African Political Philosophy, 1860-1995
Boele Van Hensbroek, Pieter

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The dominant political ideal during the colonial period was *self-government*. In the 1950s this ideal finally appeared within reach in the form of an Africa made up of independent nation-states. The possibility of independence created a completely new political horizon in which the actual construction of the nation-state became the focal issue. A number of new problems appeared on the agenda, such as: What political system should be chosen for the national state? What is the 'African' substance of this state? How can Pan-African ambitions be framed in an Africa consisting of national states? How can true independence be achieved beyond 'flag independence'?

The boisterous ideological struggles over these issues went through major shifts at intervals of about a decade in the following forty years. The radical nationalism of the Manchester Pan-African Congress of 1945 and the *West African National Secretariat* (WANS) was followed, in the 1950s, by a dominant liberal democratic orientation exemplified by Nkrumah's 'tactical action'. The 1960s brought the golden age of 'African Socialist' ideologies. Important events in this period were the Dakar Colloquium (1962), the launching of *Ujamaa* (1962) and the *Arusha Declaration* (1967) by Tanzanian president Nyerere, Nkrumah's *Consciencism* (1964) and the Kenyan government paper on African socialism (1965). In the 1970s Marxism became prominent in a context of stagnating development, the rise of Dependency and Underdevelopment theories and the successful liberation wars in the Portuguese colonies. In the 1980s all projects for building an alternative society seemed to have halted. The Ethiopian famine, the unprecedented destruction of the Mozambiquan experiment and the deepening economic crisis of the 1980s left little hope for a better future. Although outrageous events such as famines, wars and genocide continued in the 1990s inspiring prospects came to life again with the widespread call for democratization. Even where democratization actually did not proceed very far, as was the case in most countries, the thorough delegitimation of authoritarian politics created a new political environment.

My analysis in this chapter does not concern the various types of political regimes and their proclaimed ideology, such as *Marxism-Leninism*, *Authenticity*, *Humanism* or *Nayoism*. These have been studied thoroughly by political scientists.\(^{258}\) My concern is with discourses that developed intellectually to such a level that they survived the system or leader proposing them, thus becoming part of *intellectual* history. Discourses that constitute "the history of the present," that produced "a range of vocabulary .. which becomes foundational"\(^{259}\) for present-day political thought.

The central landmark from which I will map this intellectual history is modern Africa's figure-head, Kwame Nkrumah. The discourses which

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\(^{258}\) e.g. Young 1982, Ottaway 1981.

\(^{259}\) Quotes from Tully 1988, p. 16/17. Tully explains here how Quentin Skinner's historical hermeneutics can still be guided by a concern which is contemporary to us.
Nkrumah represented at different stages in his career provide the sign-boards to the various ideological orientations in post-colonial Africa. Taking bearings on this landmark provides a convenient way of locating the ideological positions of various post-colonial African theorists. After discussing Nkrumah (par. V.1), I will follow each of the discursive paths indicated by his career (V.2, V.3 and V.4), thus covering the entire terrain.

**Successive discourses in Nkrumah's thought**

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<tr>
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**Kwame Nkrumah**

*From revolutionary anti-imperialism to democratic modernism*

In the previous chapter I discussed the anti-imperialist radicalism of Nkrumah's London days. This radicalism also inspired Nkrumah's stormy entry into the Ghanaian political scene and the successful nationalist agitation of 'positive action' by his Convention Peoples Party (CPP) during 1950-1951. When he was released from prison after a massive electoral victory in 1951, Nkrumah landed directly into the seat of Prime Minister of an all-African government under British supervision. 'Positive action' was then exchanged for 'tactical action' which involved conventional democratic and statist policy orientations.

Ideologically, Nkrumah thus moved away from the radicalism of the West African National Secretariat such as expressed in his London works *Towards Colonial Freedom* (1945/1962) and the document of *The Circle* (1947). These texts strongly rejected colonial boundaries (the 'Balkanization' of Africa). They stated the ideal of 'Union of Socialist Republics in Africa' and underlined the need for a political vanguard. The radical model of thought was, furthermore, designed around an intrinsic connection between decolonization and ending economic exploitation through a social and economic revolution. All this was not heard of much in the 1950s. The book *I speak of Freedom*, presenting Nkrumah's speeches during the 1950s, expressed a framework of

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thought focusing on the political realm within a national (not a pan-African) context.

This remarkable shift towards the ideal of a democratic, unitary and national state along with a humanitarian vocabulary of political, civil and human rights also occurred in George Padmore’s work. His Pan-Africanism or Communism is rather the work of a social-democrat than of a "non stalinist Marxist". Padmore writes: "Pan Africanism means politically government of, by and for Africans; economically it means democratic socialism, liberty of the subject and human rights guaranteed by the law. ...Pan-Africanism sets out to fulfil the socio-economic mission of Communism under a libertarian political system." Nkrumah not only avoided identification with socialism, in 1954 he even introduced legislation prohibiting the diffusion of communist literature and barring communists from a number of posts, including teaching-positions.

One could account for the 'liberal turn' of the radicals by pointing to the quite limited political margins of that period in Ghana or to the political situation in the 1950s, where anti-communism was a pre-requisite for political survival in the West. To all appearances, however, Nkrumah and Padmore actually thought along liberal democratic lines during the 1950s. The intellectual monsoon was blowing from the West. Structural Functionalist social theory, belief in 'modernization' of 'underdeveloped' nations and liberal democratic political discourse were dominant. Nkrumah's and Padmore's sails were probably not secure enough to manoeuvre against these prevailing ideological winds. They moved with the dominant discourse rather than against it.

**Nkrumahism: the discourse of African Socialism**

In 1961 Nkrumah changed his orientation once more, aiming at a 'second revolution' based on a socialist strategy of economic and political reforms.

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261 Padmore 1937/1972, p X

262 Padmore 1956, p. 21 and p. 22. The book remained silent on the societal system that should fulfill the Pan-Africanist ideal of "universal brotherhood, social security and peace for all peoples everywhere" (p.18). It would definitely not be communism. Padmore argued that African independence was a necessity to prevent Africans from turning to communism.

263 In his excellent book *Ideologies des independences Africains*, Yves Bénot resented that Nkrumah "n'a jugé utile de mentioner cette période de maccarthysme larve" (p. 105) in any of his publications. Benôt's denunciation of Padmore as a mix of "l'obsession anti-communiste et l'empirisme britanique" (p. 195) is inappropriate, however. After working for decades in the communist movement and for African nationalism, Padmore knew perfectly well what he left behind when discarding Benôt's "idéologie socialiste véritable" (p. 194).

264 See Basil Davidson *Black Star* (1975/1989) for this argument. My argument is that the framework of thought expressed in Padmore's *Panafriicanism or Communism*, or Nkrumah's *I speak of Freedom*, is quite different from the radical thought expressed after the Manchester conference in 1945.
presidential system and one party rule were introduced in Ghana, the official glorification of his person as the Osagyefo ('Victorious leader' or 'Redeemer') was stepped up and a number of important persons were evicted from the party. The ideological counterparts of these political changes were the launching of 'Nkrumaisn', the establishment of the Ideological Institute at Winnaba and the establishment of the political group and journal The Spark (named after Lenin's Iskra). These changes were effected in the context of increasing stagnation both within the party and the political system and within the economy and society at large. Nkrumah had estranged practically all progressive forces from the party and continued to do so, for instance by his violent repression of the 1961 Takoradi railway strike.

The renewed radicalism of the 'Second Revolution' was sustained by a new discourse which expressed the need to confront underdevelopment and capitalist neocolonialism by way of an alternative 'African' socialism. This alternative would build on the African heritage of communal and 'socialist' ways of life. It would end the 'exploitation of man by man' by promoting social property, a mixed (private-public) economy under the control of the state, by constructing a Pan-African and Third World force in world politics, and by belief in God.

The new discourse was enunciated in Nkrumah's book Consciencism, Philosophy and Ideology of Decolonisation and Development, with Particular Reference to the African Revolution (the 1964 subtitle). This was an extraordinary text. A political statement that was not made up of political, economic or ethnological facts and theories, but of deliberations on the philosophical doctrines of 'idealism' and 'materialism', reflections on God, Spirit and the African Personality, and even a 'set theoretical' proof of the proposed metaphysics. Consciencism was an attempt to design a complete world-view or 'philosophical ideology'. It has been described by one of its adherents, Kofi Baako, as "applied religion" and "a socialist nondoctrinary philosophy". In Nkrumah's own words:

A new harmony needs to be forged, a harmony that will allow the combined presence of traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Euro-Christian Africa, so that this presence is in tune with the original humanist principles underlying African society. Our society is not the old society, but a new, enlarged by Islamic and Euro-Christian influences. A new emergent ideology is therefore required, an ideology which can solidify in a philosophical

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265 Several interpreters want to mark 'Consciencism' and 'African Socialism' off from 'Nkrumaisn', which they considered to be the malicious invention of the conservatives around Nkrumah, such as Kofi Baako. (see Hountondji 1976/1983, chapter 6, or Bénot 1969/1972, p.201). Nkrumah did not distance himself from this Nkrumaisn, however.

266 Even Basil Davidson, the sympathetic observer and staunch supporter of Nkrumah, states that Nkrumah tried to make "a revolution without revolutionaries" (Davidson 1973, p. 178). On the evictions, see e.g. p. 126-132 in the same book.

267 Baako 1961, p. 188 and 189
statement, but at the same time an ideology which will not abandon the original humanist principles of Africa. Such a philosophical statement will be born out of the crisis of the African conscience confronted with the three strands of present African society. Such a philosophical statement I propose to name philosophical consciencism.  

In order to analyze Nkrumah's discourse in his African Socialist period, the time between his turn to socialism in 1961 and his book Neo-Colonialism of 1965, several sources are available apart from Consciencism. I will use what is probably Nkrumah's most impressive book, namely Africa Must Unite published in 1963. Africa Must Unite presents a very clear discussion of pre-colonial and colonial heritages, the nationalist struggle and the development of independence in Ghana. It subsequently discusses dilemmas in Ghanaian politics which involved the Convention Peoples Party, the opposition, the economy, the constitution and the various Pan-African initiatives. The reader is invited to sit next to Nkrumah in the cockpit of society and is given a view backward through history and forward to the challenges ahead, hearing Nkrumah's instructions on how exactly to use the societal steering wheel to proceed in the direction of progress and socialism. The discourse located itself at the centre of political power. From this position, "stability and resolute leadership in the building of our country" are perceived as being of foremost importance. Nkrumah compared his assignment with that of Sisyphus's task "to roll a whole people uphill" which requires a "managing director".

This idea of 'a people' with its 'managing director' involves particular views about the national state and about politics within that state. First of all, Nkrumah's idea of the advancement of a people implied a strong rejection of regionalism. One could have expected his Pan-Africanism to lead to a weakening of the national idea, and his intention to build on African heritages to lead to a recognition of communal and regional structures, but actually Nkrumah had a strong focus on the national state and national integration. Pan-Africa integration was to proceed from national integration and thus national integration should not be frustrated by regionalism. Nkrumah argued that obeying the call for federalism of the UGCC opposition and of traditional rulers such as the Ashanti-hene would leave only "token sovereignty" for the national government. The fate of Nigeria, where Azikiwe's national party the

\[ \text{\cite{Nkrumah 1963/70, p. 70}} \]
\[ \text{\cite{e.g. Baako 1961}} \]
\[ \text{\cite{both quotes from Nkrumah 1963/1970, p. 83}} \]
\[ \text{\cite{Even Pan-Africanism was basically justified in terms of progress. "The obvious solution is unity, so that development can be properly and cohesively planned" (Nkrumah 1963/70, p. 53).}} \]
\[ \text{\cite{(Nkrumah 1963/70, p. 62). Basil Davidson comments that Nkrumah "so much more constructive than his regionalistic opponents, called for a constitution in which the central government held all the ultimate power" (Davidson 1973/1989, p. 150). Note how much}} \]
NCNC could not preclude the rise of regionalism and thus could not construct a strong central state, was abhorred by Nkrumah. In addition, Nkrumah considered traditional leadership, which was proposed as the key to a regional system of government, to be something to overcome. The people had to be released "from the bondage of foreign colonial rule and the tyranny of local feudalism."\(^{273}\)

The second supposition of Nkrumahism was that political monism was the best system within the Ghanaian national state. Society's great leap ahead required a massive synchronization of the energies and the minds of the population. The government, party and the people should coincide: "the aspiration of the people and...the government are synonymous" and there should be "direct consultation" between them.\(^{274}\) Similarly, the trade unions should toe the line. Under socialism, they were considered to have 'a new role' in "carrying out the government's programme."\(^{275}\)

