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NEWSLETTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

FROM THE EDITOR, OLUFEMI TAIWO

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FROM THE EDITOR

Olufemi Taiwo

Seattle University

South Africa has been in the news lately. As we go to press, there is a controversy over United States' participation in the United Nations Conference Against Racism scheduled for Durban, South Africa, in September 2001. We know that the South African President, Thabo Mbeki, has been enmeshed in a controversy with AIDS activists across the globe in light of his skepticism about the causes of AIDS. In many other ways, since the change over to majority rule in 1994, South Africa has remained a significant presence in the United States media. I have no doubt that philosophers in the United States have been part of the audience for the many exposures that I referred to above. But, I am sure that few have been introduced to news of the philosophical scene in South Africa. It is for the latter reason that the first article in this issue of the Newsletter is timely. Pieter Duvenage, a South African philosopher, asks and answers the question: Is there a South African philosophical tradition? He points out that the piece is devoted primarily to the "philosophical approach" that has historically dominated in "historically white" and predominantly "Afrikaans-speaking" universities and he traces this approach back to the eighteenth century. But the piece is now without reference to the alternative contributions of South African black philosophers. Yet, given that the latter were not the object of focus in the present article, one hopes that future contributions to this Newsletter from South Africa will fill out our knowledge of the history of philosophy in South Africa.

In the piece, Duvenage argues that South Africa, like other postcolonial societies, exhibits in its intellectual development some characteristic traits. One of them is that its dominant intellectual traditions owe their origins to the mother country, in this case, Britain, with other influences coming from Netherlands, the original homeland of the Afrikaner population, and the wider continental philosophical tradition. These influences have been shaped by the peculiar experiences of living in South Africa and the result has been some homegrown syntheses that can be labeled "South African". Simultaneously, the piece reminds us of the importance of migrating texts and traditions and the fact that the more historians of philosophy based in Europe and North America fail to take full cognizance of the career of Euro-American philosophical forms in non-Euro-American climes, the less complete their accounting will be of the true

development of their own traditions. My hope is that Duvenage's piece will contribute to our education in this respect.

The second piece, "Philosophy in Russia", is by Natasha Blokhina and Matthew Lister. As the authors point out, they do not set out to write about philosophy in all of Russia. It is an attempt by them to provide us with a snapshot of the current philosophy scene in Russia, especially in light of the developments in the aftermath of the collapse of "dialectical materialism" that once dominated the now defunct Soviet Union. They argue that, in the post-Soviet era, there has been a return to the religious roots of Russian intellectual traditions. But they do not argue that this is the only strand in contemporary Russian philosophy. They point to "three main streams of philosophical development" in Russia at the present time. They are 1) the modernized versions of Marxist philosophy, 2) Orthodox Church-inspired religious philosophy and, 3) the group of younger philosophers largely to be found in the Academic Institute of Philosophy and whose exertions are directed in the main towards social and political philosophy and new interpretations of the history of philosophy. Finally, the authors point out the excessively difficult circumstances under which philosophers in Russia have to create at the present moment.

The final contribution on "The Universalist Thesis Revisited: What Direction for African Philosophy in the New Millennium?" is by Jay van Hook. The author revisits the universalism versus particularism debate in African philosophy. The revisit, according to the author, has been prompted by two books published by the distinguished Ghanaian philosophers, Kwame Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu respectively, which "defend at least a moderate version of the universalist thesis." Van Hook ultimately maintains his skepticism about universalism in philosophy even as he agrees "with both Gyekye and Wiredu that cultural borrowing is both necessary and desirable and that all human beings and cultures share much in common." He insists that such an acknowledgment does not require "a non-trivial universalist view of philosophy". Van Hook's piece is an important intervention in debates concerning cross-cultural understanding and the books that he uses to set up his argument represent some of the best products of philosophical syntheses that should be of interest to the readers of this newsletter and the wider population that the APA serves.

Finally, I would like to seize this opportunity to inform our readers that the Newsletter has a new editorial address. From now on, contributions should be sent to: **Olufemi Taiwo, Department of Philosophy, Seattle University, 900 Broadway Avenue, Seattle, WA 98122**. Electronic submissions should be sent to: taiwo@seattleu.edu.

ARTICLES

Is There a South African Philosophical Tradition?

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1. Introduction

Until now international philosophical movements have played an overwhelming role in South Africa. British Idealism, European continental thinking (which includes phenomenology, existentialism, critical theory and hermeneutics) as well as logical positivism and religious philosophical approaches such as Christian philosophy (*Christelike Wysbegeerte*) and neo-Thomism have, at different times, influenced South African philosophy. It is also presently the case that South African philosophers, who are working in such fashionable fields as postmodernism, postcolonialism, feminism and analytical philosophy, do so with a heavy emphasis the origin of which is traceable to other contexts. Against this background my aim in this contribution is to ask: is there something like a South African philosophical tradition, and if so, where will we find it and what promises does it harbour for the future? If one wants to talk about a South African philosophical tradition, then it is further necessary to accept that, compared to a French, German, or English philosophical tradition, there does not really exist such a thing. There are no Oxfords, Sorbonnes, or Heidelbergs which are hundreds of years old. A South African philosophical society, for example, was only constituted almost fifty years ago in 1951. It would thus be premature to refer to South African philosophical tradition too easily. It might be better rather to refer to a South African philosophical approach.

It ought to be clear that the issue of intellectual history, and a specific one at that, is at stake here. The history of local intellectual traditions—and more specifically that of philosophy—has received little attention in South Africa. Despite a promising but short-lived project by the HSRC in the 1980s, and a few articles, there has been no attempt to study the history of the institutionalisation of philosophy in South Africa.¹ One of the reasons for this predicament is, according to Du Toit (1991: 5), the result of the history of settlement, conquest and dependency characteristic of a colonial and post-colonial society. Philosophy is thus part of a larger picture reflecting the complex relation between those intellectual and material factors that contributed to the scientific, industrial and technological revolution of “first world” societies in the centre, on the one hand, and its impact on the processes of social and intellectual development in peripheral (post)colonial societies, on the other hand. In this process, indigenous cultures were uprooted and displaced and metropolitan ideas and values introduced and imposed often in advance of the relevant and corresponding material and social development in the local society. The issue here is, as Du Toit (1991: 6) suggests, that liberation from the political rule of imperial powers and diminishing of economic

dependency on the old centre do not necessarily mean that the problematic intellectual history of post-colonial societies has also been redressed.

The problematic aspect of intellectual history in a post-colonial society like South Africa is that there is no clear break with its colonial past. It might be more appropriate to refer to a constant mixing of colonial and post-colonial discourses. In order to address this issue, this paper provides a brief historical sketch of the institutionalisation of philosophy in South Africa. More specifically, the emphasis falls on the first generation of professional South African philosophers and the reaction to their work by a succeeding generation. In many ways, what will follow will be a western narrative, or to borrow a book title from the South African author, J.M. Coetzee, a kind of “white writing”. Finally, some suggestions are made on the promise of a South African philosophical approach that goes beyond a kind of white writing.

