

IDEA OF CULTURAL INTEGRATION

by Bernard FONLON

Comprehensive Meaning

I stated at the start and have reiterated all along that, seeing the various cultures that are met today in Africa, and seeing that each of them has things of worth and beauty to give us for our welfare and for the construction of the new Africa, the most logical, the healthiest, the most salutary policy for us, in this domain, is a judicious cultural integration. And to elucidate my contention, I thought it best to do so by defining my terms. Up to this, I have endeavoured to state as clearly as possible my idea of culture.* And now for what I mean by Integration.

I could have said Cultural Unification, and that would have been as clear. But I have chosen the word Integration because it is a term pregnant with meaning.

It comes from the Latin adjective *integer, integra, integrum*, meaning whole, entire. And that is whole and entire which is one; hence the English word *integer*, (directly borrowed from the Latin) meaning a whole number as opposed to a fraction, a part.

A thing is said to be one from two points of view: first, with reference to other things; and, secondly, with reference to itself. With reference to other things, that is one which is divided from everything else, which, so to speak, can stand up to be counted. With reference to itself, that is one which is undivided in itself. Wholeness, oneness, therefore implies, on the one hand, the exclusion of division within; it implies, on the other, division, or separation from everything else without; in other words, internal coherence and external distinctness.

The oneness implied by the word *integer* is not the oneness of a monolith, the oneness of single block of stone; for the verbal suffix—*ate* (from the Latin—*are—atum*) in the verb to *integrate*, from which verb the word integration comes, implies action, the action of putting parts together to form a whole.

* See "Abbia" Nos 11 and 16.

ABBIA

The oneness of integration therefore, in a general sense, is the oneness of a whole composed of parts, it is unity from diversity, unity in diversity. Hence the word *integral* which is used in speaking of parts which make up the whole, or of the whole when it has all its parts complete.

If a thing is made up of parts and yet is one, its oneness, therefore, must mean that each part occupies that place, performs that function, that belongs to it, in the system of the whole; it must mean that these parts complete each other, that they do not jar, that they fit into the ensemble and work in **harmony**.

When the Latin adjective *integer* is applied to living organisms, its meaning is further enriched. For if a living organism lacked an essential member, or was impaired in any of its parts, or if the members were at war among themselves, there would be that lack of harmony which in living beings means disease, ill-health. In this sense *integer* means *healthy*; and, where there is health, there is vigour. Notice that the English word **whole** is also used both in the sense of complete and in the second sense of healthy.

Disease in living bodies means, either that foreign harmful creatures have found their way into the organism, or that some of its members are suffering decay, corruption. Thus, the word *integer* is also used to mean the absence of harmful elements within the system, the absence of corruption, therefore purity.

Purity means not only the absence of physical filth or decay, but, even more so, that of moral corruption; hence the word *integrity*, meaning uprightness, honesty, sinlessness. It was in this sense that Horace used the word in his famous ode in which he implies that purity of life is, in itself, a sure defence:

*Integer vitae scelerisque purus
non eget Mauris laculis neque arcu
nec venenatis gravida sagittis,
Fuscus,
Fuscus,*

He whose life is pure and free
from sin has need neither, for the
bow nor for the Moorish spear,
nor for a quiver thick with
poisoned arrows.

13. Horace Lib, I CAR, XXII

To integrate, therefore means to put parts together in order to bring about a whole whose members operate in harmony, a whole that is healthy, vigorous and pure.

Before integration, each part lives a separate existence, is a distinct entity. Their integration brings into being a *tertium quid*, a new being that was not there before. Integration is therefore a process of creation, a new birth; hence such Latin expressions as *de integro*, *ab integro*, meaning anew, afresh. In fact, the Latin noun *integratio* means a renewal.

Integration therefore means completeness, the absence of deficiency; it means oneness, the absence of division; it means harmony, the absence of conflict; it means health, the absence of disease; it means vigour, the absence of languor; it means purity, the absence of corruption. Integration is a process of renewal, a new birth, a new creation.

When I first began pondering on this idea of cultural integration, I was reminded of the famous melody of the Irish poet, Tom Moore, *At the Meeting of the Waters*, and that called up in my mind the image of rivers blending into one inseparable, undistinguishable stream. A more perfect image however, would be that to which I have referred already, that of digestion, the process whereby dead animal, vegetable, mineral and gaseous substances are transformed into living flesh. Another image, which we have seen before and which is a perfect, would be that of grafting. Those who have tasted the luscious product got from grafting the sourish grapefruit on to the orange would agree that there could hardly be an apter image of cultural integration.

Such then is Integration as I see it, and, thus conceived and understood, it is, as I have said already, the sanest cultural policy for us today in Africa.

In Defence of Cultural Borrowing

I once overheard two Nigerian writers arguing whether high-life¹⁴ was African music; one asserted heatedly that it was, and, the other, as heatedly, that it wasn't. On another occasion, I was attending a Congress where the eternal question arose whether literature

14. Highlife—popular dance music in Ghana and Nigeria on European and African instruments combined.

written by Africans in European languages is African literature. A black South African rose up and laid it down categorically that no literature was African literature, unless it was written in an African language. For men of this mind, if anything is to be genuinely African, it must be shorn of all foreign influence, it must spring up, unalloyed and clean, straight from the genius of Africa.