The drive for synchronization also concerned human character and consciousness: "Africa needs a new type of citizen, a dedicated, modest, honest and informed man. A man who submerges self in service to the nation and mankind."\(^{276}\) Consciencism's important chapter "Society and Ideology" expresses the 'total' nature of the proposed collective commitment in quite an outspoken way. The ideology is proposed here as the main solution for the problem of order in society: "seeking to establish common attitudes and purposes for the society." "The ideology of a society is total. It embraces the whole life of a people, and manifests itself in their class-structure, history, literature, art, religion." "It is this community, this identity in the range of principles and values, in the range of interests, attitudes and so of reactions, which lies at the bottom of social order."\(^{277}\) Nkrumah's subsequent discussion was concerned with the "social sanction" and "the subtle methods of 'coercion'

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273 Nkrumah 1961, p. 44; see also chapter V in that book. Padmore stated: "tribalism is undoubtedly the biggest obstacle in creating a modern democratic state and an integrated nation out of small regional units inhabited by backward people still under the influence of traditional authority". (Padmore 1956, p. 288) In his Africa Must Unite Nkrumah is pragmatic: "If, in the interregnum, chieftancy can be used to encourage popular effort, there would seem to be little sense in arousing the antagonism which the legal abolition would stimulate." (Nkrumah 1963/1970, p. 84)

274 Quotes from Nkrumah 1963/1970, p. 126 and 129. The hegemony of Nkrumah's CCP was confirmed in several national elections where the oppositions was defeated even in its own strongholds. The democracy within the CCP, however, was much more of a problem. Julius Sago (alias Ikoku), the radical supporter of Nkrumah and editor of The Spark, blamed the degeneration of the CCP on the absence of democratic structures and influence 'from below'. (Ikoku 1971)

275 Nkrumah 1963/70, p. 126/127. Typically, not discontent but imperialist conspiracies may destroy the unity: "African workers, as the likeliest victims of these infiltrations, must be on their guard" (127).

276 Nkrumah 1963/70, p. 130

277 quotes on Nkrumah 1964, p. 57, 59, and 61 respectively.
and cohesion” which organise a society outside the scope of direct central control. The resulting "new harmony", Nkrumah stated, "may be described as restatements in contemporary idiom of the principles underlying communalism.”

In order to create this communalism for rapid development certain liberties may have to move to the background. Nkrumah confirmed that he found the idea of censorship repugnant, running "counter to everything for which I had struggled in my life" yet "we had embarked upon a course that aimed to push forward the clock of progress. Were others to be given the freedom to push it back?" The extensive use of the 1958 Prevention of Terrorism Act, which caused the death of the leader of the opposition J.A.B. Danquah in detention, was not, as far as principles are concerned, ruled out by the discourse of Nkrumaism.

The Discourse of revolutionary anti-imperialism

In the mid-1960s, Nkrumah moved to a philosophical position which its adherents called 'scientific socialism'. Of course the February 1966 coup d'état which ended CCP rule in Ghana and forced Nkrumah to spend the last six years of his life exiled in Conakry contributed to his change of ideas. Nkrumah moved from a position of power to the position of an outsider so that a discourse situating itself in the central control room of society was replaced by one situating itself in the margins, among the 'masses of workers and peasants': in theoretical terms it was the guerrilla-camp and in practical terms it was Nkrumah's home in Conakry.

The new discourse already developed before Nkrumah's overthrow. The book Neo-colonialism, the last stage of Imperialism was published in 1965 and in the introduction to Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare; A Guide to the Armed Phase of the African Revolution (1968) Nkrumah mentioned that he was already preparing a manual on guerrilla warfare already in Accra. In a way, Nkrumah's revolutionary anti-imperialism revived many of his positions expressed while he was in London. In content, as well as in style the similarities between the Handbook (1968) and the document of The Circle (1947) are striking.

Nkrumah's ideological change after 1965 can be substantiated by the fact that the logic of 'tactical action' in the 1950s as well as Nkrumaism, Africa

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278 Nkrumah 1964, p. 65
279 Nkrumah 1964, p. 74
280 Nkrumah 1963/1970, p. 77
281 A similar congruence in style can be observed between Nkrumah's Africa Must Unite and Class Struggle in Africa. Nkrumah presents himself to the reader in completely different roles: as practical pamphleteer (The Circle and Handbook), fact-gatherer (Neo-colonialism), metaphysician (Consciencism), and political-economic analyst (Africa Must Unite and Class Struggle).
Must Unite and Consciencism cannot be justified from the scientific socialist point of view presented from 1965 onwards. Nkrumah himself, never confirming that he had changed his position on certain topics, endowed the change with an objective basis by stating that now the 'armed phase on the African Revolution' had started.

Although not long ago, it is hard to recapture the context and meaning of radical anti-imperialist thought throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Re-thinking socialism as an unquestioned political ideal and as a certain gift of history, as it was often perceived before the collapse of socialism systems in the world, requires considerable historical empathy today. First of all, let me present the basics of Nkrumah's Scientific Socialist account: After World War II, workers's protest within the capitalist states along with the threat of both communism and fascism forced governments to grant concessions which led to the creation of Welfare States. This expensive system meant that external colonial exploitation had to be intensified: 'therefore, it became necessary for international finance capital to carry out reforms in order to eliminate the deadly threat to its supremacy of the liberation movements.'

This necessity led to a policy of replacing old-fashioned 'direct colonialism' with its rationalized form, namely 'collective imperialism' under the leadership of the USA. The new system involved granting 'sham independence' and thus creating the system of 'neo-colonialism': 'A state can be said to be a neo-colonialist or client state if it is independent de jure and dependent de facto. It is a state where political power lies in the conservative forces of the former colony and where economic power remains under control of international finance capital.'

The seminal image that captures Nkrumah's idea of neocolonialism as a mechanism of domination appears in Nkrumah's discussion of the question "Who really rules such places as Great Britain, West Germany, Japan?":

Street octopus. And its suction cups and muscular strength are provided by a phenomenon dubbed 'The Invisible Government', arising from Wall Street's connection with the Pentagon and various intelligence services.

Typically, the octopus metaphor does not depict a person or a simple conspiracy of persons nor a mechanistic or cybernetic system such as embodied in centre - periphery or world systems theories. The Wall Street octopus is an animated entity, sinister, sucking and strangling in which the centre masters the

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282 Not only the inspiration of radical thought thirty years ago is not easily grasped today, but also the concrete fears behind its politics are easily overlooked. Radicals linked imperialist acts of destabilisation with the orchestration of world affairs and not without reason since a number of radical African leaders were murdered primarily at the orders of Western powers. (Lumumba, Mondlane, Cabral, Machel). See the astonishing facts about CIA murder plans brought together in Madeleine Kalb's The Congo Cables.

283 Nkrumah 1969, p. 5

284 Nkrumah 1969, p. 8

285 Nkrumah 1965, p. 240 (emphasis is mine)
periphery.

From a Marxist point of view, Nkrumah's analysis leaves many questions unanswered. The modes of production in Africa and related classes were not discussed, nor the possibility of introducing socialism in Third World societies which had been incorporated into the capitalist system without fully becoming capitalist formations. Nkrumah's political message, however, was communicated with great clarity, embodied in such statements as: "the African Revolution is an integral part of the world socialist revolution." Thereby Nkrumah stated a position that remained dominant within the Left until well into the 1980s.

Nkrumah's position implied a fierce critique of the non-radical African leaders and governments (more specifically of the Monrovia and Brazzaville groups of states which objected to the militant stand of the Casablanca Group in which Ghana participated). They were declared to be merely the 'puppet governments' of 'client states' and the product of tactics devised by the imperialists who "decided to play their own version of nationalism." In the struggle for liberation no role would exist for the leaders of most independent African states. Liberation would be the work of the workers and peasants: the "broad masses of the African people who are determined once and for all to end all forms of foreign exploitation, to manage their own affairs, and to determine their own future." Their struggle required an All-African People's Liberation Army with a strong Pan-African coordination.

While revolutionary warfare held the key to African freedom, socialism provided the specific content of the new social order. Nkrumah now criticised the "muddled thinking" about 'African Socialism': "there is only one true socialism and that is scientific socialism, the principles of which are abiding and universal." He summarised this socialism as: 1) Common ownership of means of production; 2) Planned methods of production by the state, based on modern industry and agriculture; 3) Political power in the hands of the people "in keeping with the humanistic and egalitarian spirit which characterised traditional African society"; 4) Application of scientific methods in all spheres of thought and production.

Despite all the ardour and spirit in the three main books of the Marxist-Leninist phase in Nkrumah's intellectual life, they leave behind a tragic resonance. For the reader, the need for resistance emerges more clearly than the possibility of resistance. The octopus is strong and enveloping. Optimism can only be located in the Marxist theory of history which predicts an end to capitalism and the future state of total freedom. Nkrumah possessed the ability to design comprehensive and non-contradictory analyses in order to outline what should be done. The reader, however, is left with doubts about the degree to which these analyses can be translated back to real-life situations.

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286 Nkrumah 1970, p. 10
287 Nkrumah 1969, p. 32; see also Nkrumah 1970 chapter 3.
288 Nkrumah 1969, p. 23
289 Nkrumah 1969, p. 29 and 28
The four Nkrumahs

Nkrumah's intellectual career, as I have argued above, represented different political orientations at different times: socialist anti-imperialism at the end of the 1940s, liberalism or democratic socialism in the 1950's, African Socialism in the first half of the 1960s and Marxism-Leninism in the second half of the 1960s. The diverse political orientations coincide with different struggles, namely `positive action' for national independence (until 1951), followed by `tactical action' and obstruction of a `disruptive' opposition. From 1961, the struggle for a socialist nation and finally, after the 1966 coup, the pan-African armed struggle against neo-colonialism.

The different political orientations also coincide with different political roles. Nkrumah changed from an activist to a party leader then to national leader and finally to an exiled revolutionary. Likewise, the various genres of Nkrumah's writings correspond with these roles. Towards Colonial Freedom (1945/1962) is an anti-colonial pamphlet by a nationalist militant whereas his Autobiography (1957) and I Speak of Freedom (1961) contain the speeches and statements of a political leader who is dedicated to freedom, democracy and progress. Consciencism (1964) is the 'philosophical' tract of the national leader. In this "Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization" Nkrumah is the nation-builder who lays deep and solid foundations for a state while speaking on behalf of the nation and continent. In his last years, exiled in Conakry, Nkrumah returned to the political pamphlet, publishing works such as the Handbook of revolutionary warfare (1968). At various points in time, more analytical texts appeared, like Africa Must Unite (1963), Neo-colonialism: the last stage of colonialism (1965) and Class struggle in Africa (1970).

The Four Nkrumahs

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<td>margin</td>
<td>economic exploitation</td>
<td>pamphlet e.g. Towards Colonial Freedom</td>
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<td>party leader</td>
<td>'tactical action'</td>
<td>centre</td>
<td>political freedom</td>
<td>speech e.g. I Speak for Freedom</td>
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<td>1961-65</td>
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<td>national leader</td>
<td>nation building</td>
<td>centre</td>
<td>socialist nation-state</td>
<td>philoso-phical book e.g. Consciencism</td>
<td>African *Socialism</td>
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290 This is the sub-title of the 1970 edition of Consciencism.
There is also continuity in Nkrumah’s development, especially in political style. His autobiography recounts the pathetic moment when he sailed out of New York to return to Africa in 1945. Nkrumah said farewell to the Statue of Liberty: "You have opened my eyes to the true meaning of liberty...I shall never rest until I have carried your message to Africa."

In many ways Nkrumah has remained inspired by a drive for liberty, embodying it in different ideological schemes. His role was always that of the spokesman of the struggle and the designer of grand schemes that evolve fully fledged from the mind of the theoretician. The role of others was thus also defined as followers, namely as executors of the projects designed by the leader. In such a scenario, the political process concerns mobilization and execution rather than deliberation; unanimity is required while differences of view are an anomaly.

The Beninese philosopher Paulin Hountondji brilliantly analyzed the deeper logic of ‘unanimism’ or anti-pluralism in the discourse of Consciencism. His analysis questions the whole project of designing a "Philosophy and Ideology for Development, with Particular Reference to the African Revolution" (subtitle of the 1964 edition of Consciencism). Hountondji connects this critique with an attempt to pinpoint the mistaken premisses of the CCP political project in the first half of the 1960s under ‘Nkrumaism’.