2. Academic philosophy in South Africa: a brief historical sketch

One can safely assume that Jan van Riebeeck and his party did not bring with them a library of books when a European settlement was planted at the tip of the African continent, at the Cape of Good Hope, in 1652. Van Riebeeck’s instructions, rather, were of a different kind: to establish a commercial settlement, halfway between the Netherlands and the mysterious East (Java), with a specific and limited purpose—to provide fresh produce to East Indiamen trading between the Netherlands and Asia. In such pragmatic-material circumstances there was obviously work to be done and little time for the luxuries of intellectual and philosophical reflection. The Dutch East India Company, which ran the settlement, had little interest in the hinterland of the Cape, which, reports said, was barren, inhospitable, and sparsely populated by “primitive” tribes. Interests waned further when exploring parties failed to find any workable mineral deposits. For the next century and a half, the company governed the Cape with the central idea of profitability, trying, unsuccessfully, to discourage the spread of settlement into the interior (Coetzee 1988:1). Under such circumstances it was impossible for cultural and tertiary educational institutions to bloom. O. F. Mentzel, for example, wrote almost a hundred years after Van Riebeeck’s arrival: “there are no high schools or universities in this country. Such institutions are not required, for what use could one make of learning acquired there in a land where life is still primitive and where the Company’s rule is law.”²

It was only after Britain took over the Cape as the colonial power in 1795 that a tertiary educational system slowly emerged during the nineteenth century.³ The first tertiary institutions such as the South African College (SAC) in Cape Town (1829), St. Andrews in Grahamstown (1855), Grey College in Bloemfontein (1855) and the Victoria College in Stellenbosch (1874) were all strongly influenced by British intellectual and administrative traditions. In 1873, the University of the Cape of Good Hope was established to coordinate the examinations of these colleges. In the northern parts, the first tertiary institutions only emerged after the Anglo-Boer War when the Transvaal University College (TUC) was founded in Johannesburg (1906) and in Pretoria (1908). In 1910, this university college was divided into the South African Mine School (Johannesburg), while Pretoria

continued under the original name. The next important date for tertiary education in South Africa was 1918 when the University of the Cape of Good Hope was transformed into the University of South Africa with its seat in Pretoria while the SAC and Victoria College became the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch respectively (Rauutenbach 1975: 139-141). They were followed by the Universities of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) in 1923 and Pretoria in 1930. Although other universities were subsequently instituted, these four (Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Witwatersrand and Pretoria) can be considered the four founding residential universities in South Africa.

It is also at these four universities that philosophers found an institutional base. It is at this point that the issue of power and knowledge enters the picture. In the British colonies philosophy was established as an area of study at universities, which were funded by the state. This all happened in a context where the political order of the day could not be separated from knowledge production. At issue here is the specific colonial situation where thinking starts to migrate from the centre (in this case London) to the colony (in this case South Africa). Such a study of the history of British academic institutionalisation in South Africa allows one also to gain a deeper understanding of further developments in the twentieth century. It also assists us in understanding where philosophy finds itself today, after the epochmaking events of 1994. It is perhaps only now that one can talk about the possibility of the emergence of a South African philosophical approach. We need reflect further on the relationship between knowledge and power because subjects (individuals) are always encumbered by institutional power relations and this makes pure and neutral thinking impossible. It is against this background that the focus now turns to the influence of British Idealism on philosophy in South Africa.

The initial institutionalisation of philosophy in South Africa occurred in a hegemonic atmosphere. This hegemony was tied to a specific trend in British philosophy, namely British Idealism, in which figures such as F. H. Bradley, Bernard Bosanquet and T. H. Green were central.⁴ This movement was a very interesting nineteenth century phenomenon, because British philosophy is normally characterized as empirical, practical, and “commonsensical.” Isaiah Berlin made the apt remark that this empirical approach stands in close relation to the everyday British mentality. During the second half of the nineteenth century, though, British philosophy was influenced by a kind of Hegelian Idealism. Hegel, succinctly put, argued that history is the bloody narrative of progress which leads eventually to the highest good—Absolute Spirit. In this process, he made the questionable point that certain cultures or peoples (and the individual amongst them) had the task to lead other people. It doesn't involve difficult guesswork to arrive at who he had in mind: the peoples of Europe had to lead the way. In the British context of imperialism and colonialism of the nineteenth century the “white man's burden” entailed that it was their task to assist the colonised people on the long and winding road to the absolute spirit. The Hegelian legacy was thus used by British Idealism to provide a form of legitimisation for colonialism.⁵

The first philosophers who gained institutional positions at places such as Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Pretoria, and

Johannesburg were almost without exception products of British Idealism. The celebrated example in this regard is R. F. A. Hoernlé. More than his predecessors at Cape Town (Bindley, Foot, Fremantle and Loveday) he interpreted his appointment as professor of philosophy at the South African College (1908-1911) as a calling.⁶ In a splendid study, one chapter of which is appropriately titled “When Hegel came to Africa”, Nash (1985) provides a fascinating anecdote of how Hoernlé arrived with this idealistic inspired philosophy at this far-off corner of the world, Cape Town, to be confronted with totally different circumstances than he was used to at Oxford. At Stellenbosch, Thomas Walker was from 1874 to 1916 a professor of philosophy. Walker is not exactly remembered for his academic prowess, but for his administrative and military capabilities (regarding the latter he presided as commanding officer of the local regiment). Although Walker was also product of British Idealism, he identified himself with the local Dutch-Afrikaner community. In the northern parts of South Africa, the philosophy department at Pretoria University was founded by the Oxford-trained Scot, W.A. Macfadyen (see next section).⁷ At the University of the Witwatersrand Hoernlé, after a spell as a lecturer at Harvard, returned to occupy the chair (1923-1943).⁸

3. Macfadyen and early Pretoria philosophy: an interlude

In the year that the Pretoria branch of the Transvaal University College (TUC) was founded in 1908, philosophy was taught by A.C. Patterson (1875-1932), professor of Hebrew and Latin and later rector, and Dr. J.H. Hertz. Between 1909 and 1911, Le Fouche, the professor of history, was also responsible for philosophy, psychology and political science. In 1911, Dr. W.A. Macfadyen came to teach ethics and political science and, from 1912, he was appointed Professor of philosophy and political science, a post that he held until his death in 1924. Apart from philosophy (including logic, metaphysics and ethics) and political science, he also lectured in a variety of other subjects, e.g. psychology, economics, biology, city planning, music and eugenics.⁹ Macfadyen (1865-1924) was born in Manchester and studied at Brasenose College, Oxford, where he received his Greats (1869) and MA. Due to poor health he came to the Cape Colony in the early 1890s and joined Graaff Reinet College. Shortly afterwards he moved to Pretoria (South African Republic) where he taught English and logic at the State Gymnasium. At the same time he studied law and completed the first LLD at the University of Cape of Good Hope in 1899. After the Anglo-Boer War, during which he did his service at Simon's Town, and before he came to Pretoria, he was Professor of Law at Rhodes University College, Grahamstown (1905-1909) and lecturer in mathematics at the Grey University College in Bloemfontein.¹⁰

According to J. N. Findlay, who studied at the TUC between 1919 and 1924, Macfadyen introduced him to the usual run of philosophers from Thales to Aristotle and from Descartes to Kant, to the political philosophers from Hobbes to T.H. Green and the logicians from Aristotle through Bacon and J. S. Mill to Bernard Bosanquet, and to the psychologists from William James and E. B. Titchener to William McDougall. He left the ethics course to an assistant and had some interest in the realism of H. A. Alexander. Findlay describes his training as very similar to what was then going on all over the British Empire.¹¹ Findlay himself went on to Balliol College, Oxford,

where he completed his Greats in June 1926 and returned to Pretoria in 1927 to join Prof. T. J. Hugo (Macfadyen's successor in 1925) in the department of philosophy.¹² The 1920s, though, was a very turbulent time at the University of Pretoria. Findlay writes that "...a posse of Afrikaner intellectuals, many of them theologians, became engaged by slow steps with ministerial encouragement, in driving the English-speaking teachers out of the University, and making it a wholly Afrikaans institution". In the early 1930s there was also the infamous tarring and feathering of a French lecturer who wrote some negative remarks on the Voortrekkers in a novel.¹³ In 1932, the University became an Afrikaans institution. Shortly afterwards, Findlay left for a post in New Zealand.¹⁴