Such a purist therefore might say:

"This new integrated culture of yours with the African stream diluted by French and English currents, call it whatever you please, but don't call it African."

And we are right in the debate on what makes a given thing African, today, when foreign influences are invading every nook and corner of African life. Seeing how heated this debate over the Africanness of things in present day Africa can sometimes wax, one is led to ask the further question whether cultural borrowing, as such, is something derogatory, something to be ashamed of, something to frown on?

Once at Kampala, I visited the Uganda National Museum and was struck to see there several musical instruments exactly like those to be found in several parts of Cameroon. I visited the Lukiko, the Buganda parliament, and discovered, among other things, that the Baganda and other East African peoples have the same symbol for kingly authority as the peoples of the Cameroon grasslands, namely, the leopard skin for royal foot-rest.

During the inaugural conference of the O.A.U., in Addis Ababa, in May 1963, we had the privilege of sitting at a banquet given by the Emperor in his grand reception hall. There was music playing.

"Listen," said an Ethiopian sitting by me, "that is Ethiopian music; does it sound strange in your ears?"

I didn't need to listen, because from the start, it sounded very familiar to me and I felt sure I had heard music like that somewhere else in Africa.

And so it is: wherever you go, in Africa, you are struck by the indigenous cultural similarities—in music, dancing, in social and political institutions. If a musical instrument, a religious

practice, an institution is found at once in several, far-flung parts of Africa today, should we suppose that it was invented simultaneously here, there and everywhere, or should we not rather say that some invented it and others borrowed from the inventor? I come from an ethnic group in Cameroon where many of the prominent traditional social and political institutions are known to have been borrowed from our neighbours; the clansmen admit that and seem to see nothing derogatory in the admission; on the contrary, they point to the fact with pride. Indeed, hardly an African nationalist would find anything to quarrel with in cultural borrowing between African peoples; if African borrows from African, that's borrowing from a brother! Thus it is not so much against the borrowing in itself, as against the people from whom it is done that the African purist rises up in arms. This is confirmed by the fact that all but the whole of the resentment that rankles and festers on this issue is directed against borrowing from the whiteman.

But if the whiteman had not been the soulless, heartless slaver and humiliator of the African that he was, if he were not the arrogant jeerer at things African, the self-assured proclaimer of his own cultural superiority, would borrowing from his culture still provoke the same bitterness? I do not think so. The indignation is levelled against the whiteman's arrogance and wickedness, not against his culture.

But any debate as to whether we should borrow from the whiteman or not would be pointless and sterile.

For we have no choice but to borrow.

We in Cameroon are rightly proud of Sultan Njoya of Bamoun whose rare genius invented a script; he was, perhaps, the only one in the history of black Africa to have done so. But who would dare suggest that we should now oust the Roman form of writing and instal Sultan Njoya's? It is truly meet and just that an African country should have an African language as the medium of national expression. But who for that would suggest that we should banish English and French from our schools? We may stand in awe at the super-human asceticism and the unearthly grandeur of Mahatma Gandhi; but would we follow his counsel and reject industrialisation?

The whiteman's civilization is here to stay whether we like it or not.

The question should not therefore be, whether we should borrow, but how to make sure that this borrowing shall be done with judiciousness and dignity.

For centuries, the whiteman has duped, and humiliated, and mocked, and ground the blackman under. But today with the African up and determined to be done with this humbug, once and for all, the whiteman has decided to change his tactics. Smiles have now replaced the jeers, and proffers of friendship and gifts have taken the place of kicks and buffets. But appetites of centuries' whetting are not blunted overnight; and the fact is, that now that it is impossible for the whiteman to keep the African under with open, brazen arrogance, he is striving by devious ways to perpetuate this thralldom, especially in the economic and in the cultural fields; for by whatever name you call him, he who becomes the sole and unique supplier of food for both your mouth and your mind, is in effect your master.

That is why the African, although he must borrow, should be wary of his former insolent, hard-driving enslaver, who now returns brimming with smiles and fulsome with praise, bringing economic benefits and cultural gifts.

"...ulla putatis
dona carere dolis Danaum?
quidquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentes. 15

"Do you think any gifts of the Greeks are free from treachery?", asked one of the Trojan leaders with reference to the Wooden Horse that the Greeks had left at the gates of Troy, during the Greco-Trojan war; "whatever it be, I fear the Greeks even when they are bringing gifts."

Where the whiteman's attitude towards the black is concerned, there is always the danger that the most generous overtures may cloak something sinister, may prove a Trojan Horse.

Therefore, every cultural contribution that comes to us from the stranger should be carefully scrutinized, before it is integrated into our way of life. If we are cautious and approach this problem with shrewd insight, borrowing from others can lead to a rich and healthy cultural growth provided, as I have said again and

15. Virgil, *Aeneid*, 11, pages 43-49

again, that what we borrow is digested and becomes part of us just like dead animal, vegetable, mineral or gaseous matter, taken in, and broken down, and absorbed, becomes living substance, part and parcel of our being. Through such digestion and absorption, a borrowed cultural element becomes ours however distant its origin may be.