Hountondji noted a contrast between the original 1964 edition and the revised 1970 edition of Consciencism. The 1964 edition had maintained that African societies are basically classless and that its communal world-view could provide a basis for African socialism. In the 1970 edition of Consciencism, Nkrumah abandoned the original idea of classlessness but maintained the idea that a progressive politics in Africa requires a collective philosophy or an ideological synthesis.

Hountondji argued that by abandoning the idea of classlessness the search for a collective philosophy becomes an illusory project since a plurality of classes implies a plurality of ideological orientations in politics. The idea of "restoring the lost unity of African consciousness...a unified system of thought" is a classical example of the philosophy of consciousness which tries to reconcile real social differences at the level of consciousness.

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291Nkrumah 1957/1971, p. 48
292Note that Hountondji is not at all in the anti-Nkrumah camp. As for the factual analysis of the Nkrumah period he used Julius Sago's (Ikoku's) interpretation in Le Ghana de Nkrumah. In fact, apart from its analytical sophistication, Hountondji's discussion (like Ikoku's) is one of the few examples of a critical analysis of Nkrumah which is still basically sympathetic to his venture. Many sympathisers run the risk of shouting down Nkrumah's words with their own songs of praise.
293Hountondji 1983, p. 149
Hountondji maintained that the project of Consciencism should be rejected from a political point of view as well. In the first place, it attempted to translate "theoretical unanimity into a value to be struggled for." Instead, we should reaffirm the value of pluralism. In the second place, Consciencism tried to provide metaphysical foundations for issues that are essentially political and that, therefore, require the public deliberation of all those concerned in an open political process rather than an exercise of ideological reflection by a single leader. According to Hountondji, we should "assert the autonomy of the political as a level of discourse." A similar criticism of anti-pluralism can be directed at the idea of politics in Nkrumah's later writings. There is a remarkable schematism here since the single dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed is said to determine the world. Whether we talk of Jehovah's witnesses, the Peace Corps, development aid, the BBC World Service or "the literature spread by so-called liberal publishers," they function as agents of imperialism. Even Nkrumah's quite sophisticated book Class Struggle in Africa (1970) was designed according this basic scheme. It assumes that the logic of the ideological order can be reduced to the political order which is in turn defined by the economic order. There is only the Wall Street octopus and its victim, "our enemy and ourselves," so that not a single fact or circumstance is allowed to escape the dichotomy.

Such a reductionism creates an argument for unanimism which Hountondji's discussion of Consciencism does not include. If the world is essentially divided into the "enemy and ourselves" and if ideological differences can be reduced to these fundamental camps, then there are only two ideological options: of the oppressor or of the oppressed. In this situation, there can be no legitimate plurality of opinions among the oppressed. The oppressed are only to be united in "an ideologically monolithic party of cadres." Whereas the unanimism in Consciencism is derived from the 'nature' of a group or nation the unanimism of Class Struggle is derived from the historically required ideological choice of the oppressed. In both cases political pluralism is considered faulty.

The present chapter will use Nkrumah's intellectual career as a guide to post-

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294 Hountondji 1983, p. 154. Hountondji also criticized the doctrine of Consciencism itself, e.g. concerning its claim to provide a coherent doctrine, while in fact providing an arbitrary connection between elements such as materialism, the possible existence of God, egalitarianism, humanistic ethics, self-determination, and socialism.

295 Hountondji 1983, p. 154. "A plurality of beliefs and theoretical choices does not preclude commitment to the same political ideal. The only necessary basis for commitment is that common interests are at stake: national interests in the case of anti-colonial struggle, class interests in the case of the struggle for socialism" (154). See also Hountondji's article "What Philosophy can do" (QUEST I,2 (1987) p.3-30) on delimiting politics from philosophy.

296 Nkrumah 1965, p. 43

297 Nkrumah 1969, p. 44; see also 1970 chapters 3 and 6.
colonial African political thought. My interpretations of key authors will show that the three discourses which Nkrumah embodied at different stages of his life: democratic modernization, African Socialism and radical anti-imperialism are also the major historical discourses in the post-World War II period.

Modernization Discourses

At first glance, postwar African political discourse until the move towards African Socialism in the 1960s was characterised by an astonishing degree of consensus. The nationalist struggle was fought under the flag of democratic rights and when independence was visible on the political horizon most intellectuals favoured a liberal democratic orientation. When taking a closer look at the major points of conflict in this period, however, it emerges that beneath the level of shared convictions very different models of thought were operative.

Two major points of contention arose in the first decades after World War II: federalism, and (African) socialism and the single party state. These often led to bitter struggles. The issue of federalism, for instance, divided the major players in Nigerian and Gold Coast politics, Zik and Awolowo, and Nkrumah and Danquah respectively. Both Zik and Nkrumah, building on their earlier 'New African' position (as discussed in the previous chapter), were protagonists of a central state which would overcome 'tribal' differences between peoples within the national borders and which would be able to implement a process of rapid modernisation. Awolowo and Danquah, on the other hand, resisted the substitution of indigenous linguistic, cultural and ethnic communities, including their inherited forms of leadership, with a totally new, centralized nation-state.

In the early 1960s, another issue of contention arose, namely socialism and the single party state. There was a strongly felt need for the central state to have an assertive role in the development process. Protagonists of an African Socialist orientation suggested that the developmental state would be handcuffed by adhering to standard democratic institutions such as the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers, political pluralism and civil liberties. Accordingly, a socialist single party system would be more appropriate. The opponents of African Socialism were, in most cases, inspired both by a commitment to democratic values and institutions and by the conviction that socialist development strategies would not work. The issue of political pluralism and the role of the state raised debates throughout the 1960s which were largely the same as those at the end of the 1980s when single-party rule was abolished in many African countries.

Political confrontations over federalism and socialism were bitter and in

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298 However, Zik acquiesced to the federal structuring of Nigeria at the 1953 constitutional conference.
the case of Danquah even led to his death while he was imprisoned under the *Prevention of Terrorism Act*. In the domain of ideas, however, the confrontations produced some of the best political arguments. These arguments are here discussed in order to map the basic dimensions of the ideological landscape in the 1950s and 1960s.

*The liberal modernization discourse*

For many nationalists, the basic argument against European colonialism has been an *inherent* criticism proving that colonialism contradicted the very ideas and ideals of freedom and democracy proclaimed by the West itself. These nationalists subscribed to the ideals of freedom and democracy, considering them to be *universal* human values that should apply to Africa as much as to any other part of the world.

Probably the best example of a liberal modernizer is the Nigerian Nnamdi Azikiwe ('Zik'). Azikiwe's thought (which was discussed more extensively in the previous chapter) is archetypal for a thoroughly universalist belief in the possibility of transcending racial, ethnic as well as social cleavages. By adhering to the universal values of freedom, democracy and human welfare, Azikiwe argued, individuals and groups could 'move to the higher plane' of identification with the national and human community.

Azikiwe considered liberal democratic institutions to be the expression of these universal values. Moreover, he considered them to be indispensable for any modern society, since no other system is capable of avoiding authoritarianism and the misuse of power. Similarly, Azikiwe argued that nation-building requires a parliamentary democracy. People will not shed tribal identities unless they have their individual liberties firmly guaranteed and are protected against poverty: "By adapting the best elements so far experienced by human beings all over the world, in the practices of capitalism or socialism or welfarism...a Nigerian ideology based on the eclecticism now universally appreciated as the welfare state, is the right incentive." Pragmatic reasoning also dictates the choice for democracy, as Obafemi Awolowo argued: "A nation groping more or less in the dark, and striving for bare subsistence, cannot afford to depart from laws and principles which are sufficiently verified, and from routes which are well charted, to embark on experiments which the verdicts of history declare to be utterly ruinous."

*The social-democratic modernization discourse*

In the 1960s the liberal democratic state lost credit because a growing number

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299 Quoted in Langley 1979, p. 471
300 Quoted in Langley 1979, p. 494
of people believed that only a strong and intervening developmental state could enforce the desired 'great leap ahead' for African societies. Democratic ideals as such were not abandoned, yet, for the sake of development, the state as the most powerful institution in society would have to take the lead in the development process. The resulting discourse situated itself in the steering cabin of society. It indicated the key problems which a newly independent society faces and it outlined what should be done, in which order, and what the expected results would be.

Dunduzu Kaluli Chisiza from Malawi is an interesting example of this developmentally assertive variant of democratic discourse. He was secretary-general of the Malawi Congress and an influential politician when he died in a car accident in the early 1960s. Chisiza proposed a "Pragmatic Pattern of Development" which was concerned with democratic values but even more so with a coordinated programme of modernisation. His highly pragmatic orientation is exemplary for the type of discourse that has dominated much of developmentalist policy design in the last forty years.301

Chisiza exemplifies the energetic social-democratic modernizer. His clear and direct style and practical turn of mind, without loosing sight of emancipatory objectives, is reminiscent of Africanus Horton nearly a hundred years earlier. For instance, he proposed strategies for ultimately "completing the annihilation of tribalism," a four-step programme for the "political regrouping of neighbouring countries" as an alternative to Pan-Africanism as an "operation roof-top"302 and an argument for effective but limited political pluralism including all the necessary institutional mechanisms to guarantee effective control of state power. Typically, he worked in close cooperation with the West, particularly by using foreign investment and development aid. For Chisiza even non-alignment was a matter of opportunism: "Paradoxical as it may sound, the safest way of aligning with the West is not to align with the West."303

The neo-traditional modernization discourse

A liberal orientation in matters of political arrangements does not have to ignore African cultural heritages, as was the case with the liberal and social democratic modernizers. The combination of liberal universalism with a strong link to local traditions has a long history in the Gold Coast, from the Aboriginal Rights Protection Society in the 1890s to the United Gold Coast Convention and to the Ghanaian opposition under G.B. Danquah. In the 1950s and 1960s it

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301 Chisiza 1961 is in fact one of the few elaborate African expressions of this discourse, which normally remains taken for granted (Young 1982, p. 183). 'Developmentalism' was, after all, so firmly entrenched in ongoing aid-programming that it could do well without explicit ideological statements.

302 Quotes on Chisiza 1961, p. 5.

303 Chisiza 1961, p. 11
constituted one of the main ideological positions countering both African Socialism and Marxism.

In politics, style and class as well as in the model of political thought, Danquah himself personified this tradition. When he died in prison in 1965, Danquah's political and intellectual work was continued by Kofi Busia who was a Brong (Ashanti) nobleman, an Oxford sociologist, an opposition-leader and a Prime Minister. The main texts in this Ghanaian tradition are erudite and sophisticated, and their positions moderate, pragmatic and open-ended. This moderation does not mean, however, that they suggested westernisation as a solution to Africa's problems. If we examine the example of Kofi Busia, his books typically begin with elaborations on African culture and analyses of the contemporary African situation in terms of 'challenges' to be tackled on the basis of the 'heritages' of Africa itself. Busia can therefore be called a 'neo-traditionalist' as well as a liberal moderniser. There is, one could say, a neo-traditional 'Akan' and a liberal 'Oxford' Busia.

The discourse was not an eclectic mixture, however. The key aspect of the discourse was a specific interpretation of the conceptual pair 'tradition' and 'modernity'. 'Tradition' here referred to the concrete heritage of the Akan people rather than to the generalized 'African tradition' of the African Socialists or the general sociological stereotype of a 'traditional society'. Studies in history, culture and society were considered to be necessary to know the traditions that were relevant for development. Again, 'modernity' was conceived of as a general feature of world historical development which Western societies expressed in specific ways and African societies could express in different ways.