Macfadyen was succeeded by T. J. (Tom) Hugo as head of the department of philosophy in 1924. Hugo (1886-1963) studied education at the Victoria College (Stellenbosch) and Grey College (Bloemfontein) where he received a B.A in 1913. From 1914, he studied philosophy and psychology at the University of Groningen (Holland). There he completed his doctorate under the guidance of Prof. Gerhardus Heymans on the character types of children (Hugo 1918).¹⁵ Back in South Africa, he taught psychology for a short while at the University of Cape Town, before he went to the University of Pretoria in 1921 as senior lecturer in psychology with teaching duties in philosophy. In 1925, Hugo succeeded Macfadyen as head of the department of philosophy (Hugo 1977: 434). Although Hugo retained some elements of Macfadyen's British Idealism, he and his successors, C.H. Rautenbach (1902-1988), C.K. Oberholzer (1904-1983), and P.S. Dreyer (1921-1999) steered the department towards a continental style of philosophy.¹⁶ In order to understand this particular reaction against British Idealism, it is necessary to look at the bigger picture again.

4. The reaction to British Idealism

What became of the philosophical legacy of British Idealism at Oxford and in South Africa (and specifically at the four institutions mentioned above) in the twentieth century? Within the first decades of the century, analytic philosophy became the dominant force at Oxford (and most of the English speaking world), thereby eclipsing British Idealism completely. It remains a fascinating question, and one that needs more research, whether the decline of British Idealism was in any way connected to the collapse of British colonialism. The reaction of analytic philosophy, led by G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, to British Idealism was no coincidence, because it linked up with the British empirical and common sense tradition. Logic and the analysis of everyday language play an important role in this regard. Because such a philosophy keeps itself busy with a refined game of analysis, even to the most esoteric extents, it has been criticized for being ahistorical and apolitical. In South Africa, analytic philosophy became influential at different times at all the historically white English-speaking universities. The first department to follow the analytic line was Witwatersrand after the death of Hoernlé. The University of Natal, Rhodes University (under the influence of Daantjie Oosthuizen since the 1960s), and lastly the University of Cape Town, eventually followed Witwatersrand's lead.¹⁷

Philosophy at the University of Cape Town is an interesting case study, because four Afrikaans-speaking philosophers—G.H.T. Malan, A.H. Murray, Marthinus Versfeld

and S.I.M. du Plessis—gave a distinctly continental flavour to the department between the 1930s and the 1970s.¹⁸ It was only after the retirement of Murray (a kind of Afrikaner Idealist) and Versfeld (strongly influenced by a non-dogmatic Catholicism) in 1974 that this department became pugnaciously analytic.¹⁹ Finally, analytic philosophy also became influential at the University of South Africa (Unisa) in the 1960s due to the influence of two Afrikaans-speaking philosophers—A.M.T. Meyer and René Meyer.²⁰

In comparison to the historically white English-speaking universities, another reaction came against British Idealism at the oldest historically white Afrikaans-speaking universities (Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Bloemfontein). The earliest followers at these institutions were all influenced by the three branches of the Dutch Reformed Church, whose theological positions were determined by continental debates (stemming from Holland and Germany) rather than from Britain.²¹ From this perspective, these philosophers were open to religious experience and they were critical of an overly scientific *weltanschauung*. Their outlook was further influenced by the struggle of Afrikaner nationalism against British colonialism, the Afrikaans language-struggle against English and a certain historical consciousness. Afrikaner philosophers such as Brümmer and Tobie Müller (Stellenbosch), Hugo, Rautenbach and Oberholzer (Pretoria), Stoker (Potchesfroom), and Diederichs (Bloemfontein) found themselves culturally in opposition to British traditions.²² In these circles, Oxford and Cambridge were no longer the intellectual reference points, but the emphasis moved to continental Europe and America for possible alternatives. Although all of these philosophers associated themselves with the national struggle for recognition by the Afrikaners (white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans) there are also subtle, but important, differences in their philosophical outlooks.

These differences become perceptible when one studies the development of institutionalised philosophy at the predominantly Afrikaans-speaking universities in South Africa during the twentieth century. At Stellenbosch, Brümmer and his successors Kirsten, Degenaar and Rossouw, were all influenced by a certain blend of continental philosophy and Protestant theology (influenced by the powerful Dutch Reformed Church Seminary – NG Church).²³ The Pretoria tradition also followed a continental tradition like Stellenbosch, but Rautenbach, Oberholzer and Dreyer took a more conservative political stance than did Degenaar at Stellenbosch. At Potchefstroom, Stoker started an indigenous Calvinist philosophy—dubbed philosophy of the Idea of Creation (*Wysbegeerte van die Skeppingsidee*).²⁴ This religiously informed philosophy also became very influential from the 1950s on at Bloemfontein. To summarize: the historical development where British intellectual traditions were opposed by an eclectic mix of continental philosophy, set the agenda for most of twentieth century South African philosophy. The interesting aspect of this development, though, is that this tension took place in terms of the western way of thinking as a whole and more specifically within the context of the Anglo-Saxon tradition of English-speaking white South Africans, on the one hand, and the continental tradition of the Dutch/Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans (Afrikaners), on the other hand.²⁵

5. 1994 – and the road ahead

Although the argument has followed, so far, the contours of a “white writing”, it does not imply that there were no black voices. Already in the 1940s, Anton Lembede wrote a fascinating M.A. study on Socrates. Writers such as Eskia Mphahlela and Credo Mutwa contributed to an indigenous thinking and writing tradition. There was also the influential Black Consciousness Movement of the 1960s, with figures such as Steve Biko, Barney Pitso and Mamphela Ramphele. The work of these figures, though, hardly passed through the corridors of academic philosophy in South Africa. The first coloured lecturer in philosophy, Adam Small, was only appointed in the early 1960s at the University of Fort Hare. A sprinkling of black philosophers followed at the homeland universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Presently the number of black South Africans with tenure is still a significant minority. Until 2000, only Joe Teffo has been appointed as a full professor in philosophy at the University of the North. Appropriately he titled his inaugural lecture “The Other in African Experience” (1995). Although themes in African Philosophy made earlier inroads at the Historically Black Universities in the 1970s and 1980s, it only entered the curricula of philosophy departments at the historically white universities, in the 1990s, where it is still very much on the periphery. An interesting case study in this regard is the influential University of South Africa where African philosophy has found a place in the curricula since the middle of the 1990s, but still under the watchful eye of analytic philosophy.

This brings us to the challenges facing philosophy in South Africa today. As the various South African cultural value systems are moving nearer to one another at the dawn of the twenty-first century—due to industrialisation, modernisation and the founding of a politically united state—the general question of education, and more particularly that of philosophy, becomes pressing. The issue here is not only the mediation between different cultures, but also the confrontation between particular cultures and the universal modernisation process. Against this background one of philosophy’s principal tasks in South Africa is to explore the rational, political-ethical and aesthetical dimensions of this problem. In dealing with the cultural problem, South African philosophy is in line with the outside world. The cliché, that South Africa could be described as a microcosm of the macrocosm, is well known. Writing on South African philosophy, Rauche (1992: 452) argued that the main task of philosophy is to find new ways of living together, avoiding ideologisation. There is the need for co-operation between people and among peoples all over the world: the existential need for forging human ties and communicating with one another. Although there is in South Africa a growing awareness of this need for cross-cultural communication and contextualisation, the question remains: has South African philosophy succeeded in addressing this issue?