For, as I see it, there are two ways by which a cultural element can be a people's property.

The first, of course, is, if that cultural element is completely or to a large extent, the creation or the discovery of the said people.

The second is through a process which the celebrated West Indian Negro poet, Aimé Césaire, has christened the *Dialectic of Need*. A people in the course of its evolution, arrives at a point where an urgent need arises, where a void, a burning thirst, develops, crying to be filled, to be slaked. And there is not in the resources of that people the wherewith to satisfy it. But it happens that another people with whom they have come in contact possesses the means to fill that void, and slake that thirst naturally, perfectly. Its adoption gives rise to no conflict, it is not felt as something foreign; for the adopter feels completely at home with it, it has become his own, and fits harmoniously with the rest of his system.

On the one hand, therefore, the *thesis*, a people with a need, a void, with nothing to fill it. On the other, the *antithesis*, the therewithal to satisfy it thoroughly, but belonging to the stranger. In between, the *synthesis*, the dialectic reconciliation, whereby the foreign therewithal becomes the borrower's property through satisfying his need.

This is the philosophical basis of all exchange and commerce. No people is self-sufficient; and, thus, there is no inherent shame whatsoever attached to borrowing or exchange between nations. On the contrary, it is one of the most effective ways of promoting mutual assistance, mutual understanding, and mutual respect among the peoples of the world.

A Classic Example

The Romans and the Greeks furnish an outstanding example of this. The Romans though superior to the Greeks in war freely

bowed to the vanquished Hellenes as their cultural betters and were eager and grateful to learn from them.

Horace, in one of his epistles, proudly proclaims that he was the first to introduce certain Greek measures into Roman poetry:

.....Parios ego primus iambos
ostendi Latii, numeros animosque secutus
Achilochi....
Hunc ego, non alio dictum prius ore, Latinus
Volgarī fidicen; iuvat in memorata ferentem
Ingeniis oculisque legi manibusque teneri. » 16

"I was the first to reveal Parian iambics to Latium, following the measures and genius of Archilochus.... Him, then, celebrated by no voice before, I the Latin lyric poet, have made familiar to Roman ears. I am delighted, as I bring forward what has hitherto been unknown, to be read by gentle eyes and to be held by gentle hands."

In another passage more celebrated still Horace renders homage to the civilising influence of the Greeks on their Roman rulers:

Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artes
Intulit agresti Latii: sic horridus ille
Defluxit numerus Saturnius, et grave virus
Munditiae pepulere!7.

"Then captive Greece took captive her rude conqueror, and introduced her accomplishments into rustic Latium. The rugged Saturnian verse passed out of use, and elegance expelled the noisome venom of satire."

The Greeks, even if they so desired, had no means of imposing their culture on the Romans; for, being a subject people, they did not detain the power of coercion. But the conquering Romans were themselves conquered, in this that they were overawed by the cultural excellence before them, and absorbed it freely and with enthusiasm. In contact with the Greeks the Romans saw, on the one hand, their own cultural deficiency, and, on the other, the quintessence of the therewithal to supply that deficiency;

16. Horace Epistles 1, XIX

17. Horace Epistles, Book II, Pages 156-159

and, consequently, the filling of the Roman cultural void has place freely, took place without conflict, that is, harmoniously. When cultural borrowing is done in such a healthy atmosphere it cannot but be fruitful.

The same spirit shown by the Roman towards Greek culture brought out more forcefully still in a letter of admonition on the occasion of the latter's appointment as Governor of Greece. Pliny exhorts him to remember that he is being sent to the cradle of civilization; let him venerate its gods and honour its cities and respect its children. He warns him against arrogance, against the abuse of authority which tries to prove its force by insolence and terror. If every governor that ever went to boss a colony had this letter as vade-mecum and was guided by its counsels, there would have been less bitterness during the colonial period, and cultural cooperation, in its aftermath, would not as now be fraught with so much resentment.

Pliny's text, to my mind, is so much to the point that I cannot resist the temptation of giving large extracts of it:

« Cogite te missum in provinciam Achaiam, illam veram et meram Graeciam, quae primum humanitas, litterae, etiam fruges inventae esse creduntur, missum ordinandum statum liberarum civitatum, id est, ad homines maxime hominesque liberos maxime liberos, qui ius a natura datum virtute, meritis, amicitia, benevolentia et religione tenuerunt. Revere conditores deos et numina deorum, vestrosque gloriam veterem et hanc ipsam senectutem, quae in homine venerabilis, in civitate sacra. Sit apud te honor antiquitatis, sit ingenitibus factis, sit fabulis quoque, sed esse cuiusquam dignitate, nihil ex libertate, nihil etiam ex iactatione deservatis. Habe ante oculos hanc esse terram, quae nobis miserit iura, quae leges non victis sed potentibus dedit, Athenas esse, quas ad eas, Lacedaemonem esse, quae quibus reliquam umbram et residuum libertatis nomen eripere distulerunt, barbarum est. Recordare, quid quaeque civitas fuerit, non ut desipias, quod esse desierit; abas superbia, asperitas. Nec timueris contemptum. An quod temeratur, qui imperium, qui fasces habet, nisi humilia et sordidus, et qui primus ipse contemnit? Male vim suam potestas aliorum contumelias asperitas male terrore venerato acquiritur, longaque valentior amor ad obtinendum, quam velle, quam timor. Nam timor abis, si recedas, manet amor, ac sicut ille in vultu hic in reverentiam vertitur. Te vero etiam atque etiam (repetam enim) memineris oportet officii tui titulum ac tibi ipsum interpretari, quale quantumque sit ordinatum liberarum civitatum. Nam quid ordinatio civillius, quid libertas generatius? Porro quam turpe, si ordinatio aversione, libertas servilitate mutetur! »