The remarkable thing about this tradition - modernity vocabulary is that it does not define two opposites. The idea of modernity indicates a range of challenges that a particular tradition is facing. Depending on its specific resources, traditions need to develop new solutions in order to shape their own modernity. In the words of Busia: "These are the challenges Africans face. Their cultures must change and grow but they must retain that identification with the past which gives every people its sense of uniqueness and pride." The fact that "Africans belong to the stream of human history" does not have to lead to a loss of cultural identity since "there is always room for conscious choices."

\[304\] *The Challenge of Africa* begins with two chapters on Akan funeral rites en Akan values and African culture. *Africa in Search of Democracy* begins with a chapter on the "religious heritage" followed by one on the "political heritage". The contrast with great contemporaries of Busia is interesting: whereas Nkrumah seemed to write from an imaginary position of the capital of the whole continent, and Azikiwe from a relatively detrabalized position in the metropolis Lagos, Busia's orientation point was basically an African cultural and societal tradition, namely the Akan tradition.

\[305\] The two elements neatly correspond to the two main forces Busia relied on in politics, namely the liberal West and the traditional rulers. Compare e.g. Kwame Ninsin's analysis of the anti-CCP opposition in "The Nkrumah Government and the Opposition on the Nation State: Unity versus Fragmentation" (Ninsin 1985).
Cultural change is a selective process.³⁰⁶

Busia's discourse involved a quite unresentful assessment of colonialism.³⁰⁷ Rather than regarding colonialism primarily as political domination or economic exploitation, Busia asserts that "colonialism is, above all, a social fact." Africans came into contact with other peoples and ways of life which resulted in a change of culture. Characteristic for Busia's position is the fact that he considers the confrontation with superior technology: arms, bulldozers, motorcars and all of the attendant social and cultural changes as the most prominent experience of colonialism.³⁰⁸ Consequently, Busia considered the essence of decolonisation to be the synthesizing of African culture with modern science and technology rather than simply the act of attaining political independence.

In the field of politics, such a synthesis involves building a modern state on African heritages. Busia noted that "Africans cherish democratic values."³⁰⁹ The Ashanti political system had its own resources in this regard involving, for instance, its own system of 'checks and balances' to prevent arbitrary authoritarianism. Busia described, for instance, the political institution of the commoners or young men meetings which had a decisive voice in the rejection of candidate chiefs through their spokesman the Nkwankwaahene.³¹⁰

The modern territorial state, however, involves the crucial new aspect that it is multi-cultural and multi-ethnic in composition. According to Busia: In traditional societies, all members held the same religious beliefs, shared the same rituals, held the same views about the universe. The highly valued solidarity of traditional society was based on conformity; but it is old-fashioned to hope to achieve solidarity on the basis of conformity in the circumstances of today. In the contemporary situation, a State consists of people holding different religious beliefs...; they may hold different views...in science or philosophy, or politics, and in other ideologies or subjects. It is assumed that they can all nevertheless agree on the validity of the ideals of democracy and be equally loyal to them.³¹¹

The fact of pluralism of the political community is the major challenge to traditional African political systems and requires a "new institutional expression of cherished values."³¹² The proponents of a single-party system

³⁰⁶resp. Busia 1962, p.46/47, p. 47, and p. 137. Busia contrasts his views with the racial particularism of the early Negritude movement. It can be charged, however, that Busia, just like Horton one century earlier, so identified with modern European society that he actually had a strong tendency to identify modernity with the West.
³⁰⁷see chapter III of Busia 1967, also Boahen 1987.
³⁰⁸See especially Busia 1962 chapter IV
³⁰⁹Busia 1967, p. 108
³¹⁰Busia 1951, p. 9
³¹¹Busia 1967, p. 97
³¹²Busia 1967, p. 87
misread the signs of the times. Their idea that "the state replaces the tribe" and that the family can be a model for the state ignores the actual pluralism of modern African societies. Under modern circumstances, the equivalence of 'tribal unity' can only be achieved with considerable coercion. This, Busia argued, is shown by the fate of Ghana under Nkrumah as well as that of Tanzania under Nyerere.

The idea of a single party cannot even claim to exemplify the African political tradition at the level of the 'tribe', as Busia maintained. Traditional systems involved mechanisms for hearing minority voices and for preventing authoritarianism. Such mechanisms, however, are absent from the single-party system. Opposition does not divide society rather it promotes social cohesion because "the opposition helps to make all citizens, including those who disagree with the party in power, a part of the democratic system." Effective "methods and institutions for the preservation of liberty" are necessary. If closely analyzed, this means that Africa cannot dispense with any of the key ingredients of the idea of democracy: "a democratic society provides methods and institutions for the preservation of liberty. These include organs as newspapers, trade unions and other voluntary associations, political parties." African democracy will thus differ in form from the European example, but it should comply with "the common standards by which it (should) be judged." One of the key differences with Europe, Busia insists, is the nation-state: "Africa should break loose from this alluring European model. It does not fit in with the social realities of the continent." "We should...accept the fact of pluralism rather than fly in the face of the facts and attempt to achieve monolithic state structures through coercion." In fact, Busia argued, 'tribal' solidarities can provide structures for people to manage their own affairs locally and provide indigenous traditions of checking 'the encroachment of dictatorship' at the national level.

Busia's arguments on single-party rule remained largely unrefuted. After the early 1960s, however, the issue of democracy became secondary to what was considered a much more fundamental issue, namely socialism. Political visions of a totally new societal alternative dominated African political thought.

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313 Busia 1967, p. 33
314 Busia added more specific criticism of single party rule. Even if we hear "the cry 'one man, one vote' ... it should be noted that this is valueless without freedom of speech and association or public discussion." (Busia 1967, p. 99) If the party demands loyalty to its policies and leadership, how can differences of opinion be maintained within the single party? Similarly, the fact that voters can eliminate candidates in elections (such as happened in Tanzanian elections) only proves that voters can eliminate personnel, not policies. Even the choice of personnel is incomplete since it is a choice among the leadership, not a choice of the leadership.
317 Although Busia's sophisticated arguments could have received new enthusiasm in the democratisation discourse in the 1990s, he seemed to be practically forgotten.
In the early 1960s a remarkable new style and message emerged in African political thought. The often sophisticated political texts by liberals and Marxists, meant for a politically educated audience, were drowned out by speeches, memoranda and party programmes on 'African Socialism', meant for the new broad national public. The topics could be 'exploitation of man by man', 'the humanist society beyond capitalism and communism' or 'the national family'. In most cases, the authors of this new-style African political thought had a background in the teaching profession, were dedicated members of one of the world religions and belonged to the top echelons of the newly independent states.

Two approaches have to be avoided in the interpretation of African Socialist discourse. On the one hand, the great majority of texts should not be mistaken for a primarily academic attempt at theorising about society, history or humanity nor for an attempt at philosophy in the sense of a tightly argued intellectual exercise with academic pretensions. On the other hand, the opposite tendency should be avoided which claims that it suffices to simply explain African Socialism in the light of 'the interests' of the new leaders or the new dominant class. African Socialism deserves to be studied as a political discourse in its own right, which means that it is part of the political project of specific groups in society, while constituting an ordered set of ideas and concepts that shape peoples interpretations of vital political issues and thus their actions.

African Socialism was a peculiar event in intellectual history. At one time, it seemed to represent African political thought as such, the golden age of African political thought as well as the impulse that was finally expounding the African vision of society to the whole world. After this glory, it is even more astonishing to observe the speed with which Africa Socialism evaporated both as a policy orientation and as a theoretical position. None of the variants of African Socialism appears to have survived the eclipse of the political leader who proclaimed it.

The discourse of African Socialism emerged around 1960 in a new political situation that formed independent states and turned nationalist movements into national governments while a completely new horizon for political action appeared. For independence to be real, societal change would be needed beyond the available models of West and East: "trying to create something which is uniquely ours" and "to grow, as a society, out of our own roots." African cultural heritages could render this alternative by suggesting

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318 Besides an orientation towards the general public, the African Socialist authors kept a keen eye on the opinions among the well-wishers in the West who were subsidizing their programmes, as well as on the contending superpowers.

319 Clapham 1970

320 e.g. Nyerere, Kaunda, Senghor.

321 Nyerere 1968, p. 2
two consecutive choices, first rejecting capitalism for socialism, and then rejecting Marxist socialism for African socialism.

At issue here were not simply the principles of political democracy (the main concern of the liberals) or the details of political economics (the main concern of the Marxists) but the whole moral, cultural, social and economic order of society. This broad agenda suggested wide-ranging, 'philosophical' reflections on humanity, God, history and society. In actual politics, these theoretical teachings had practical aims such as 'nation-building' (fostering national unity in the new nation-states), designing a developmental alternative to break neo-colonial dependency (the "second phase of the freedom struggle") and justifying the new political leadership and its party. Each of the branches of African Socialist discourse discussed below had its specific political roles. I will not examine these roles as such but will focus on the key intellectual characteristics of each branch.

The developmental discourse of African Socialism

For authors such as Mamadou Dia, Tom Mboya and Kwame Nkrumah, African Socialism was basically an issue of development policy. Nkrumah's Consciencism, for instance, was presented as an synthesis of indigenous, Christian and Muslim heritages, but the main function of the synthesis was to unite society in a crash programme of industrialisation and nation-building. Similarly, the principal Kenyan document on African Socialism, the Kenya Government Sessional Paper Number 10 entitled "African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya" (1965) made reference to 'African tradition' but it was basically an exercise of adjusting practical policy options to the needs of the African situation.

Most of the standard elements of African Socialist policy are discussed in the Kenyan Sessional Paper. It argued for a 'mixed economy' with a state sector, a cooperative sector, a limited private sector and joint ventures with foreign investors. Productive resources should be under social control, which meant that the 'commanding heights' of the economy and key sectors, such as banking, import and export trade, and distribution of land should be controlled by the state. Actually, in the case of land, African Socialist policy contradicted African tradition which considered the distribution of land to fall within the jurisdiction of the relevant traditional authorities. Within the developmental discourse of African Socialism, the core issue

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322 Nyerere 1968, p. 29. The term "second independence" is used by a variety of authors.
323 See also Padmore's discussion of 'Pan-African Socialism' in Friedland 1964, p. 223-237.
324 It is clear that actual Kenyan policies were rather capitalist in orientation. The launching of the document was itself an important manoeuvre in the Kenyan political scene at that time. (see Leys 1975)
325 Such authority could be different from that of the chief. (See e.g. van Rouweroy van Nieuwaal & Ray 1996)
was "a transformation of structures, particularly economic ones" which could end neo-colonial dependence. Such a national strategy would be viable only if political units larger than national states were created. Developmental African Socialism was thus connected to the idea of Pan-Africanism.

For Mamadou Dia, who acted as an energetic Senegalese leader of government until his fall in 1962, African Socialist structures would be built on quite different premisses from those of the West: "Born to affirm a system of values unrelated to the value of money, the non-Western civilizations of Asia and Africa could only produce relations in which monetary considerations always remain secondary." 327

**The cultural discourse of African Socialism**

Different arguments for African Socialism can be found in Senghor and in Nyerere. They put forward elaborate arguments defending the *African* character of the African Socialist alternative. This is especially the case for Léopold Sédar Senghor. A wide range of arguments for an *African* variant of socialism based on 'African communalism' could be reported, however, I will limit my discussion here to Senghor. As a poet and a theoretician of *Négritude* and former president of Senegal, Senghor was probably the most well-known African intellectual of this century. In his sophisticated arguments, Senghor did not content himself with rebuking the common stereotypes of 'capitalism' and 'communism'. He seriously discussed contending ideologies and concluded: We stand for a middle course, for a *democratic socialism*, which goes so far as to integrate spiritual values, a socialism which ties it in with the old ethical current of the French socialists. Historically and culturally we belong to this current. Besides, the French socialists - from Saint-Simon to the Léon Blum of *For All Mankind* - are not so utopian as they are reputed to be. In so far as they are idealistic, they fulfil the requirements of the Negro-African soul, the requirements of all men of all races and all countries. 329

Interestingly, Senghor's discourse did not involve the usual championing of the nation-state, so common among African Socialists. Senghor distinguished between 'fatherland' and 'nation':

The fatherland is the heritage handed down to us by our ancestors: a

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326 Mamadou Dia 1960/1963, p. 236
327 Mamadou Dia 1960/1963, p. 238
328 The African communalistic culture as a 'We' culture has been a frequented subject for decades, especially among philosophers. e.g. Ntumba, 1988?, Anyanwu 1984, Okolo 1993.
329 Senghor, 1961/4, p. 46; see p. 26-48 for the general discussion of ideologies. Senghor's discussion of Marx is characteristic of a common view of Marx in the 1960s: essential mistakes in Marxism are recognised, while Marx is still respected as a humanist, the philosopher of the *Economical and Philosophical Manuscripts*.
land, a blood, a language or at least a dialect, mores, customs, folklore, art - in a word, a culture rooted in a native soil and expressed by a race.... The nation groups such fatherlands together in order to transcend them. Unlike them, it is...a conscious will to construct and reconstruct. The choice is, therefore, for a pluralist federalism: "far from rejecting the realities of the fatherland, the nation will lean on them." The nation-state should resist the temptation of "the uniformization of people across fatherlands." Diversity should be maintained and the tyranny of the state warded off through the decentralisation and the deconcentration of its economic and political institutions. Democracy, citizen's rights and the rights of the opposition should be respected, although the government should "take all necessary steps to curb demagogic opposition." Senghor's position on democracy parallels Azikiwe's or Busia's position rather than the African Socialist stance of Nkrumah or Nyerere. Because African cultural roots are plural, the specificity of what is 'African' cannot be conditioned by a shared African cultural heritage. Africanité is anchored, one could say, at a 'deeper' human level, namely in the 'Negro-African' soul. This Négritude defines not only a different social order but also an epistemology, an imagination in short, a way of being human. Senghor was here clearly the heir of Edward Blyden's 'Negroist' orientation, while proposing a more open and dynamic conception of this Négritude than his famous predecessor.