One way to answer this question is to allow intellectual history to contribute to philosophy in this context. The challenge is to explore those intellectual traditions that have shaped philosophy in South Africa, to know where they are coming from and to understand how they were transformed under (post-)colonial conditions. Such a *genealogical* perspective, to borrow a term from Foucault, is worthwhile by its providing a historical and material corrective to arguments that might otherwise strive to reconcile cultural

values and ideas in an apolitical and an ahistorical manner. (Post-)colonial societies do not develop autonomously, but they are the result of the transplantation of fragments of cultures and traditions rooted in the parent societies. As argued here the imperial power and metropolitan centre is of primary significance to (post-) colonial thinking. Against this background, local traditions have to define their own ideas, values, and aims within the ambit of hegemonic imperialist and other “foreign” discourses even (perhaps especially) where they deliberately set themselves against these. In such a situation, Du Toit (1991: 5) argues, colonial and postcolonial intellectuals found themselves as “ambiguous intermediaries”, functioning both as missionary agents of “civilised” values and imperial discourses and as spokespersons for local interests and communities.

In South Africa, the role of “ambiguous intermediary” also implies a problematisation of Western intellectual traditions. In philosophical terms, it means a problematisation of both analytic and continental philosophy and how they have been practised in South Africa. Rauche (1992: 453) argues correctly that some problems raised by continental philosophy (from existentialism via hermeneutics and Critical Theory to postmodernism) are of relevance to South African conditions, but then these problems must be discussed on a less abstract and more concrete level: they must be applied to South African problems. Unfortunately most of the papers at South African philosophy conferences and in the *South African Journal of Philosophy* move on a more or less abstract level. South African philosophers coming from an analytic background have a special responsibility in this regard. Logical and clear language benefits any philosophical argument, but it cannot just stay at that level; it must be sensitive to the locality in which it operates.²⁶

Another aspect of the Western intellectual tradition that needs critical reflection in the South African context is the overemphasis on the *functionalist* way of thinking. This is enforced by the influence of technology in society and the need for increased economic productivity and achievement. As Rauche (1992: 453-454) puts it: “The greatest danger from the philosophical point of view, is that functionalism so practised in philosophical analysis leads to a one-dimensional way of thinking and forgets man’s multi-dimensional being. This danger, which arises from the absolutization of one particular type of thinking,... is a real problem. What is needed in view of the multi-cultural structure of South African society is the balancing out of the original cultural factor against the mechanical functional character.”

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Endnotes

1. See De Beer and Mouton (1988). For contributions on South African philosophy, see Conradie (1980), Wolff (1986), Miller and Macdonald (1989, 1990) and Rauche (1992: 442-450; 451-461). For an early and interesting contribution on Afrikaans philosophy in South Africa, see Murray (1947, 1968). According to Nash (1997: 63) the earliest published texts on philosophy in South Africa are: Bacon (1846) and Changuion (1848).

2. Mentzel lived in the Cape between 1733 and 1741. See O.F. Mentzel (1919: 108-109) and Schoeman (1997: 50-54).

3. For a short time (1803-1806) the Dutch returned as colonial rulers at the Cape.
4. For a general study, see Metz (1938), and more specifically on Green, see Richter (1964).
5. It is important to note here that another aspect of Hegel's legacy, his view of the tension between master and slave, did not figure prominently in this context.
6. Fremantle, an ambitious and energetic young Oxford graduate, resigned his post in 1903 to enter politics. See Nash (1985: 79-80).
7. On Macfadyen see Bennett (1977).
8. For his contribution on liberalism in the South African context, see Hoernlé (1939).
9. P.S. Dreyer, "Die Wysgerige agtergrond van die Hervormde teologiese opleiding aan die Universiteit van Pretoria", p. 339.
10. C. Bennett, "W.A. Macfadyen", p. 568.
11. Findlay (1985a: 13) who was born in Pretoria, and attended the Pretoria Boys High School, is arguably the most eminent philosophical son of the city and South Africa. Elsewhere (Findlay 1985b: 55) he writes: "At his South African University Findlay absorbed the idealism which the British Empire had diffused everywhere, chiefly through such now dated but valuable books as Caird's *Critical Philosophy of Kant* and Bosanquet's *Logic – The Morphology of Thought*, and also through all the classical writings of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, etc."
12. According to Findlay (1985a: 20, 22) he based his lectures in logic on W.E. Johnson's *Logic* and Keynes' *Theory of Probability*. Later he also considered Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (who he met for the first time at the end of 1929). Findlay also gave a standard course on modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant, and lectures on metaphysics which he based on Russell, Broad, Stout and similar Cambridge sources. According to Findlay, the Oxford idealism of Bradley, Bosanquet, Joachim and Collingwood was anathema to him, even though he became a specialist on Hegel in his later years. Findlay was more interested in Brentano, Russell and Meinong. In 1934, he went to New Zealand, and after a short return to South Africa (Rhodes and Pietermaritzburg), he had a very successful career as a philosopher at the University of London, Yale and Boston. For his inaugural lecture at Pietermaritzburg, see Findlay (1946).
13. For a detailed discussion of this, see Steyn (1987: 159-178).
14. Before leaving for New Zealand Findlay (1985a: 23) writes that he attempted to translate W.E. Johnson's *Logic* into Afrikaans, a language that is as "...receptive of sense as of nonsense ...". Findlay completes his autobiographical note on the early years in the philosophy department as follows: "I also had the enjoyable experience, not base when one's opponents are base, of being able to scarily them publicly with my tongue, before leaving for a new position in New Zealand. There are good people in charge of the institution now, since deceit and hate are not basic Afrikaner characteristics."
15. This work was later republished by Hugo (1922).
16. For a brief introduction to the Pretoria philosophical tradition, see Dreyer (1989). Hugo was an assiduous follower of Heyman's neo-Kantian type of philosophy. He was more known for his staunch support for the Afrikaner nationalist cause at the University of Pretoria than his academic output. He wrote, for example, on the Afrikaners as a people (volk) cultural festivals, the Afrikaner university etc., see Hugo (1838a, 1938b, 1941). On Oberholzer's main work (1968) see the critique of Malan (1971) and the *feestschrift* of Smith (1979).
17. It is interesting that of all the so-called homeland universities (Fort Hare, Zululand, North, and Transkei) only the latter department became analytic.
18. Of the four Malan (then at Bloemfontein and Witwatersrand) turned to analytic philosophy. According to Rauche (1992: 455), both Hoernlé and A.H. Murray addressed South Africa's racial problems from the liberal perspective of British Idealism. They arrived at quite different conclusions though. Murray, for example, contrasted political pluralism with the monistic social philosophies of the western national state in his book (Murray 1958), by arguing an individual's rights and duties derive from the function performed by him/her within his indigenous system of law, property and religion. Consequently he argued for a great measure of decentralization (and pluralism) in South Africa, even to the degree of separatism.
19. On Versfeld, See De Klerk (1983) and Rossouw (1986).
20. For his doctorate, see A.M.T. Meyer (1949).
21. The biggest of the three the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, though, had strong links with Scotland. The other two (*Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* and *Gereformeerde Kerk*) had very strong links with Holland.
22. On Müller, see the biography of Keet and Tomlinson (1925).
23. Kirsten was influenced by Bergson; Degenaar by phenomenology, existentialism, analytical philosophy, Marxism and postmodernism; and Rossouw by hermeneutics. Of the three, Degenaar is an interesting figure due to his critique of apartheid from a very early stage. He passed through various phases: existential philosophy, phenomenology, analytic linguistic philosophy, Marxism and neo-Marxism, as well as post-modernism. His latest writings discuss problems of language and literature, among other things the problem of the paradigm, the phenomenon of metaphorical language and the social dimension of post-modern intertextuality (Van Niekerk 1991, Du Toit 1986 and Degenaar 1998).
24. On Stoker, See Du Plessis (1994). For a critical study on neo-Calvinism in South Africa, see Conradie (1960).
25. Versfeld's comments on the various philosophical foci in South Africa, after the second South African Philosophy Conference in 1953, has still relevance today. He mentions British Idealism, represented by English and Scottish philosophers, who made an impact at all the South African university colleges initially. Since the 1940s, though, the influence of continental thinkers, such as Husserl, Scheler and Heidegger was felt. A new cultural phenomenon in the 1950s was the modern logic and positivism. Then there is also the ascendancy of a conscious Calvinist Philosophy, influenced by the Netherlands. Lastly Versfeld mentioned Catholic philosophy, a tradition that has shaped his own thinking (Versfeld 1953:2). The influence of religious affiliations on the choice of philosophical positions, as mentioned by Versfeld, is an interesting issue in South African philosophy. This is especially the case with Afrikaans universities such as Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein (Conradie 1980: 410). Versfeld (1953: 2) continued: "Die organiseerders ... het hulle uiterste geënsaamlik om alle rigtings en albei tale tot hulle reg te laat kom." Versfeld made the following interesting remark: "Ons moet totdie gevolgtrekking kom dat, soos sake nou staan, die Engelsprekende Suid-Afrikaner minder belang in die wysbegeerte stel as sy Afrikaanseprekende langenuot, en dit o.a. omdat lassgenoemdes die filosofie as lewensbepalend aanvaar, en nie hoofsaaklik as kritiese oefening sonder inhoud." De Vleeschauer (1953) also commented on this conference, the second South African Congress for the Advancement of Philosophy, organized in Pretoria from 4-8 May 1953, and which was attended by seventy participants coming from all parts of the country. De Vleeschauer classified the papers in the following fields: the philosophy of values, the philosophy of existence, logic and epistemology and history of the Protestant philosophy. In the first two groups, papers were read by C.K. Oberholzer (Pretoria), J.J. Degenaar (Stellenbosch), Martin Versfeld (Cape Town) and S.I.M. du Plessis (Cape Town). Papers on logic were read by A.M.T. Meyer (Pretoria), Harris, Yourgrau and Malan (all Wits). On the history of theology, papers were read by H.J. de Vleeschauer (Unisa), A.E. Venter (Bloemfontein) and H.G. Stoker (Potchefstroom). There were, finally, two public lectures. A.H. Murray presented a paper on "A liberal Philosophy for a Racially Plural Country" and T.J. Hugo on "Some Failures in Philosophy".
26. For interesting reflections on this issue, see Meyerson (1995) and Du Toit (1995).