« Consider that you have been sent into the province of Achaia, that true and original Greece in which first civilisation, literature, even agriculture are believed

to have been discovered, sent to regulate the condition of free communities, that is, sent to men who are truly men, free men who are truly free, who have maintained their natural rights by valour, by glorious feats, by friendship, by a contract in fact sanctioned by religion. Venerate the gods that founded the cities and the divine powers, honour their ancient glory and their present decline in years, which in the case of a man command respect, in the case of cities even to their legends. Diminish nothing from any man's dignity, liberty or even to their legends. Diminish nothing from any man's dignity, liberty or even to their legends. Bear in mind that this is the country which sent us our laws, that we did not give us enactments after conquering us, but on our own petition. Remember that it is Athens to which you go, Sparta which you rule; to deprive them of the lingering shadow and last remaining name of liberty were heartless, cruel, inhuman. Recollect what each city once was, yet not so as to despise it, because it has ceased to be its old self. Let no arrogance or harshness appear; and do not fear contempt. Can he be despised who holds the magisterial power and the fasces, unless he be mean and abject one who is the first to despise himself? Authority ill proves its force by insulting others, respect is ill gotten by terror, and affection is a far more potent influence in getting what you want than fear. For fear departs, when your back is turned, while affection remains; and just as fear turns to hate, affection turns to respect. You ought, then, again and again (for I will venture to repeat myself) to remember the significance of your position and to represent to yourself what an important task it is to govern free states. For what is more constitutional than such government, what is more precious than freedom? Moreover how scandalous to turn government into anarchy, freedom into slavery! »

If the counsels that the Roman man of letters gave to the future governor—humility, recognition of others' worth, respect for their person, their liberty, their institutions, avoidance of arrogance, contempt and harshness, rule by affection rather than by terror—if all these had been heeded by modern colonisers, how harmonious would cultural borrowing be, how smooth would cultural integration be effected today!

One passage in Pliny's text is so relevant and apt, in so far as this question of cultural integration is concerned, that it merits repetition:

Habe ante oculos hanc esse terram, quae nobis miserit iura, quae leges non victis, sed potentibus dedit.

Bear in mind that this is the land that sent us our laws, that she did not impose enactments on us by conquest, but gave them to us on our own request!

...CULTURAL INTEGRATION

This sentence sits right on the head the principle without which no cultural borrowing however needfull can be healthy, namely, that such borrowing should be an act of free choice on the part of the borrowers.

On this principle the cultural policies of modern imperialism stand condemned, inexorably. For the carrying out of their self-styled civilising mission consisted in forcing their way of life down the throats of conquered peoples and with what brutality, with what jeering humiliation, with what overweening contempt!

Fortunately, that era is gone, or, at least, is condemned to die. Consequently, in the future, Africans must allow no ruffled passions to blur their vision: for, since they must live with, and learn from, their former jeerers and oppressors, they must keep all pride and anger and bitterness down, in order to be able to appraise with shrewd, objective insight the things we need from foreigners to foster our cultural growth.

In ending this passage, it gives me great pleasure to be able to invoke in defence of cultural borrowing the authority of a man whom no one could accuse of too pro-western sympathies, a man who stood, first and last, for his country and its culture—the great Indian leader, Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi took an uncompromising stand for Education through the Indian vernaculars and retrenched himself in Indian culture by a series of the most unearthly vows; among these were the vow of Swadeshi which bound him to supply his needs only from the produce of his immediate environment; the vow of Khaddar by which he imposed upon himself the duty of using nothing but home-spun cloth and of spinning his cloth with his own hands. Who would expect a man like this to speak up in defence of cultural borrowing? And yet he did! And spoke up straight and clear. This is what he said:

"The Indian culture of our times is in the making. Many of us are striving to produce a blend of all the cultures which seem today to be in dash with one another. No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive. There is no such thing as pure Aryan culture in existence today in India. Whether the Aryans were indigenous to India or were unwelcome intruders, does not interest me much. What does interest me is the fact that my remote ancestors blended with one another with the utmost freedom and we of the present generation are a result of that blend. Whether we are doing any good to the country of our birth and the tiny globe which sustains us or whether we are a burden, the future alone will show.