Senghor suggested a dynamic symbiosis of races and cultures in which cultures strive "not to be assimilated, but to assimilate." Senghor disputed the fact that Europe presents itself as the universal culture: Just as much as black Africa, Europe and its North American offspring live by means of archetypal images. For what are free enterprise, democracy, and Communism but myths, around which hundreds of millions of men and women organize their lives? Négritude is itself a myth.

Senghor proclaimed a polycentrism of cultural difference which, however, still allows criticism in terms of humanism. "The neohumanism of the twentieth century stands at the point where the paths of all nations, races, and continents...

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330 Senghor 1964, p. 11. On p. 12 he quoted Hegel "It is not the natural limits of the nation that form its character, but rather its national spirit." The Nation is an essential aspect of humanization. Note that Senghor's view of the nation-state resembles that of Busia.


332 Senghor 1964, p. 53

333 According to present-day scientific understanding Senghor mixed biological and cultural categories in an unacceptable way. Négritude is presented as both a matter of 'blood' and 'culture'. He suggested that 'certain biologists' support that "the psychological mutations brought about by education are incorporated in our genes and are then transmitted by heredity." (Sigmund 1963, p. 249) This is definitely incorrect according to 'most biologists'.

334 Senghor's Foreword to Lynch (ed.) 1978.
The political discourse of African socialism

With his famous idea that *Ujamaah* (familyhood) is the basis of African Socialism and his ardent defense of 'One-Party Rule', Julius Nyerere provides an exemplary case of African Socialism as basically a political idea. The works of Nyerere, the former *Tanganyika African National Union* (TANU) party leader and president of Tanzania, are mostly collected speeches. They lack the erudition and sophistication of Senghor texts but have an enormous clarity and directness. By casting some well-chosen stereotypes of the positions which he discards and providing catchy formulations of his own stance, Nyerere always managed to provide a clear-cut and influential definition of the problem at hand. His were such formulations as:

> We, in Africa, have no more need of being "converted" to socialism than we have of being "taught" democracy. Both are rooted in our own past - in the traditional society which produced us.

Or:

> The European socialist cannot think of his socialism without its father - capitalism!

Nyerere's discourse is based on a few simple oppositions expressed in well-known incantations such as 'Exploitation of Man by Man' (to characterize capitalism or the system of 'the West') versus the philosophy of 'Inevitable Conflict between Man and Man' (to characterize communism or the system the East). The fundamental unattractiveness of both systems prepares the ground for Nyerere's alternative which is derived from the humanist African tradition. Nyerere used 'African tradition' primarily as a counter-image to West and East, clearing the space for an alternative rather than defining the shape of that alternative. Detailed analyses of social and political institutions in African societies are absent. Nyerere's papers on democracy and one-party rule, for instance, are considerably more lengthy in analyzing the British system than the African one.

African tradition taught Nyerere a set of humanistic values as well as a basic idea of a political community as a kind of family. Essential for a...
democratic political community, Nyerere concluded, is the 'attitude of mind' of those concerned and not the specific institutions. The form of democratic government should be adapted to the historical realities in which it is applied. In Britain, under capitalism, where there are fundamental divisions between rich and poor or capital and labour, a two-party system may be appropriate. This, however, can hardly be called an ideal situation: each party fights with the hope of winning as many seats as possible. They fail to win them all. And then, having failed, they quite blandly make a virtue of necessity and produce the most high-sounding arguments in praise of their failure.\(^\text{339}\)

The Tanzanian situation is one where the common struggle against a foreign enemy has created a party which represents "the interests and aspirations of the whole nation."\(^\text{340}\) In a situation where rapid development is the general aim, the only relevant thing to quarrel about is who can do the job best. The choice of leadership in a single-party system should therefore be made strictly by using the ballot box and *internal* party democracy should be guaranteed. For the task of imposing party discipline, of limiting freedom of expression in Parliament, with no rival party to help would sooner or later involve us in something far worse than the factionalism of which I accused the two-party enthusiasts.\(^\text{341}\) In the Tanzanian situation opposition parties are not necessary: where the differences between the parties are not fundamental, ...you immediately reduce politics to the level of a football match....This, in fact, is not unlike what happens in many of the so-called democratic countries today.\(^\text{342}\)

If, however, differences are in fact fundamental, then: there can [therefore] be no question of national unity until the differences have been removed by change. And 'change' in this context is a euphemism, because any change in fundamentals is properly termed 'revolution'. What is more, the reason why the word 'revolution' is generally associated with armed insurrection is that the existence of really fundamental differences within any society poses a 'civil war' situation and has often led to bloody revolution.

Nyerere's message was clear, opposition in a good society where the "party is identical with the nation as a whole"\(^\text{343}\) (such as in Tanzania) is either useless

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\(^{339}\) Nyerere 1969, p. 199

\(^{340}\) Nyerere 1969, p. 199

\(^{341}\) Nyerere 1969, p. 200

\(^{342}\) "Democracy and the Party System" (1963) reprinted in Nyerere 1968, p. 195-203. On another occasion Nyerere suggested "Given such responsible opposition I would be the first to defend its rights. But where is it? Too often, the only voices to be heard in 'opposition' are those of a few irresponsible individuals". (Sigmund 1963, p.201)

\(^{343}\) All three quotes from Nyerere 1968, p. 195-197.
or insurrectional. According to Nyerere political pluralism does not even serve freedom:

It is the responsibility of the government in a democratic country to lead the fight against all these enemies of freedom. ...It is therefore also the duty of the government to safeguard the unity of the government from irresponsible or vicious attempts to divide and weaken it - for without unity, the fight against the enemies of freedom can not be won. There can be no room for difference or division. 344

The various aspects of Nyerere's Ujamaa discourse are already contained in its basic metaphor of the family. If, in essence, the state is an expanded family community, then the basis of the state is a fundamental solidarity, a 'state of mind' disposing people to cooperate, share, seek compromise and avoid formalising inter-human relations. Fundamental differences of opinion or interest are not expected and leadership will be 'natural'. There is no need for a separate political sphere, let alone for formal political institutions and checks and balances. The exemplar of the family also implies the idea of the political leader as a pater familias who can naturally speak on behalf of his family. The problem of political representation, therefore, will not arise. The leader guides his people as their 'Mwalimo' (teacher) rather than holding a political office.

The exemplar of the family in Ujamaa discourse suggests how the political process should be organized. Beyond that, it also states a substantial ideal of the good life and the good society. Tanzanians do not have to debate about their society any more since their national ideology already articulates their ideal. The true state of the country is already defined by the leader.

This true state is, however, not yet realized. As in all idealists’ strategies for social change, ideals have to become embodied in stubborn reality, particularly in human minds and institutions. People have to be made 'ripe' for it and made to turn their backs on temptations such as money and individualism. The process of implementation of the ideal needs protection against subversion and manipulation. Who can do this? Automatically the enormous weight of this responsibility rests upon the shoulders of the trusted leaders who have insight and moral stamina. In this discourse, politics contracts to become a matter of moral backbone instead of an organized political process. The famous Arusha Declaration, for instance, does not say a word about how the people can control the political process but includes a whole section on leadership. 345

It is interesting, at this point, to contrast Nyerere's argument for African

344 Sigmund 1963, p. 199. This view of politics deviates from the idea that the executive, legislative and judiciary should be separate powers. The large powers of the executive under Nyere could partly explain why Nyere's humanist speech did not hinder the extensive use of the prevention of terrorism act against opponents in Tanzania.

345 See e.g. the 'Arusha Declaration' part five and part two-d.
Socialism with Nkrumah's perspective. For both of them the pluralism of ideas and communities had to be overcome, finally, by unification. However, they constructed completely different arguments to defend this option. Consciencism provided a philosophical exposition on the communal nature of human life and on the universal necessity for discouraging deviance and promoting consensus. The conclusion of Nkrumah's 'deep level' argument was the need for a coherent collective world-view, a collective ideology which directs the evolution of society on a wide range of issues. In contrast, Nyerere did not design a world-view. Nyerere advanced a very sketchy image of a communal Africa and a number of pragmatic rather than philosophical arguments related to developmental needs and the political process. Arguing against Nkrumah would require a general argument on man, on communities and on the possibility of shared identities and ideologies. Arguing against Nyerere would require empirical arguments on actual forms of African solidarity and on the possibility of avoiding stagnation and authoritarianism under single-party rule.

The fate of African Socialism was not sealed, finally, in academic or political debates but in its dramatic failure as a development strategy. African Socialist governments were initially sustained by the exceptional historical situation of newly established 'young' nations with the goodwill of their populations, as well as by some potent donors. Already during the 1960s, however, failure became apparent. African Socialism was a peculiar discourse which was tailored to the ideological needs of the new African elites in the 1960s. It harnessed many of the sentiments of self-assertion as well as many stereotypes of African cultures which are affirmed throughout African political thought. Ultimately, however, it neither addressed key issues in political theory nor issues concerning development policy in a new and constructive way. With hindsight, African Socialism has been rather a peculiar episode in the history of African politics rather than a substantial and lasting contribution to African political thought.

The Discourses of Revolutionary Struggle

Throughout the previous section I have discussed democratic modernization and African Socialist discourses in their various forms. In African thought before the mid-1990s, one also finds clearly Marxist-inspired discourses. Radical intellectuals such as Lamine Senghor, Guaran Kouyaté and George Padmore were discussed in the previous chapter, and I mentioned Wallace Johnson and the Ghanaian Spark-group. Before 1965, however, Marxism held a minor position in African political thought. Most African countries followed a liberal modernizationist orientation after attaining their independence in a relatively peaceful manner.

346 Both types of refutations have been advanced, e.g. by Busia.
A discourse on revolution developed primarily in those situations where an anti-colonial war was fought, such as in the cases of Algeria, in the Portuguese colonies and, in a different way, in South Africa. In a global context, Marxism became current during the 1960s with Dependency Theory as the inspiring innovation in development theory. Various types of radical and Marxist-inspired discourses thus developed in Africa, whereas the rival option of African Socialism lost its appeal. Marxist-inspired radicalism became the hegemonic paradigm, at least intellectually, for two decades or more and accounted for practically all important political writings in Africa between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s.

Most commentators have interpreted these discourses as variants of Marxism. My discussion in this section can benefit hermeneutically from the current 'post-Marxist' era and provide new interpretations of radical African thought as well as underline the diversity of its orientations.
Overcoming colonial alienation: Frantz Fanon

The need for a revolutionary struggle to liberate Africa was most forcefully argued by Frantz Fanon, the Algerian psychiatrist, freedom-fighter and intellectual of West Indian origin. The compact, penetrating and perceptive presentations of his book *The Wretched of the Earth (Les Damnés de la Terre)* (1961) can hardly be matched by twentieth century political literature. Much of the impact of Fanon's texts, especially of the sections "Spontaneity: Its Strengths and Weaknesses" and "Pitfalls of National Consciousness", derives from avoiding the usual textbook-wisdom and armchair theorising on revolution. Instead, these sections have the compelling authority of Fanon's own practical revolutionary experience. Fanon's texts seem visionary in their message. In 1961, in the middle of the decolonisation process, Fanon was able to give an analysis of the 'pitfalls' of post-independence national leadership which, more than three decades later, remains as striking as any critique could be.

Frantz Fanon is mostly discussed with reference to his views on the question of violence in colonial liberation. There are also good descriptions of his political ideas. The task of the present analysis is to capture the specific model of thought in Fanon's discourse. A model which, as I will show, shapes a discourse on Africa in its own right.

The starting point of Fanon's analysis was the colonial condition, a situation characterized by oppression, racial segregation and a chasm between the elite and the masses as well as between city and country side. It was an essentially racist condition, involving more than racial segregation but also the internalisation of racism and thus the deformation of all human beings involved. The colonial condition created both settler and 'native' in their dialectical relation as master and slave: "For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence."