Philosophy In Russia

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Russia is, of course, a country huge in both size and history. Anyone who attempts to sum up either the essence of Russian philosophy or the present situation of philosophy in Russia will face a near impossible task. Therefore, in this paper, we do not attempt to give a complete or thorough account of either topic. Rather, we single out several aspects that we believe will be of interest to those who hope to understand the history and future of Russian philosophy. Others would no doubt have chosen some different emphasis. We can only hope that our contribution will encourage others to explore this rich field. We will proceed by first giving a schematic characterization of some of the main trends in Russian philosophy, and then briefly discuss the state of philosophy in Russia at the beginning of the twenty-first century, especially as it is practiced in the provinces.

The Russian poet of the 19th century, F.E. Tutchew wrote:

Óì ïî Ðí ññèþ íá ïíýòü,
Àðøèíï ïáùèì íá èçíáðèòü:
Ó íáé ïñíáííáý ñòàòü-
ÂÐí ññèþ ííáíí òí èüèí ááðèòü.¹

The first and the fourth lines of this verse may be considered the most important. They can be translated as: “Russia cannot be understood by the mind (or reason) but only by faith” (or, “one can only believe in Russia”).

Reasoning was not the main feature of the Neoplatonism which formed the foundation of the Russian Orthodox Church. Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, thought of the universe as an emanation from the One, the omnipresent, transcendental good. We lower forms could only understand this One through contemplation, and this tradition was still very influential in the Orthodox Church. The ancient Russian State, Kievskay Rus, was christianized in 988 A.D. and it inherited the Orthodox belief system. In pondering the essence of God, the Orthodox Christian relies not upon reason but on faith and contemplation. Thus was formed an original Russian approach to rationality, which might well be seen as a form of anti-rationalism.² This usually expresses itself in various tendencies towards mysticism. However, though the influence of the Orthodox Church has been a, perhaps the, influence of major importance, we think it is not the only reason for the prevalence of mysticism in Russian philosophy.³ We can also mention the Russian geo-political space, Russian history, with its numerous invasions and wars, the many centuries of slavery for much of the population, which was only abolished in 1861, the state’s domination in all spheres of Russian life, the wideness of the plains and endless Siberian territories, social misfortunes that not only required economically effective activity but contemplation and readiness for disasters. All of these might incline one to appeal not only to reason, but also for God’s help. If we use Arnold Toynbee’s category of the “Historical Challenge” and analyze Russian history in light of it, we’ll see religious types of answers to the challenge.⁴ When the answers were in another (secular) form, they were condemned by the Russian people and history. (Peter the Great and the Bolsheviks can

both be seen as examples of this sort of reaction.) So Russia has a philosophical tradition dating back to its founding, and its national philosophy is religious. In contrast to the religious philosophy, the philosophy practiced by even the most talented of secular Russian thinkers over most of its history was not especially original, for their main thoughts were borrowed, and had their origins in the West. In this, Marxism is no exception.

Russian religious philosophy had a short period of renaissance before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries is called the “silver age” for Russian literature, and many Russian intellectuals worked as poets and writers as well as philosophers. This less systematic method fit well with the mystical and anti-rationalistic nature of the philosophy.⁵ However, in 1922, those scientists and thinkers, many of whom were university professors, who had not agreed to conform to the Bolshevik regime were expelled from Russia. Those who did not emigrate but would not conform were excluded from public life and had their activities put down. In the West, the names of Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1901), the neo-Hegelian religious philosopher, Nikolay Berdyev (1873-1948), who emigrated, and Michael Bakhtin (1895-1975), who did not, are well known, and Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968) is known for his important work in *Sociology in America*.⁶

Russian religious (and even much secular) philosophy reflected the main features of the Russian mentality, in representing the Russian soul and national ideals in social life. In the West, these features are known through Russian classical literature by authors such as Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Ivan Turgenev, and others. In abstract form, these features are reflected in philosophical concepts. The central concepts of Russian philosophy are, *sobornost*, *vseedinstvo*, *bogochelovechestvo*, and *rususkaya ideya*, the “Russian idea”, or “Idea of Russia”. We will explain them in order. The concept of “*sobornost*” originates form a Russian word “*sobor*” meaning “meeting for agreement” and symbolizes the Russian religious philosopher’s idea that the Russian Orthodox Church is the synthesis of both men’s freedom and men’s unity. This idea is opposed by Russian religious philosophers to what they have seen to be the main idea of the Catholic Church—unity without freedom. “*Vseedinstvo*”, or “all-in-unity”, stands for the population’s symmetric unity with the state and the church. Finally, “*bogochelovechestvo*” literally means both “mankind-in-God” and “God-in-mankind”, and represents God as the final goal in mankind’s history. The “*rususkaya ideya*” is the claim that Russia and the Russian people will have a special place at the vanguard of the history of the world, and adhering to it will lead Russia into its next, higher level.⁷

Even though Russian religious philosophy was in many ways utopian, dreaming of an other-worldly existence, it also reflected the real (earthly) dreams, self doubts, and fears of the Russian people. It is not, then, surprising that the Bolsheviks adopted and transformed many of these religious ideas and used them in the Russian version of Marxism. For example, the idea of “permanent revolution” can be compared with the “Russian Idea” in an obvious way—in both, Russia is leading the nations of the world to a new, better state of existence. This, then, helps explain one important way in which Marxism was “domesticated” in Russia, and

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gives one reason as to why Marxism in Russia differed from Marxism in other parts of the world. Though religious philosophy was banned, its influence lived on.