Nothing can be farther from my thought than that we should become exclusive or erect barriers. But I do respectfully contend that an appreciation of other cultures can fitly follow, never precede, an appreciation and assimilation of our own... An academic grasp without practice behind it is like an embalmed corpse, perhaps lovely to look at but nothing to inspire or ennoble. My religion forbids me to belittle or disregard other cultures, as it insists under pain of civil suicide upon imbibing and living my own.

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I would have our young men and women with literacy tastes to learn as much of English and other world-languages as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world like a Bose, a Ray or the Poet himself.¹⁹ But I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular. Mine is not a religion of the prison-house.²⁰

The Blending of the Waters

A passage in the text I have quoted from Gandhi, to end the foregoing portion, so forcefully and precisely confirms my convictions, in what I shall say in this section, that I will recall it here. He says:

"I do not want my house to be walled in and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I respectfully contend that the appreciation of other cultures can fitly follow, never precede, an appreciation and assimilation of our own."

The appreciation and assimilation of one's culture must always precede the appreciation and assimilation of a foreign one, says Gandhi.

In other words, applying his words to our case, African culture should be, as I have said before, the mainstream into which the foreign tributaries should blend, the main stem into which the foreign scion should be grafted, the sap that should enliven the entire organism.

As I have pointed out before, this native culture is the culture of the vast majority of the people and cannot, therefore, be lightly

19. Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose and Sir P.C. Ray were eminent Indian scientists; 'the Poet' refers to Rabindranath Tagore.

20. Mahatma Gandhi: All Men are Brothers: Pages 156-157

set aside. Furthermore, to demolish it in order to build anew on a foreign foundation, would end in the creation of a void and will render the people rootless and bewildered and put them, as the American Negroes are today, in permanent malaise. Furthermore, such a dimolition would be physically impossible; for culture is essentially something of the mind, and, therefore, not as easy to destroy as something material; habits of thought and feeling that have taken generations and centuries to drive their roots down cannot be torn up so easily. Thus, however you look at it, Mahatma Gandhi's principle is confirmed, in our case, by the very nature of things.

Yet, as we have seen already, if African traditions have to be used as the foundation for a modern African culture, they have to be re-examined and rid of all that is erroneous and wrong or unjust; and, anything therein that is true, good and beautiful should be rendered as perfect as possible. In this way, this African culture will become a new creation in this that the genius of our ancestors will be enriched by that of the present generations. A very good example, to illustrate this principle, is the field of law. During the colonial period, in almost all colonised African countries, there were two sets of courts: those that applied native law and custom and those that administered the legal system of the ruling colonial power. In independent Africa, these two legacies must be judiciously integrated into one harmonised system of law.

In this task of the study, the reappraisal and the rediscovery of African values, Institutes of African Studies, in African Universities, have a very important and privileged role to play. At this stage, they should be principally research centres and their findings should be put at the disposal of the makers of modern African culture—artists, writers, musicians, thinkers, legislators, religious authorities and the elaborators of the new social order.

The principle that cultural integration in Africa should be on an African basis is more important and more far-reaching than would appear at first sight.

The New Kultur Kampf

For, it would be extremely naive to believe that, with the advent of African independence, the whiteman has renounced, at last, his ambition to condition and control the black. You cannot stop a cat from mousing, over-night.

In the four hundred years of slavery, the intentions of the whitemen were plain, straight and brutal: to reduce the Negro to the level of a beast of burden, in order to own and control his person and use his brawn, for the exploitation of the wealth of the New world.

When colonialism took over from slavery, there was a change in emphasis and in tactics: the struggle was now principally to deprive the African of his land. If you took away his territory, by making it a colony or a protectorate, (and in practice the distinction between these two forms of domination was only a notional one) his sovereignty went with it, and, with his sovereignty, automatically went his right of self-determination, his right to have his own destiny in his own hands.

Today, the immediate ambition of the whiteman is to control the African economy; to control the exploitation of African resources, the means of distribution and exchange, and banking and credit, for the benefit, principally, of the stranger. Thus, for the needs of his stomach the black man should remain, forever, beholden to the white; and, as we all know, he who pays the piper calls the tune! That is why any African leader who has any socialist leanings, especially if his country is rich or if his voice has a wide and attentive audience throughout the African continent, is considered by the imperialist powers as a very dangerous enemy that must be implacably pursued and destroyed. The memory of Nasser and Suez is still fresh and the current strife between the Congolese Government and the **Union Minière** deserves to be watched. But the struggle to control and exploit African resources, for the benefit of the foreigner, is doomed to fail, sooner or later. For, as time goes on, pressure is bound to increase on the African leaders to challenge this state of things. However timid, however tardy at the start, this pressure is sure to gather ever-mounting momentum. The hundreds and the thousands of the hungry workless youth that shall be turned out, year after year, in ever-increasing numbers, by colleges and universities, will see to that.