The 'native' has to interiorize the colonial system which, once it has entered 'under his skin', leads to profound alienation. Fanon claims that he had to deal with many syndromes related to this alienation in his psychiatric practice.

Colonial alienation is not only a psychological affair but also a socially produced condition. Its abolition, therefore, involves the actual elimination of the colonial situation. The personal, psychological level and the collective, political level are two sides of the same coin.

If colonialism 'produced' the native, the "decolonisation is the veritable creation of new men...the 'thing' which has been colonised becomes man during

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347 At least grasping a deeper logic of the liberation struggle.
348 On violence, see e.g. Zahar 1974, Wiredu 1986, Federici 1994; on political ideas: Hanson 1977.
349 Fanon considered the colonial situation to be typified by the issue of race predominating over the issue of property; the superstructure dominates the infrastructure.
350 Fanon 1961/1967, p. 28
the same process by which it frees itself."³⁵¹ Liberation can, therefore, never be a gradual process or a matter of 'Replacing the foreigner', namely the white man. The mutually constitutive master-slave relation is not overcome when the slave becomes master but only when the whole set-up and the related identities are eliminated. Fanon, therefore, rejected African évoluté culture and African independence that was based on a compromise with colonialism. Violent struggle is the only way to become free.

Fanon thus valued violence for practical reasons and as medication against colonial alienation, that is as a destroyer of the old identity. In Hegel's master-bondsman relation, it is through labour that emancipation is possible. In Fanon's colonial master-slave relation, it is the 'work' of violence which makes emancipation possible. "The militant is also a man who works...to work means to work for the death of the settler."³⁵²

The main revolutionary force in the work of liberation would be the unalienated peasants, the 'mettlesome masses of peoples' who are 'rebels by instinct'. Contrary to Marxist expectations, the salaried workers in the cities who are 'pampered' by the colonial power cannot be identified with the mass of the people according to Fanon. The political and trade union cadres of the nationalist movements share a disdain for the rural masses with the political elites and are badly prepared for radical de-alienation and armed struggle. They tended to concentrate on the cities, to refused to support anti-colonial peasant uprisings, such as the Mau Mau in Kenya, and even to persecute those few radicals who really identified with the people.

These radicals who initially have to flee to the countryside will "discover that the country people never cease to think of the problem of liberation except in terms of violence...of armed insurrection." The armed struggle then moves from countryside to town: "It is with this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of the lumpenproletariat, that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead."³⁵³ The key agents in the struggle are the militants and the people, not the middle class: "it is absolutely necessary to oppose vigorously and definitely the birth of a national bourgeoisie and a privileged caste." These "Blacks who are whiter than the Whites"³⁵⁴ in fact follow a racial and chauvinist programme of substitution: 'Replacing the Foreigner' without changing society. "We observe a falling back towards old tribal attitudes, and, furious and sick at heart, we perceive that race feeling in its most exacerbated form is triumphing." "If the national bourgeoisie goes into competition with the Europeans, the artisans and craftsmen start a fight against the non-national African," demanding that "the Foulbis and the

³⁵¹Fanon 1961/1967, p. 28
³⁵²Fanon 1967, p. 67. The famous discussion of R. Zahar on Fanon (Zahar 1974) gives a convincing analysis of Fanon's views in this respect, also discussing the difference between 'work' and 'violence'. Her interpretation stresses the psychological basis of Fanon's views, referring mostly to Fanon's book Black Skin, White Masks.
³⁵³Quotes on Fanon 1961/67, p. 101 and 103.
³⁵⁴Quotes on Fanon 1961/67 p. 161 and 115.
Peuhls return to their jungle or their mountains.”

This bitter attack on the African bourgeoisie was matched by Fanon’s famous prediction of the role of the national leader: "In spite of his frequently honest conduct and sincere declarations" (or exactly because of these) he constitutes a screen between the people and the rapacious bourgeoisie since he stands surety for the ventures of that caste and closes his eyes to their insolence...He acts as a breaking-power on the awakening of the consciousness of the people.

Fanon’s work easily uncovers the particular model upon which his idea of colonial liberation was designed, namely that of overcoming psychological alienation. The personality is the exemplar for the political; political liberation is a therapeutic process, a process of re-establishing collective self-identity.

This exemplar can here be used to reconstruct the architecture of Fanon’s discourse. Let me, for that purpose, first analyze what was assumed and implied by the model of psychological alienation and then trace its consequences for Fanon’s political conception. The three basic assumptions of the alienation model are: (1) there is a definite 'unit' or 'entity' that is alienated, based on the idea of the person; (2) there is a healthy, natural, or good state of the person, and healing is conceived as a return to this state; and (3) healing is not automatic or natural, it requires an act of will, a prise de conscience.

Each of these assumptions can be shown to determine Fanon’s political conception.

1- In the first place, the whole idea of political alienation assumes that there was already something such as a nation which was subsequently alienated, just like a personality had to exist for it to become alienated. According to Fanon colonialism involved more than a range of instances of oppression and of resistance among diverse African communities. The colonized were "a coherent people who keep their moral standards and their devotion to the nation intact." Fanon speaks of the "old granite block upon which the nation rests." This suggests that in fact the nation precedes colonialism. Fanon does not consider here precolonial African states or 'tribes', he strongly opposed "primitive tribalism," nor does he assume that urban militants implanted the idea of a nation. In fact, in Fanon’s account the exiled militants find a peasant nation already present.

Quite apart from the historical error which may be involved in assuming a pre-given 'nation', there is a theoretical reduction. The rich and diverse heritages of peoples, life-forms, religions and cultures are reduced to a single entity. The empirical variety remains undiscussed and can, therefore, neither

355 Peul and Fulbe 'tribal' peoples in West Africa. Last three quotes on p. 127, 125, and 127 respectively.
358 Fanon 1961/67, p. 164
complicate nor enrich the revolutionary alternative which is sketched. The concept of 'the nation' ('the people' or 'the oppressed') remained an non-empirical, mythical category in Fanon's thought. Such a 'subject of revolution' was the artifact of his psychological model of alienation and liberation.

2- Fanon's discourse is indebted to the psychological model in a second way namely by its conception of the liberation struggle. Healing psychological alienation involves exorcizing the interiorized alienating influences in order to re-establish self-identity. It is a process of returning to the true foundations. Fanon's conception of the political struggle is strikingly similar. It is a process that involves mobilizing the true, original national forces in the majority of poor and the peasants who are "the solidly massed presence of the new nation" and have kept "their moral values and their devotion to the nation intact." Their main task is to effect the complete exorcization of the colonialists as well as of the African bourgeoisie. In that act they construct a truly independent nation as the re-establishment of collective self-identity.

The model of alienation can be retraced at specific points in Fanon's conception of the liberation struggle. Firstly, 'the people', as the true source of nationhood, indicates the unalienated healthy kernel. The description of the people results in some of the few, but typical, romantic exaltations in Fanon's texts. For instance, Fanon describes the radicals fleeing to the country side: The peasant's cloak will wrap him around with a gentleness and firmness that he never expected. These men...wander through their country and get to know it...Their ears hear the true voice of the country, and their eyes take in the great and infinite poverty of the people.

Secondly, the demon-like enemy is perceived as the alienating intrusion. Fanon's description of the alienated elite, on the other hand, is unforgiving: In under-developed countries, we have seen that no bourgeoisie exists; there is only a little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster, only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out to it....not even a replica of

359 Fanon's tendency to conflate African peoples under broad categories like 'blacks' or 'the oppressed' might be one of the reasons why he appears to have had particular impact outside Africa (e.g. among African-American radicals; see Hanson 1977, p 4-10). Although probably all African intellectuals have read his work and his greatness is recognised, it is relatively rare to find him cited or discussed by African authors. (Wiredu 1986)

360 Marxist theory may be another source of Fanon's abstract category of the 'nation' and the 'masses'. Here one finds a similar reduction of a multitude of social and cultural differences under one category proposed by the theory as 'the subject' of 'the' revolution; Fanon's 'oppressed' taking the place of Marx's 'proletariat'.


362 Fanon 1971/67, p. 100. Fanon's subsequent detailed discussion of the various ways in which the rebellion gets frustrated, perverted and, finally, reorganized is far from romantic. It should also be noted that his discussion of violence in this second stage of the struggle is much more practical than his ideas concerning spontaneous anti-colonial violence (e.g.106/107)
Europe, but its caricature. Thirdly, Fanon's idea of liberation involves healing by exorcism: a return to purity. Fanon's description of the new nation, finally, totally inverts the present sick state of the nation:

Then the flag and the palace where sits the government cease to be the symbols of the nation. The nation deserts these brightly lit, empty shells and takes shelter in the country where it is given life and dynamic power. [...] The capital of under-developed countries is a commercial notion inherited from the colonial period.

A real national policy, a policy of the rural masses, could even move the government as a whole towards the countryside. In this way, 'the nation' returns to its source and is truly liberated and healed.

3- The third way in which Fanon's political conception is shaped by the model of overcoming alienation concerns the driving force of change. For interpreters who treat Fanon as a Marxist, his relative unconcern with standard Marxist theory of history and society must be astonishing. He provided no theoretical discussion on the possibility of avoiding a capitalist stage in the sequence of modes of production. Fanon was not a Marxist here. He simply proposed to discuss the matter at the practical level stating, for instance, that "the bourgeois phase in the history of underdeveloped countries is a completely useless phase." The question for Fanon was not what history has in store but what ought be done. Like in the case of psychotherapy it is, finally, a matter of deliberate action and a prise de conscience of the oppressed. Fanon could, therefore, freely suggest lines of action which derive from his own practical experience in the struggle, for instance that "the combined effort of the masses led by a party and of intellectuals who are highly conscious and armed with revolutionary principles ought to bar the way to this useless and harmful middle class." Fanon's prescriptions also included barring the development of the intermediary sector (traders), shielding the youth from "disintegrating influences" and educating the masses (while "avoiding sweeping, dogmatic formulae").

The revolutionary process, thus, depended on 'highly conscious revolutionaries' and on political education. This leads to Marx's question: "Who educates the educators?" (the revolutionaries). Fanon's account of the struggle suggested a circular process where the people teach the militants and the militants teach the people. This mechanism itself again reveals a psychological model, namely that of counselling, where the therapist triggers and directs the

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363 Fanon 1961/67, p. 141
365 It should be stressed that Fanon's discourse does not include the standard Marxist Leninist idea of mobilizing the rural majority of the people to capture state power. That state itself is rejected.
366 Fanon 1961/67, p. 142
367 Fanon 1961/1967, p. 140
368 "The young people of an under-developed country are above all idle: occupations must be found for them". Fanon 1961/67, p 158
process of self-discovery and of awakening what is already *predisposed* in the patient.

My interpretation of Fanon displays a peculiar discourse on national liberation whose basic structure is conditioned by the exemplar of psychological alienation. At the end of this chapter, I will contrast this discourse with the radicalism of Nkrumah and Cabral. Several critiques of Fanon, although well argued, seem to escape Fanon's basic concern. If, as Zahar for instance, one identifies Fanon's idea of the liberation struggle with Marx's idea of the struggle for socialism then Fanon fails to discuss most of the basic questions regarding class, history and economic structure. But Fanon, as I tried to argue, developed a different type of discourse with a different concern. In fact, he certainly did not want to identify his alternative with the socialism of the socialist block:

The Third World ought not to be content to define itself in the terms of values which have preceded it. On the contrary, the under-developed countries ought to do their utmost to find their own particular values and methods and a style particular to them.  

*Mastering our national historicity: Amilcar Cabral*

Although primarily a man of action, as the leader of the Guinean and Cape Verdian liberation movement PAIGC, Amilcar Cabral is often considered to be one of the foremost African political theorists of the 20th century. His impressiveness derives from the "forthrightness and candour" of his writings as well as from his willingness to critically discuss the limits of revolutionary theory when applied to African situations. He virtually refused to discuss the theory of revolution in general and disconnected from his experiences in the Guinean liberation war. Paradoxically, it is precisely this thoroughly concrete and situational character of his thought which makes it of general value. Compared to Fanon's vigorous prose, Cabral's texts are sober but equally condensed. However, the difference with Nkrumah is much greater. Where Nkrumah seems satisfied only when a theoretical scheme is complete and everything fits in, Cabral suspects theoretical perfection: "In reality phenomena don't always develop in practice according to the established schemes." And when invited to speak at the Tricontinental Conference of revolutionary movements in Havana in 1966, Cabral subtly suggested to discuss a struggle which the organisers did not put on the agenda explicitly, namely "the struggle

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369 Fanon 1961/67, p. 78  
370 Chabal 1983, p. 167  
371 Bienen 1977, p. 568
against our own weaknesses.\textsuperscript{372}

Cabral's major concern was for a struggle leading to national liberation. At first sight, Cabral's thought on that issue was in line with contemporary Marxism, and he explicitly compared the Guinean struggle with those of Cuba, Vietnam and China. In that interpretation, Cabral is considered special because of his analysis of specific issues in the liberation struggle, such as the role of culture and the role of the petty bourgeoisie. Let me follow the main lines of his reasoning in order to assess this reading of Cabral.