The religious tradition in Russian philosophy was interrupted in 1917 and gradually disappeared as an independent cultural phenomenon. In the now defunct Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), there was only one “true” philosophy—dialectical and historical materialism. However, the real domination of a dogmatic interpretation of Marxist philosophy existed only during the time of Stalin’s regime, that is, between 1930 and 1953. After that time, Soviet philosophy became well known for many more original philosophers who practiced “Marxist Platonism” or “Marxist Phenomenalism” and so on.⁸ Some of the best representative members of these schools include the Marxist-Platonist A.V. Ilyenkov (1924-1979), who committed suicide when his work was condemned for espousing idealism, U. M Lotman (1922-1993), the head of the so-called Tartu school of Semiotics, and the Marxist-Phenomenologist M.K. Mamardashvili (1930-1990). A.A. Zinoviev and U.O. Shedrovistskiy, among others, represent philosophy of science in the Soviet-Marxist tradition. Unfortunately, none of the major works of these philosophers are available in English at this time.⁹

So, Russia has had two main traditions in philosophy, Orthodox and Marxist, but both have failed to give fully adequate answers to people’s problems, are not seen to be attractive options by most of the younger generation, and are now often thought to be “lost”¹⁰. When Mikhail Gorbachev’s program of *perestroika*, or “rebuilding” began in the 1980’s, Russian intellectuals helped to destroy “bad socialism” and to build “good socialism” or “socialism with a human face.” Among these intellectuals were Gavriil Popov, Anatoliy Sobchak, Uriy Kagyakin, Tatiyana Zaslavskay, Nilolay Shmelev, and others.¹¹ But their efforts failed. In 1991, the USSR was dissolved, and the name “Russia” once more appeared on the political map of the world. Soon after, the problem of what philosophy Russia needed arose. The authorities wanted one thing during the first stage of democratization: the destruction of Marxism. In universities at that time, philosophy consisted mainly in teaching the history of philosophy, with all the major traditions in western philosophy, and some from eastern philosophy, given at least a cursory treatment. This was, and often still is, the history of philosophy from a Marxist point of view, as the authors of text-books and lectures were former teachers of Marxism, and these ideas die only after the deaths of their bearers.

At the second stage of the democratization of Russia, coinciding with the early part of the Boris Yeltsin era, the authorities decided to formulate a national ideology, a newer version of the “Russian Idea”. On a few occasions, there were attempts to bring together groups of professional philosophers and political theorists with the aim of producing a new national ideology. These attempts, however, were not successful. This is not surprising, since intellectuals can only christen a child and not give birth to her. That is, though intellectuals can give names to ideas, they do not have the power to bring their ideas to fruition.

At the present time, there are three main streams of philosophical development in Russia, and all of them are engaged in politics. This is to say, all three compete for influence in the state and are engaged in ideological work. The first stream is a modernized and updated form of

dialectical materialism, the second a renewed religious philosophy of an Orthodox base, and the third is a compound philosophy with an accent on the scientific philosophy of the West, and some interest in Post-Modernism.

Modernized versions of Marxist philosophy are deeply entrenched in some of the philosophy departments in Moscow and St. Petersburg, in Perm in the Ural region, in the work of the prominent philosopher, V.V. Orlov, and in work done by almost all the philosophers at provincial universities who are older than sixty. Those who are engaged in this style of philosophizing consider dialectical materialism and the theory of economic formation as central, and think that what is needed is not a rejection, but a modernization of Marxism. They argue that Marxist theory is compatible with contemporary scientific views on nature and society.

The renaissance of religious philosophy is dependent on many occasions, that are social, political, and cultural in character. The Orthodox Church restored and re-opened hundreds of churches and many monasteries in the last days of the Soviet Union and the time thereafter. Several of these churches and monasteries opened religious schools or seminaries. This process stimulated a growing interest in religious, especially Russian religious, philosophy, and demanded a higher level of research in this field. It is important to note the state’s present tolerance of and benevolence towards (Orthodox) religion at schools and universities. For example, the Ryazan State Pedagogical University, where we work, is planning to open a theology department. In the nineteen-eighties, the most influential religious philosopher was Alexander Men, and, at the present time, the most interesting journal for religious philosophy is “*Начало*” (Nachala—Beginnings) published in Moscow since 1991.

The last stream, the compound variety, is the most widespread and popular these days. Furthermore, the educated and younger generation of philosophers is more widely active in this stream. The journal “*Логос*” (“Logos”) is perhaps the most interesting in this area, and the center of activity is widely thought to be the Academic Institute of Philosophy. In the nineteen-sixties and seventies, Soviet philosophy of science could compete with the western scientific philosophy for attention and new philosophers, but this is largely seen to no longer be the case. The main reason for this is the absence of social and state order in Russia and the rapid influx of western philosophy in the nineteen-eighties. At the present time, the most popular areas of research include social and political philosophy and the philosophy of history. Additionally, new research into the history of philosophy is being done, and there has been a real boom in translations of books by eastern and western philosophers whose original compositions were not allowed in the USSR.

All of these streams are inclined to interpenetrate each other and work together, with the exception of dogmatic Orthodox thought. This process can be seen taking place on the pages of the leading philosophical journal “*Вопросы философии*” (*Voprosii Philosophii*—“Philosophy’s Questions”).

The philosophical life in contemporary Russia on the one hand can be summed up by the words of Buratino (the Russian Pinocchio), “More likely alive than dead.” That is, life exists though it is often hard to see at first glance. This applies to the Russian Philosophical Society and its main

journal, *Voprosii Filosofii* mentioned above. Publication and activity are sporadic and irregular. If one did not know where to look, it would be easy to think there was no significant philosophical activity. Nevertheless, philosophical life has become more interesting and active now that it is not centralized in and directed from Moscow. In the provinces, new philosophy departments have been opened and new philosophical journals have been published. Their numbers are as yet not sufficient for the country and economic considerations hinder many developments. At present, the most popular and cheapest way of communicating among philosophers is to submit papers to conferences, where the articles or abstracts are published, but without actually attending the conferences. This is a regular practice in Russia which differs greatly from that in the U.S. Most philosophers in Russia cannot at present afford to attend many, or any, conferences, so the program of those who will actually attend is made up a few weeks before the conference.

Russian philosophers face many problems today, though several of these are common to all the population. A Professor's salary of about \$70-\$80 per month is just equal to the lowest standard of living above the poverty line. Teachers at the high-school level, who make even less than this, need to work at additional jobs just to make ends meet. On her or his salary alone, it is nearly impossible for a philosopher to rent an apartment and support her or himself. Buying a house or a flat is out of the question. This means that either she must rely on family members for support, thereby making it very difficult to take a job at a university in another city, or else must have an additional job or teach extra private lessons on the side, which severely limits the amount of time that can be devoted to research. Additionally, it is nearly impossible on a philosopher's salary to purchase books or journals published by American or European publishers. This, of course, also greatly limits the research that one might pursue.