The whiteman knows this only too well, knows that the chances are, ten to one, that he shall loose the economic contest. Yet he is by no means prepared to abandon the secular struggle to condition and control the Negro. He sees that the one effective means left at his disposal to assure this domination of the black, is to control his thinking: condition and control the mind of a man, of a people,

and you have in your power, to treat as you please, their persons their territory, their destiny. For thought conditions all: as you think so you feel; as you feel so you act; as you act so you feel, as you feel so you think; and so goes the round. This is an elementary psychological law. It is culture that conditions and controls men's thoughts; and thereby, their feelings and their actions. The ultimate struggle, in Africa, although it will employ instruments and tactics more refined and subtle than those of the struggles that preceded, will be the cultural struggle—the struggle for men's minds, the struggle to control, in one way or the other, the institutions that form and shape the thinking of the youth, that is, the schools, the colleges, the universities. Such shall be the African **Kultur Kampf**. And the party that comes out victorious from the strife will ultimately control everything.

I have a feeling that there are not many in Africa that will agree with me. For it appears to me that, in Africa, many people are not awake to this problem. Minds are so usurped by political and economic preoccupations that a question of such supreme importance is not given the attention it deserves, is lightly treated as a matter of no consequence. In the mean time, advantage is taken of the financial difficulties of the African States to seize control of their institutions of learning through foreign foundations and technical assistance. And what is more, there are cases where the few African intellectuals who are found in these institutions are converted into technical assistance personnel, and, this, in their own countries! In the face of this phenomenon, is one not justified in wondering where the loyalties of this élite will be? Added to this, there is the covert hostility, if not the overt antagonism, that is often encountered against any talk of the cultivation of African languages. And all this in the determined effort to demolish the African cultural bed-rock and lay a foreign foundation in its stead.

The Open Door

Does this mean that I deplore foreign foundations and technical assistance? How could I do so after speaking up so strongly in defence of cultural borrowing? In fact, next to the first principle that cultural integration in Africa should have African culture as its foundation, I lay down a second, one no less important—the principle of the open door; we must be prepared to welcome all

that is true, good, beautiful or useful no matter from where it comes. I am all for healthy cultural cooperation. How could our colleges and universities function without foreign professors? Indeed, in so far as cultural cooperation, involving African institutions of higher learning, is concerned, I will go further still and say that I believe and advocate strongly that newly-founded African Universities should be put under the tutelage of older, more experienced, more universally recognised and respected universities in countries like England and France. This guardianship should continue until the young university can stand on its own legs. The most successful African Universities I know of are Ibadan, in Nigeria, and Makerere, in Uganda; in the field of science and literature, they have, in recent years, produced the most promising crop of young African writers and scientists anywhere on the continent. Both, for long years, were under the tutelage of the London University. These universities are concrete testimonies of what healthy cultural cooperation can achieve. Indeed this cooperation can be far richer in our day than it has been hitherto; for, formerly, our cultural contacts were mostly with the colonising countries, chiefly Britain and France. Today, African students are found, by the hundred, if not by the thousand, in any major country in Europe, America and Asia. The variety and the wealth of the contribution they will bring augurs well for the cultural future in Africa.

But that a foreign power should own and control, in an African country, a university, over which the local African government has not authority whatsoever, is a thing to be condemned, out of hand, without appeal.

I am all for cultural cooperation, therefore, provided one primordial condition is fulfilled and that brings me to what I consider the third essential principle to be observed in the process of cultural integration in Africa.

The Acid Test of Genuineness

It is that this integration must be done by the Africans themselves: the reappraisal of traditional African values, the evaluation of the foreign elements to be adopted and absorbed, the elaboration of the new system must be, in the main, the work of African brains. The control of the African education system must be in the hands of Africans. And where the aid of foreign experts is

... must be for many years to come, that aid must be used strictly in the furtherance of a policy drawn up by Africans and whose application shall be controlled by Africans, to foster the attainment of goals set by Africans for the good of Africans. In my view, the ultimate test of the authenticity, the final proof of the Africanness of any cultural element is whether or not that element has been produced by the genius of the African.

Blending in Diverse Domains

It remains now to be seen how this process of cultural integration should be tackled, in the concrete, in various fields.

In the field of culture as action, as education, that is, the principles seem clear enough and should be stated succinctly. The first is that, at the start, materials for the instruction of the African child should be drawn from his immediate surroundings and from his immediate experiences and that, thereafter, he should be introduced gradually to the rest of the universe. Wherever possible, initial instruction should be in the child's mother tongue. Those who reject this should reflect on what a curious phenomenon it is that the study of African languages should be pursued with such vigour and assiduity, in London, Paris, Hamburg, Moscow, New York, and yet neglected, may even despised, in their homes of origin; and, this often at the instigation of the very same people who strive so hard to further the scientific study of African languages in Institutions of African Studies in their own countries. Secondly the African principle that energy, manliness, courage, never be forgotten especially as the hedonist or pleasure-loving character of European civilisation, tends to unman, to emasculate. Thirdly, every African University worthy of the name should possess an Institute of African Studies. Along-side with all this, should obviously go the intensive study of the Languages of Wider Communication, as they are called, namely, English and French, and of all the useful things that modern European civilisation puts at our disposal, especially the physical sciences.