The situation in Guinea led Cabral to his famous discussion of the \textit{petty bourgeoisie} in the struggle for national revolution: "the colonial situation neither allows nor invites the meaningful existence of vanguard classes (an industrial working class and rural proletariat).\textsuperscript{373} In this situation one could look at the \textit{lumpenproletariat} or the peasantry as the agent of the revolution. But the \textit{lumpenproletariat} did not prove to be a progressive factor in the struggle, and in Guinea "it must be said at once that the peasantry is not a revolutionary force... we know from experience what trouble we had to convince the peasantry to fight.\textsuperscript{374} "Even extreme suffering does not necessarily produce the \textit{prise de conscience} required for the national liberation struggle."\textsuperscript{375} This brings in the \textit{petty bourgeoisie}: events have shown that the only social stratum capable both of having consciousness in the first place of the reality of imperialist domination and of handling the State apparatus inherited from that domination is the native petty bourgeoisie.\textsuperscript{376}

Thus analyzed, the situation is a curious one since the petty bourgeoisie itself is an unreliable factor, a 'service class' and a product of the colonial system. Its "natural tendency is to become 'bourgeois' to allow the development of a bourgeoisie of bureaucrats and intermediaries in the trading system, to transform itself into a national pseudo-bourgeoisie.\textsuperscript{377} The class analysis of the revolution threatens to conclude here with a contradiction, namely the class leading the revolution has the 'natural tendency' to betray its own objectives.

Cabral's famous solution for this dilemma was that: in order to play completely the part that falls to it in the national liberation struggle, the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie must be capable of committing \textit{suicide} as a class, to be restored to life in the condition of a revolutionary worker completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which he belongs.\textsuperscript{378}

\textsuperscript{372}Cabral 1980, p. 121. Cabral's modesty seems to reflect also on his commentators. Visionary writers such as Kwame Nkrumah and Cheik Anta Diop are often practically silenced by the glorifications of their admirers whereas discussions on Cabral tend to be down to earth.

\textsuperscript{373}Cabral 1980, p. 132

\textsuperscript{374} Cabral 1969, p. 50

\textsuperscript{375} Quoted in Chabal 1983, p. 174.

\textsuperscript{376} Cabral 1980, p. 134

\textsuperscript{377} Cabral 1980, p. 136

\textsuperscript{378} Cabral 1980, p. 136
Cabral thus analyzed the theoretical dilemma to its logical conclusion and formulated an unexpected and practical solution. If Cabral's solution is assessed according to his basically Marxist vocabulary, then it is not unproblematic. It implies, for instance, that the revolution is not an objective necessity but rather relies on the conscious choice of a revolutionary intelligentsia and a class commitment which counters its (assumed) 'natural' tendencies. It also implies that the leadership should "remain faithful to the principles and the fundamental cause of the struggle." In short, the conditions for national liberation "stamp on it certain characteristics that belong to the sphere of morals." 379

This interpretation of Cabral's theory of the Guinean liberation struggle leads to the odd conclusion that Cabral, being heralded as one of the greatest African political thinkers of this century, in fact constructed a rather shaky and contradictory theory of revolution. Rather than accepting this conclusion, I intend to follow Thomas Kuhn's advise to avoid ignoring inconsistencies and to press such points even harder. As Kuhn's 'bright sunny day' experience proved, 380 this can result in uncovering deeper principles of order that suddenly make us understand the rationale of the paradigm.

Let me first look at the vocabulary which Cabral uses. Here one finds some of the standard Marxist notions such as class, productive forces and revolution. It should be noted, however, that there were also a wide range of notions which do not conform to the Marxist paradigm. Cabral describes societies as integrated wholes that produce their own history and are "following the upwards paths of their own culture." 382 The metaphors which Cabral uses are also insightful. He frequently speaks of culture as "the flower of a plant", culture which "plunges its roots into the humus of the material reality" with "the capacity...for forming and fertilizing the germ which ensures the continuity of history lies in culture." Or Cabral speaks of the "cultural personality" of a people and "the life of a society". 383 Society is thus conceived in organic terms and we are far removed from the mechanical metaphors derived from the building trade such as infrastructure - superstructure, the 'iron laws' of history or the 'steeled cadres'. 384 The organic view of society is matched by a similarly idiosyncratic conception of development: "the unfolding behaviour (development) of a

379 Like all 'vanguard-theories' within the Marxist traditions, this 'conscious' element, which the vanguard introduces, is according to the marxist theory a 'subjective' factor which contradicts the theory itself. See Rosa Luxemburg's critique of Lenin's contention that the revolutionaries have to introduce the right consciousness to the proletariat because by itself it just develops a 'trade union cosciousness' (Kolakowski 1981, p. 82-88).
380 Cabral 1980, p. 136
381 See chapter 2 above.
382 Cabral 1980, p. 143
384 An organic mode of thought was less foreign to Marx himself than to the mechanicism of the Second International and Marxism-Leninism. (Nauta 1986)
phenomenon-in-motion, whatever the external conditioning, depends mainly on its internal characteristics." The internal process of a society is then the living and interconnected development of its productive forces, its related social structure and culture. This development embodies the *historicity* of that society.

In light of this new understanding of Cabral's discourse as devised from the exemplar of organic "unfolding...of internal characteristics" the rest of his thought on revolution follows as a matter of course. Apparent odd contradictions even become logical consequences.

The essence of colonialism, the discourse suggests, is to frustrate the original development of society: "the denial of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violent usurpation of the freedom of the process of development of the productive forces." Colonialism captures the history of a people:

There is a preconception held by many people, even on the left, that imperialism made us enter history at the moment when it began its adventure in our countries...Our opinion is exactly the contrary. We consider that when imperialism arrived in Guinea it made us leave history - our history.

The next step in Cabral's compelling argument for a revolutionary nationalism simply derives from this characteristic of colonialism. Revolutionary national liberation is an act by which a people recapture their own development, it is "the regaining of the historical personality of that people, it is their return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which they were subjected." This is also the reason why Cabral located the basis for resistance against colonialism in the people's culture. The culture represents the roots from which the indigenous history can reclaim the initiative.

In the last instance, liberation involves an act of a political, economical and cultural nature. More than simply achieving political independence, liberation is regaining mastery over one's collective future and involves also control over the 'national productive forces' (which have to undergo a 'mutation' in the direction of socialism for that purpose). In Cabral's seminal expression it constitutes a people's "mastering of its own historicity".

From this fundamental position, Cabral derived a range of interesting views on culture: "the armed liberation struggle is not only a product of culture but also a *factor of culture.*" On the one hand, culture is one of the main forces of liberation. On the other hand, there will be 'harmonizing' and 'unification' of the various cultural heritages in the course of the struggle:

The national liberation movement...must be able to conserve the positive

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385 Cabral 1980, p. 122  
386 Cabral 1980, p. 141  
387 Cabral 1969, p. 56  
388 Cabral 1980, p. 130  
389 Cabral 1980, p. 153
cultural values of every of the well-defined social group, of every category, and to achieve the confluence of these values into the stream of the struggle, giving them a new dimension - the national dimension.\footnote{Cabral 1980, p. 147}

Like in the case of Fanon's exemplar of psychological healing, Cabral's exemplar of organic unfolding suggests a preexisting 'subject' of the struggle in the form of a 'nation'. Cabral is tempted, therefore, to speak in the case of Guinea of 'the people', 'our' history, 'national culture', as if these entities made sense before the struggle started. At the same time, Cabral seems to have been quite aware of the role of this idea of the nation as a necessary fiction, essential to unite and inspire the people but actualized only in the struggle itself. Therefore, he refrained from trying to define a national culture or a national philosophy and could thus avoid the pitfalls of African Socialism, with its self-appointed spokespersons for the nation who were designing essentialistically conceived national cultures.

In the specific conditions of our country - and we should say of Africa - the horizontal and vertical distribution of levels of culture is somewhat complex. In fact, from the villages to the towns, from one ethnic group to another, from the peasant to the artisan or to the more or less assimilated indigenous intellectual, from one social class to another, and even, as we have said, from individual to individual within the same social category, there are significant variations in the quantitative and qualitative level of culture. It is a question of prime importance for the liberation movement to take these facts into consideration.\footnote{Cabral 1980, p. 144}

This pluralism in matters of culture implies the impossibility of continental or racial cultures since "from the economic and political point of view one can note the existence of various Africas, so there are also various African cultures."\footnote{Cabral 1980, p. 149}

The new understanding of Cabral's discourse as founded on the exemplar of organic 'unfolding of internal characteristics' also resolves what initially appeared as the main 'anomaly' in Cabral's thought, namely the idea that the petty bourgeoisie should "commit class suicide". Yet there is no contradiction here. The step which the petty bourgeoisie should take is simply part of the process of a society reestablishing the connection with its history. The 'subjective' factor in history is part and parcel of Cabral's idea of society and culture. The appearance of a contradiction only arises if Cabral's revolutionary nationalism\footnote{Revolutionary nationalism' or 'developmental nationalism' see Chilote 1968, p. 387.} is interpreted according to the framework of Marxist theory.

At the end of his famous presentation "National Liberation and
Culture." Cabral formulated the aims of national independence and the new social order as:

- Development of a *people’s culture* and of all the aboriginal positive cultural values
- Development of a *national culture* on the basis of history and the conquests of the struggle itself
- Constant raising of the *political and moral awareness* of the people (of all social categories) and of *patriotism*, spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the cause of independence, justice and progress
- Development of the technical and technological *scientific culture*, compatible with the demands of progress
- Development, on the basis of a critical assimilation of mankind’s conquest in the domains of art, science, literature, etc., of a *universal culture*, aiming at perfect integration in the contemporary world and its prospects for evolution
- Constant and generalized raising of feelings of humanism, solidarity, respect and disinterested devotion to the human being.

We see here that the whole idea of liberation in Cabral’s view is a collective *prise de conscience* of a people in a struggle for regaining creativity and self-mastery. Cabral’s is thus a classical example of a theory of emancipation. It can benefit from the Marxist theory of society but is a discourse in its own right.

*Class struggle and delinking from the global capitalist system: the academic Marxists*

The work of Abdoulaye Ly (1956) and Majhemout Diop (1958) from Senegal provides early examples of the tradition of sophisticated Marxist analysis that has been prominent in African political thought in the second half of the twentieth century. Their work concerned primarily the class analysis of the late-colonial system. According to Diop the primary *subject* of the revolutionary struggle would be the proletariat ("an alliance with the peasantry under the direction of the working class"). Abdoulaye Ly, following a Maoist line, stressed the revolutionary potential of the peasantry and the great floating mass of the 'less educated'...the manual workers -wage earners- directly emerging from the peasantry and remaining in close contact with them, who sell their raw labour to the towns (warehouses), to the large plantations (cocoa, coffee, pineapples), in the large seasonal crop areas (*navetanes*), or in the forest zones ('swimmers' for the floating of timber).

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394 Present as the Eduard Mondlane Memorial Lecture at the Syracuse University, New York at 20 February 1970.
395 Cabral 1980, p. 153
396 Quoted from Langley 1979, p. 653.
397 Quoted from Langley 1979, p. 645/646.
Ly's and Diop's texts, although heavily loaded with theory, have a good eye for detail, representing a type of political analysis that is empirically well-informed and closely related to political action.

In the following decades, political discourse on the struggle against neocolonialism increasingly adopted the form of academic analyses, especially in studies of political economy. Such discourses were primarily located in the new African universities where, as places of relative freedom, the new African intelligentsia could be found. With the radical anti-imperialists eliminated from political influence in most countries during the 1960s the universities constituted the rare places to reflect on the failures of African Socialist and capitalist development policies.