Philosophy is part of the required block of humanities classes that university students must take, but the number of required classes is often reduced from year to year. This year the number of required classroom hours was cut to 50 from the 72 of the previous year. Each year the number of classes that a University teacher should teach increases, without there being a commensurate increase in pay. This, of course, leaves less spare time for keeping current on the professional literature, research, and preparing for lectures. Despite these drawbacks, philosophy is still a respected discipline within the academy. For example, in Russia, all post-graduate students must pass an exam in philosophy before they may earn the *kandidatskaya* degree in all fields of science.¹² At present, one may specialize in philosophy only at the graduate level, and full faculties of philosophy, which train future philosophers, exist only in the largest universities in the different capital regions. However, one no longer needs undergo an examination of one's ideological commitments in order to pursue graduate work in philosophy, as all aspiring students were required to do in Soviet days.

It is difficult to say whether the authorities in the larger political world of Russia respect philosophy or not. It is noteworthy that the words of a Russian minister of education from the nineteenth century are still popular with officials. They say, "Philosophy's benefit is uncertain, but its harm is undoubted."

Philosophers working in the provinces, that is, outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg, face some particular problems. The general problem of shortage of information and access to recent philosophical work that all philosophers in Russia face are more acute in the provinces, which are in general much poorer than the capital cities. The chances of finding a book one needs, either in English or in translation, are much lower. While there are large, if somewhat under-stocked, libraries in Moscow and St. Petersburg, most provincial cities have much smaller libraries and have an even harder time acquiring new materials. Journals are also harder to come by. Additionally, there is less chance to meet with any visiting philosophers, who tend to stay only in the capital cities.¹³ New information technology, the internet and email, help to some degree to make life in the provinces and the capitals more equal, though reliable access to this technology is also more restricted in the provinces. Additionally, it is very hard for provincial universities to attract young philosophy teachers, as life outside the capital cities is often much less appealing and less comfortable than that in Moscow or St. Petersburg. This contributes to the domination of Marxist philosophy in the provinces. As can be expected, philosophy in Russia is changing and adapting to new situations brought about by the radical changes in the world around it. One thing remains certain, however. What ever may come, philosophy in Russia will have a Russian face.

Endnotes

* Though this is a joint work, the order of the names of the authors represents the importance of their respective contributions.

1. "Russia cannot be understood by reason, Or measured by any ordinary device, She stands imposingly in a statuesque manner,- In Russia one can only believe."

2. Anti-rationalism is not seen as a clearly bad thing in Russia as it often is in the West. One thing that any visitor to Russia who spends more than a few days here soon notices is the continual reference in every-day life to the "mysterious Russian soul" which cannot be explained but is invoked to explain seemingly irrational behavior.

3. See, for example, Ī. Ī. Āō ūīā, Ī.Ñ. Ēīēīā. Dōññēāy dēēīñīōñēāy iūñēū X-XVII āāēīā. Ī.: ēçā-āī, ĒĀŌ,1990, Ñ. 56. This opinion is also supported by many leading specialists in medieval Russian culture such as S.S. Averitvsev, B.A. Ribakov, and D.S. Likaxhev. For more information, please see also, *A Study of Byzantine-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1981) and *Medieval Russian Culture* (Berkley, 1981.)

4. See Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (1934-1961) in which the author attempts to establish general explanatory laws of history, one of which is need to answer (in some way) Historical Challenges.

5. Some of the better examples of thinkers in this period include, N.A Berdyev, S.N. Bulgakov, I.A. Iljin, V.V. Roxanov, V.S. Soloviev, G.G Shret, and many others. This is a rich area that the reader is invited to explore on her own.

6. Works available in English for Sorokin include, *Social and Cultural Dynamics* (Porter Sargent Publishers, 1970), *Social Change and Dynamics* (Transaction Publishers, 1985) and *On the Practice of Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1998). For Soloviev, see *Politics, Law, and Morality: Essays* (Yale, 2000) and *A Soloviev Anthology* (St. Augustine's Press, 2000.) Bakhtin's works in English include, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (University of Minnesota Press, 1985), *Rabelais and his World* (Indiana University Press, 1998), *The Dialogic Imagination and Speech, Genres, and other Late Essays* (both University of Texas Press, 1990.) Unfortunately, Berdyev's works do not seem to be in print in English at this time. Notable works about Russian philosophy in English include, J. Sutton, *The Religious Philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov: Towards a Reassessment* (1998), Lowrie, D.A., *Rebellious Prophet. A life of Nikolas Berdyev* (New York, 1960) and, in French, Segundo, J.L., *Berdiaeff, Une Reflexion*

Ehretienne sur la Personne. (Paris, 1963). Interestingly, while Bahktin is fairly well known in the West, he is known only to specialists in his home country. A quick search on amazon.com yielded well over 100 entries for Bahktin, but it is rather difficult to find any of his works in a typical Russian bookstore, and he receives much less attention by, for example, students of literature in Russia.

7. Of course, there were differences in rendering these concepts by different thinkers, but to go into detail here would be to write a whole series of longer papers. The interested reader is encouraged to look to the following sources. Ðõññèàÿ Èäàÿ, Ì. 1992 (A collection of original papers by Russian philosophers in 396 pages), N.O Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, International University press, New York, 1951, .Á.Á. Çàìóèí àñèèè, *Èñòðòèÿ Ðõññèèé Õèèññèòèè* (1989.) and F. Copleston, *Philosophy in Russia*, Notre Dame, 1969. Contemporary debate on the subject can be found in the journal of Russian religious philosophy, “Í à-àèà” (Ì ñèàà), published since 1991.

8. There was a joke that, in the Soviet Union, some of us were “red positivists”, some “red existentialists”, but all of us were Marxists.

9. For more information, see *Õèèññòèÿ ìà Èí-ààðñÿ... Èç Èñòðòèè ìò-à-àñòààííé òèèññòèè. XX ààè.1920- 50 àíàó (òñ 1). 1960 – 80 (òñ 2). (1998)*. Also, the interested reader is encouraged to see issues of the journal “Russian Studies in Philosophy”, (formally “Soviet Studies in Philosophy”) which publishes unabridged translations, with editorial introductions, of materials from leading Russian journals and publications, published by M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

10. This point of view is widespread in the Russian literature. See, for example, “Áíòðòèè Õèèññòèè”, 1999, 10, ñ. 175-180.

11. The Passions, arguments, drive, and emotions of the first years of *perestroika* are reflected in the collections of papers by prominent liberal thinkers of those years titled *Èíàí ìà Ààì (The Other isn't Given)* (1987) and *Çààèñèò ìò ìàñ (Depending on Us)* (1998).

12. This is a research degree somewhat like the Masters degree in England, in that it is not the highest possible degree, but it is the normal degree for a university teacher.

13. We encourage visiting philosophers to visit the provinces for a less distorted view of Russia, and to meet with the dedicated philosophers who work there. Unfortunately, Russian travel rules do not always make this an easy prospect.

The Universalist Thesis Revisited: What Direction for African Philosophy in the New Millennium?