In so far as the arts are concerned, the process of integration is already well on the way. In music, for example, there is the rich variety of the enrapturing music invented by Africans, especially in Ghana, Nigeria, the Congo, Cameroon, and played on European

and African musical instruments blended together. Recently, the degree of Doctor of Music was conferred by an East European university on Victor Elaiya, one of the Nigerian pioneers, and a leading star, in the field of highlife music. In the domain of letters, a very interesting literary movement of foreign expression is in process, in English speaking Africa especially. This new literature draws large inspiration from African life and, thanks to its inside, intimate knowledge of both modern and traditional Africa, it paints very authentic pictures of African life. The striking thing about this literature is that, not only is the content African, but the foreign language through which it finds expression, is reshaped by the minds of the characters presented therein, and receives, thereby, a new imprint. An excellent example of this is found in the works of Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian novelist. Achebe loads English with freight from the traditional Ibo mind, and, without changing the structure of the language, changes its character by making it a language with an inspiration different from English. His characters reason in images rather than in words and there is a refreshing non-Englishness in their speech. Achebe himself has illustrated this technique by citing a passage from his book, *Arrow of God*. In this passage, the hero, a traditional chief priest, is telling one of his sons why he is sending him to the Christian church:

"I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eyes there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask, dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying hed we known tomorrow."²¹

According to Achebe the same passage from the mouth of an Englishman would run something like this:

I am sending you as my representative among those people—just to be on the safe side in case the new religion develops. One has to move with the times or else one is left behind. I have a hunch that those who fail to come to terms with the white man may well regret their lack of foresight."²²

In a subject like law, we have already seen how an integrated system can be effected. In the field of religion, it is obvious that

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needed, as it must be for many long years to come, that aid must be used strictly in the furtherance of a policy drawn up by Africans and whose application shall be controlled by Africans, to foster the attainment of goals set by Africans for the good of Africans. In my view, the ultimate test of the authenticity, the final proof of the Africanness of any cultural element is whether or not that element has been produced by the genius of the African.

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we cannot arbitrarily create one religion for all, for that would violate the fundamental freedom to worship according to each one's conscience. But if the various religious persuasions are to strike root in Africa, they must explore African beliefs (which cannot be all so much savage paganism as heretofore believed) to see if there are, therein, any basic convictions on which they can build. The present tendency among the Catholics of saying mass in the native tongue and incorporating African music and even dancing into their ritual are departures in the right direction. The earliest missionaries, pushed by excessive zeal, sinned by intolerance, in condemning all African customs and religious practices, and even such obviously innocent things as music and dancing, as barbaric heathenism. In some cases, in fact, they even strove to cut the neophytes physically away from the rest of their African community, by the creation of the so-called christian villages. Islam has had greater success in Africa, firstly because it was transmitted from African to Africans, and secondly, precisely because it absorbed those African beliefs and practices which were not contrary to the essential tenets of the Muslim religion.

In so far as abstract thought is concerned, it would be laudable to follow the example of the Belgian Franciscan priest, Placide Tempels,²³ and carry on investigations into the African idea of the essence of the universe and of the nature of being, in order to bring out, clearly, concepts of an African metaphysic.

The cultural level at which the African has to take almost everything from the white is that of the physical sciences; so infinitely far is the white man ahead of the black, in this field. But once he has acquired these sciences, the African should use his own inventive genius and make the acquisitions he has obtained from the white serve as a spring-board from which he can launch into independent research; in order to find scientific solutions to the specific needs of Africa, and, thus, prove to the world, by concrete realisations, as the Japs and the Chinese have done, that scientific achievement is not the exclusive preserve of the Caucasian race. The field of medicine is a very apt example. There are African herbalists who effect cures where modern medicine has been beaten. But this African medicine, however effective it may look, is only at the

²³ Placide Tempels: *La Philosophie Bantoue* — *Présence Africaine*, 1949

empirical stage. There is need to raise it up to the scientific level. It is necessary to analyse the chemical composition of the drugs used by the African herbalist, to dig into the physical causes of the diseases concerned, and see the nature of the effect of the former on the latter. Thus, African herbalism would have contributed something original and worthy of pride to scientific medicine.

But, to my mind, the most crucial problem that cultural integration in Africa will pose will be how to marry the modern, mechanical, materialist civilisation to the traditional African spirit; how to accept the scientific modernism and retain our manners and morals. For when you see the disintegration of traditional African virtues in the growing African towns, the drifting rootlessness of the youth that are reared therein, when you see the corruption, the callous disregard for the general welfare by which the rising African public services are riddled, you see that there is cause indeed for serious alarm.

And yet we all know that, in any African village, where the new civilization hasn't bitten deep, concern for the common welfare, devotion to communal duty, readiness to help each other, selflessness, honesty, courtesy, are the characteristic virtues. No communion of saints, far from it. In their midst there will be found the liar, the thief, the cut-throat, the whore; but whore and cut-throat and thief and liar are the exception, not the rule.

I said before that, in the field of technical culture, there seems, at first sight, no problem of integration, since, in this domain, we have hardly anything to contribute, but everything to learn. But it is precisely in this field, as we have seen already, that the most urgent and difficult problem of integration will be encountered.

I have repeated a couple of times before that a people's moral and spiritual values, their mores, their religion, constitute the heart's core of their culture, because they concern right and wrong, humanity, the end of man, the ultimate reality. You cannot imperil them and leave the whole system intact.