The major intellectual event in African political theory in the 1970s was the emergence of neo-Marxist theories of dependent capitalism and underdevelopment. Academically, the underdevelopment theories were the counterattack against dominant development theory; politically, they were inspired by the revolutionary socialist successes of Mao Ze Dong and Ho Chi Minh. Colin Leys's *Underdevelopment in Kenya, The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism* of 1975 has been particularly influential in African radical discourse. This book provided an application of underdevelopment theory to a specific African country and at the same time attempted at avoiding a purely economic interpretation of underdevelopment. Leys gave an account of the complexities of the emerging class structure, the changing role of international capital and the nature of the political process, in particular the role of the national leader and his margin of operation and manipulation.

The outlines of the conception of underdevelopment theory can be sketched as follows. The history of the last centuries is essentially that of the world-wide expansion of capitalism. Whether through trade, plunder or exploitation, the surpluses generated in the periphery are exteriorated to the centre which prevents the development of capitalist accumulation in the periphery. Instead, dependent relations of production and dependent classes develop in the periphery. Such a situation allows political independence, that is to say flag-independence, thus firmly locking such societies in their subordinate position within the international capitalist system. In this situation there are basically two alternatives for third world development. The first is the Japanese path of breaking into the international market of manufactured products. But it is very doubtful if this option still exists for the great majority of underdeveloped countries. The other is to opt for a much simpler 'home-made' technology, manufacturing for the domestic market or markets of like-minded states. This strategy, however, requires "a very different class structure and a

398 Also journals such as the *Review of African Political Economy* (ROAPE).
399 The theoretical debates are represented in most contemporary textbooks on development theory. I limit my discussions to the implications of 'neo-Marxist' theories for political conceptions.
400 Leys 1975, p. 211
very different political leadership. In other words it implies radical social changes in the periphery.\textsuperscript{401}

The real alternative for an underdeveloped country may indeed be either to play a very subordinate role in an international capitalist system, with little benefit to the majority of its people, or to seek an independent role in an alternative system of poorer but non-capitalist countries, a role which promises less, but might be more capable of fulfilling its promise.\textsuperscript{402}

Dependency theory is designed on a spatial model of \textit{centre} and \textit{periphery} linked by relations of subjugation and exploitation. The political content of this model derives from the historical case of the Chinese revolution, symbolized by the Long March. The periphery, i.e. countryside, struggles against the all-powerful centre, the cities. The communists organized the periphery, the 'victims' of the system and they cut the exploitative relations between the centre and the periphery, thus eliminating the source that sustained the centre. As a result, the centre was dismantled. This story depicts in a condensed form the political logic of underdevelopment theory, namely that the essence of the system is extraction from the periphery, while the elimination of the system involves cutting the links of extraction ('delinking'). The exemplar suggests analysis and strategy as well as remedy.

The introduction of dependency and underdevelopment theory into African political discourse had an enormous impact. It provided a firm foundation for the idea of neocolonial domination which shaped the intellectual framework of a whole generation of outstanding African intellectuals. Leys' book \textit{Underdevelopment in Kenya, The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism} of 1975 and his subsequent change of position in 1978 triggered, for instance, what has become known as the "Kenya debate".\textsuperscript{403} The intensity of such debates, mainly limited to academic partisans, derived from the fact that the theory implied a programme of political action. The theory implied that the real struggle belongs to the united masses against imperialism as well as against its local agents who are in control of the neocolonial states.

In the second half of the 1970s the major assumptions of underdevelopment theory were undermined by empirical studies. Firstly, the masses, if analyzed more closely, turned out to be actually a plurality of groups and classes. Rather than being the 'victims' of the imperialist system, they constituted societies with their own dynamics who engaged in complicated interrelations with national and transnational actors. Secondly, the assumption of imperialism as an entity 'acting' in a more or less coordinated manner to subvert the periphery constituted a rather radical simplification. Finally, the national elite turned out to be actually much less externally directed than previously assumed and more complicated and contradictory in itself. These

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{401}Leys 1975, p. 16
    \item \textsuperscript{402}Leys 1975, p. 24
    \item \textsuperscript{403}See e.g. Kitching 1985 and Tandon 1982. On the impact of Leys' analysis, see e.g. Gugler 1994.
\end{itemize}
complications led to a variety of positions which Gavin Kitching, in an interesting account of the debates, compared to those of the Narodniki, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the Russian discussions in the early twentieth century.404

The failures of African Socialism were interpreted by Marxists as requiring a return to a more straightforward 'scientific socialist' orientation. This orientation received new inspiration in the mid-1970s when the ex-Portuguese colonies (Guinea Bissau, Angola and Mozambique) choose for a Marxist orientation after liberation. In political thought, this scientific socialist stance can be exemplified by the concise book by A.M. Babu *African Socialism or a Socialist Africa* (written in prison in Tanzania and published in 1981). Babu built his merciless critique of African Socialism on a standard Marxist understanding of the historical process as a movement from capitalism to proletarian socialism. This universal logic towards developing "the productive capacity to the maximum"405 does not circumvent Africa. If African leaders proclaim an 'African way' or a 'third way' and deny the fact of class struggle they only confuse the African revolution since "that is where imperialism wants us to be."406 In fact, Babu argues, an indigenous road to capitalism is blocked. In this 'age of proletarian revolution' there is only the socialist alternative involving an alliance between the proletariat, the peasantry and the intellectuals.

Babu's eloquent and comprehensive argument407 is far removed from the sophisticated scientific exchanges in the Kenya debate. Instead of relying on empirical detail, Babu builds his analysis on theoretical premisses. The empirical evidence which made Colin Leys and others change their view towards the end of the 1970s (see above) could not affect Babu's type of argument, although historical experience did. The lack of success of Marxist-Leninist governments after 1975 and especially the famine in 'Marxist-Leninist' Ethiopia in 1984 marked the end of this 'scientific socialist' or 'Afro-Marxist' alternative even before the socialist world crumbled in 1989.408

My account of the tradition of academic Marxist thought does little justice to

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404 Especially Kitching 1982. One position was to play down the differences within the people, another suggested that a process of 'proletarization' was already well under way (thus claiming the possibility of a proletarian socialist revolution), another again suggested that the complicated dynamics would result in a non-socialist line of development, at least for the time being.

405 Babu 1981, p. XII

406 Babu 1981, p. 60

407 Including, for instance, a discussion of differences between the bourgeois and proletarian world-view.

408 On Afro-Marxism see Ottaway 1981. The failure of actual attempts at alternative development strategies had a significant, albeit indirect, influence on leftist political discourse: "Tanzania played a role for many Kenyan radicals rather like that played by the Soviet Union in the political struggles of Communists in western Europe in the inter-war period. [Its failure] had rather the same effect in Kenya as the 1956 revelations about Stalinism had on western Communism in the post-war period". (Kitching 1985, p. 145)
the bulk of elaborate and sophisticated works in political economy which were produced in the decades between 1970 and 1990 by such eminent scholars as Claude Ake, Dani W. Nabudere, Samir Amin, Mahmood Mamdani, Issa G. Shivji, Julius O. Ihonvbere and many others. The net result for political thought of all this impressive work, however, is not different from what my sketchy analysis has shown. By the end of the 1980s practically all Marxist options had been discredited. The agenda of political thought shifted to issues such as democratization and human rights, so long disparaged as 'bourgeois concerns', and to the new issue of civil society. The perspective of radical social change turned, more modestly, to the issues of social movements and popular struggles for democracy. This will be dealt with in chapter VII which discusses contemporary intellectual developments.

Three discourses of revolutionary struggle: Nkrumah, Fanon, Cabral

The key message of my discussion of revolutionary discourses is a double one. On the one hand, the differences are relevant. The discourses of Fanon and Cabral have their own architecture rather than representing applied versions of Marxism. On the other hand, one should acknowledge the similarities. Most political economists and radicals, from Nkrumah to Amin, shared a basic Marxist vocabulary. Although the great number of sophisticated theoretical and empirical Marxist studies in the 1970s and 1980s have done much to refine, decorate, furnish and colour the Marxist edifice, its basic architecture remained the same.\footnote{The case of Samir Amin is exemplary here. Scholarly and engaged, absorbing any new issue to which emerges: from economic dependence, to social history, to fundamentalism, and to democracy, his theoretical framework has remained largely unaffected (see chapter VII of the present book).}

In order to map the most important contrasts, I want to return for a moment to the three key theorists discussed before, Nkrumah, Fanon and Cabral. The key exemplar in each of their discourses can guide the way.

Nkrumah's image of the Wall Street octopus provides an essentially global view of imperialism. Africa is perceived as a victim and African history as a process of subjection. Since the enemy is presented as global and enveloping, the struggle must also be global or at least include the whole African continent. Local circumstances, cultural contradictions and intra-human aspects remain either outside the range of vision or are analyzed strictly in terms of the global dualism of imperialist versus anti-imperialist forces. This is true for Nkrumah's schematic Marxism as well as for the sophisticated Marxist analyses because both assume that ethnic, cultural, social and political phenomena are ultimately conditioned by the political-economic order (or are politically irrelevant).

If the global capitalist system is the source of all distortion, then liberation is the end of trouble. There is no reason to design partial solutions or
to speculate about an alternative system. The heuristic of the discourse directs all attention to understanding the cause: the capitalist system. While Cabral called for a discussion of "our own weaknesses" and of the complications of motivating and organizing the people, Nkrumah focused on "Know the Enemy": the system and the malicious operations of imperialism.

Fanon's revolutionary thought is designed quite differently. His model is not a global monster, a global political-economic system, but rather an inter-human or even intra-human drama, namely alienation. At the individual level, the resolution of this drama involves regaining self-identity, and at the collective level it involves complete national liberation and the creation of a society which differs totally from the imperial example. Where Nkrumah studied the system of the enemy, in Fanon's analysis the enemy is hardly more than the background of his discussion which centres on the militants' own actions. The key to liberation lies in the person and in the people, while the aim is defined in terms of these actors, namely as regained self-identity.

Fanon's psychological model of liberation also accounts for his lack of attention to the historical and cultural diversity of the peoples who are struggling. After all, human beings share a basic psychological make-up. Whatever the specific backgrounds and cultural orientations may be, persons and 'nations' undergo a similar alienation and have to go through a similar process of a re-establishment of self-identity. Of course the outcome, the free society, will be different according to different contexts but this does not need special attention. Like the therapist, who is primarily concerned with a specific illness and not with the individuality of the patient, the revolution is primarily concerned with liberation and not the cultural specifics of a people.

Between the universality at the macro level of the global system and the universality of the human psyche and its possible disorders there is the infinite variety of communities, societies and cultures, each with their specific histories. Conceptualizing the struggle at the middle level, as Cabral did, conditions a different discourse on liberation, one that cannot ignore situational specifics.

Cabral was neither a professional politician nor a professional psychiatrist but an agricultural engineer. In essence, for him, liberation meant the practical creation of a community which could freely develop its specific productive capacities. The key expression "mastering your own historicity" refers to mastering a development that is specific to a nation.

Conceptualizing development at the middle level of concrete communities also suggests that there are no laws of evolution to guarantee that liberation will succeed. The theorists of the global capitalist system could pretend to know the laws of that system which told them that capitalism and imperialism would eventually give way to a new type of social formation: 'socialism'. Even Fanon's psychological model suggested that alienation is not the natural state and will be redressed. Cabral's discourse, however, has to do
without such theories that make implicit promises. He has to refer to rights and good intentions of historical actors rather than to 'facts of theory'. Liberation involves a prise de conscience of the whole nation, especially of the petty bourgeoisie. Cabral's 'organic' model involves an objectivistic promise for a better world but only in a weak version. He suggests, for instance, that the "unfolding behaviour (development) of a phenomenon-in-motion" is its natural behaviour.

My argument has been that the three discourses conceptualize the problem of liberation by choosing an exemplar from a different level: the global, the personal and the communal. Although, finally, Nkrumah, Fanon and Cabral were comrades in the anti-imperialist struggle and would probably agree on most specific issues, nonetheless they present different liberation discourses.

### Three discourses of revolutionary struggle

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<th>EXEMPLAR</th>
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<td>organic nature</td>
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<td>'unfolding' development / &quot;mastering historicity&quot;</td>
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410 "For us the basis of national liberation...is the inalienable right of every people to have their own history." Cabral 1980, p. 130
411 Cabral 1980, p. 122
412 At two crucial points, Fanon's and Cabral's own exemplars produce similar myths like Marxism. Firstly, the idea of coming socialism: although in less objectivistic terms than Marxism, their discourse suggests that capitalism will be replaced by a socialist society. Secondly, the idea of a 'subject' of revolution. I argued that Fanon and Cabral import the idea of the 'nation' as a kind of 'historical subject'; the 'nation' is a theoretically, rather than an empirically, substantiated notion.