Theoretically at least, technical progress is perfectly compatible with the highest virtues living. In fact, some of the great scientists, to whom we owe so much, were men of virtue and deep humanity, men like Pasteur and Newton. But the danger is that the increased wealth that material progress brings whets greed and fosters individualism, turning away men's zeal from the service of the community to the service of self.

With regard to the preservation of African solidarity, my personal conviction is that, this can best be done by raising the spirit of African communal life, from the village level to the national level. To my mind, there is no way more effective to do this than the introduction of a socialist economy. The socialist spirit is native to Africa, whereas grasping, dehumanising, monopolist, materialist, capitalism is a stranger among us. The introduction of socialism, therefore, will not entail the upheavals that it caused in Europe; that for one thing, the real property that we have, land, is owned in common; the only capitalist interests that exist are foreign. Above all, socialism will help to reinforce political equality by a good measure of economic equality. Without the second form of equality, the first is a pipe dream.

The Ultimate Purpose

Such, then, is the nature of the African cultural problem, such the answer we propose for solving that problem, such our idea of healthy Cultural Integration. An idealist conception, a long-term enterprise, surely; but one worthy of all endeavour, notwithstanding.

It is obvious that, those of us, who ponder this problem over, consider it as a question of primordial consequence, a question whose answer is intended to serve a highly vital purpose.

What then do we propose as the ultimate purpose of Cultural integration?

The formal, the essential, the intrinsic end of all integration, whatsoever, is to heal a breach, to put an end to a cleavage, to cure, through unification, a division considered as baneful.

With regard to the African continent, the white man's advent brought a threefold division into African cultural life. Firstly, there was the fact that a new civilization was brought to cohabit, side by side, with the traditional African way of life; and you had, cheek by jowl, two cultures which hardly understood each other, and, which, more often than not, were in a state of war. Secondly, the presence of these two cultures split the African community into two: those who obstinately refused the African ways and clung, steadfast, to the culture of their ancestors, and those who welcomed the new order of things. This division often cut even through families whose members, on either side of the cultural cleft, became as good as strangers, one to the other.

Obviously, this was an unfortunate state of things. Thirdly, to this division of culture and of the community, was added the trauma that was caused to fester in the psyche of the Negro who accepted the new civilisation. For, as I have shown above, however westernized he became, he could not completely stamp out from his soul, however much he tried, every vestige of the ancient culture. And even if he succeeded in doing so, his colour was always there, to distinguish him from his new cultural brethren, and identify him with his dusky kin.

Furthermore, as I have pointed out above, the contempt with which his race was held, the jeers to which it was subjected, the tribulations it was made to undergo, incited him to strive, with might and main, to escape from his own and identify himself, as totally as possible, with the new cultural community; hence the desperate attempts to bleach the unbleachable blackness, to uncurl the hair that is forever recurling; hence the self-detestation and the state of a soul in conflict, divided against itself.

To heal the first division, cultural integration will enable the African to rehabilitate the best elements of his own culture, to absorb the best that the foreign modern world can offer, and make it his own; and from both the old and the new, create a new harmonised system of principles and values, to guide his private and corporate life, and serve as a spring-board from which his native genius will now launch forth, on its own, into further inventions, creations, conquests and achievements, in the sciences, in the arts, in the field of abstract thought, in high heroic example, in social institutions; realisations that will win for the blackman's civilization a place of respect, among the cultures of the universe. These achievements will make the world admit, however grudgingly, that there is initiative, inventive talent, creative genius, inherent beauty, moral rectitude and heroism, in the Negro race. This culture, thus integrated and developed, will be an eloquent evidence to the fact the Negro people are a mature people, capable of profound, scientific thought. This will blast, clean out of existence, the pernicious myth cherished and propagated, alas, by some eminent Africans, that the Negro is a being that feels but does not think. An idea which to me, *salva reverentia*, is sheer, downright nonsense.

Secondly, thanks to this integrated culture, thanks to the spirit of the tolerance that will prevail, where differences persist, like in religion for example, thanks to the reinforcement of African village solidarity and egalitarianism by the introduction, at the national level, of scientific socialism, the social cleavage will heal, and, the division of one and the same people into **natives** and westernised, privileged and underprivileged, will disappear and yield place to an integrated community, sharing one culture.

And finally, with our indigenous way of life restored and rehabilitated, enriched by the absorption of healthy foreign contributions; with the emergence of a new culture, unified, harmonised, fertile, productive, dynamic and endowed with dignity in the eyes of the world; with communal divisions eliminated and communal unity recovered; the healing of the Negro's wounded psyche, the ending of the internal split that rent his soul, will follow as a natural, ultimate consequence. The self-detestation, the mental dichotomy, the psychic trauma which festered within the westernised African will be gone forever. The prodigal who yearned to be white, who fled from blackness and from home, will return, and feel content among his own. The endless storms that raged within his soul will cease. Thus, he will undergo a real and genuine renewal, and, thanks to this rebirth, a new Negro will emerge, whole and entire in heart and mind, serene wherever he is, noble in his blackness, proud of his being, and at peace with himself.

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