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The question of identity occupied a prominent place in the post-colonial discourse of African philosophy during the final third of the twentieth century. Discussions about identity invariably raised the question of whether African philosophy should be construed primarily along particularist or universalist lines. Advocates of particularism emphasized its quality as *African*, while proponents of universalism wanted to focus on its characteristic as *philosophy*, that is, in practice at least, as it measured up to the dominant traditions of Western philosophy in which they themselves had been trained. It is now generally acknowledged, I believe, that it is time to move beyond the question of African philosophy's identity (and, indeed, many African philosophers have already moved beyond it) and also beyond the universalism-particularism debate. While I agree that it is time to move beyond these issues and debates, I now want to revisit that debate in order to learn from it, and thus perhaps identify and encourage a new direction for African philosophy in the new millennium.

In my article “African Philosophy and the Universalist Thesis,” [1997, 385-396], I argued that the universalist thesis about the nature of philosophy, adopted by a wide variety of African philosophers, is best abandoned. Since that article was written, however, two books by distinguished Ghanaian philosophers, Kwame Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu, have been published which renew the universalism-particularism discussion. These have convinced me that the particularist thesis should also be abandoned, but not before learning an important lesson from it. Both books, Gyekye's *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* [1997] and Wiredu's *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* [1996] defend at least a moderate version of the universalist thesis.

In the first part of his book, Gyekye discusses and attributes important insights to what he calls the particularist thesis; but he leans more heavily towards universalism, while at the same time seeking a compromise between the two positions. Wiredu, for the most part, is dealing with another issue. His main concern is to demonstrate the thesis that there are cultural universals. His primary focus is not on a universalist view of philosophy as such; but his cultural universalism clearly points in that direction, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly.

In this paper I shall do the following: first, I shall discuss Gyekye's attempt to do justice to both universalism and particularism. Then I shall examine Wiredu's position on cultural universals, particularly as it touches on the issue of the nature of philosophy in general, and African philosophy in particular. Finally, I will attempt to offer some suggestions aimed at moving African philosophy, as it seeks an identity for the new millennium, beyond this questionable dichotomy.

Gyekye on the particularist thesis

Whether one takes a particularist or a universalist position on the nature of philosophy, Gyekye observes, depends on whether one sees philosophical ideas and doctrines as relative to the cultures from which they originate or whether one views them as transcending those cultures. Gyekye defines the “particularist thesis” as the view that:

the historical-cultural moorings of philosophical ideas and proposals are sufficient evidence of their particularity and of the inappropriateness of applying them universally to other cultures or societies, that those ideas—and the problems that gave rise to them—derive from experiences that are specific to cultures or historical situations, and that, consequently, philosophers unavoidably focus attention on issues and problems that interest them or relate to the experiences of their particular cultures and histories, unconcerned seriously to engage reflectively on the problems and issues of other peoples and cultures. [1997, 28]

The first thing to note about this rather cumbersome definition is that Gyekye construes the particularist thesis as one about “ideas” or “doctrines,” and perhaps also about the “problems” to which these doctrines are put forth as solutions or answers. I have observed elsewhere [1997, 389-390] that both the universalist and particularist theses may be taken as theses about either *content* or *method* or *activity* or even all three of these. Further, taken as theses about *content*, one could mean either that the truths or *doctrines*, or the *problems*

themselves are universal or particular. Now it is clear that Gyekye interprets the particularist thesis as claiming that philosophical doctrines and the problems they are supposed to solve are culturally and historically particular. Put another way, Gyekye claims that the particularist thesis is about the *product* of philosophizing. This is evident in his reference to K.C. Anyanwu's remark that "African philosophy is a particular instance of philosophy as a cultural product" and that "different assumptions and models of experienced reality lead to different philosophical doctrines." [28-29] Finally, Gyekye claims that it is unfair to the particularist thesis to construe it as holding that critical rationality is not essential to philosophy, an interpretation he claims to find in Oruka. But Gyekye insists, "Neither Anyanwu nor any advocate of the particularist thesis would deny the place of rationality in human thought, African or non-African. The point of the particularist thesis is that the concept of rationality as understood in philosophy is a product of Western culture and that the way it is understood in that culture may not (necessarily) apply to other cultures, such as the African. But to say this is not, by any means, to imply a denial of the rational or logical character of African philosophy. ..." [29]

As a thesis confined to content or product, Gyekye contends, particularism does not negate the rational and logical aspect of philosophy; and he expresses some support for it. He is also clear, however, that on the whole, he is more attracted to universalism. On the universalist thesis, Gyekye quotes Peter Bodunrin's remark that philosophy "must have the same meaning in all cultures... African philosophy is the philosophy done by African philosophers. . . ." [29-30] Like Bodunrin, Gyekye allows that the particular issues emphasized may be culturally and historically influenced. Hence, the universalist thesis "does not deny the historical or cultural specificity of philosophical ideas or insights; but it maintains that this fact does not detract from the relevance of those ideas or insights to other cultures and times, and that they can therefore be considered universal." [30]

While supporting the universalist thesis, however, Gyekye claims that it cannot be true without qualification. While the universalist is correct that human problems as *human* are universal, particularism properly recognizes "that human problems can invariably be contextualized, for they arise in, or out of, certain historical or cultural situations." [30] The essential point of the particularist thesis, one which cannot be dismissed, according to Gyekye, is that since "the subject matter of philosophy is human experience, and human experiences differ in some respects," we may expect that philosophies produced by those with different experiences will also differ to some degree. [31] As discussed so far, Gyekye's position seems to me both insightful and substantially correct.

Having conceded this much to particularism, however, Gyekye chides the particularist thesis for denying "the possibility—and sometimes the necessity—of exploiting the ideas, values, and institutions of other peoples and cultures, where necessary, relevant, beneficial, and practicable, for dealing with the problems of a people." [31] Particularism, he contends, ignores the historical importance of "cultural borrowing." If this accusation were correct, it would be a serious flaw in particularism—but it is not obvious that particularism excludes cultural borrowing and Gyekye produces no specific documentation to support his claim.

So in what does the universality of philosophy consist, for Gyekye? What is the conflict really about? If I read Gyekye correctly, his disagreement with particularism seems to center around two issues. The first is the issue of cultural borrowing just mentioned. The second is Gyekye's idea that contextualization presupposes a universal human nature which can be contextualized. But again it is not clear that a philosophical particularist necessarily rejects the universality of a human nature. What the particularist opposes, as Lucius Outlaw has so eloquently argued, is the presumption that the particularity of Western logocentrism is universal and therefore normative for African philosophy. [Outlaw, 1987, 9-14]

My initial response to Gyekye, then, is that neither a commitment to a universal human nature nor an acceptance of the importance of cultural borrowing entail the universality of philosophy. Lucius Outlaw is correct, I believe, in his contention that there never has been a universal philosophy if by "universal" is meant anything more than "thinking" (which certainly is not unique to philosophy). [Outlaw, 1987, 32-36] What we have instead are various particulars proclaiming their own philosophical doctrines and methods as universal. With this I turn now to a consideration of the relevance of Wiredu's cultural universals to a universalist view of philosophy.

Wiredu on cultural universals

Wiredu's book is concerned first of all to argue for the existence of cultural universals. At the very beginning he bemoans the fact that during this time of unprecedented cultural interaction, there is "increasing skepticism regarding the very foundation of this discourse; namely, the possibility of universal canons of thought and action." He attributes this to the influence of such intellectual movements as postmodernism together with the need of people who have been marginalized, "in seeking to redefine their self-identity, to insist on particulars—their own previously unrespected or neglected particularities—rather than universals." [1986, 11]

In a chapter titled "Are There Cultural Universals?", he presents a disarmingly simple *reductio ad absurdum* proof for an affirmative answer to that question. It goes like this: "Suppose there were no cultural universals. Then intercultural communication would be impossible. But there is intercultural communication. Therefore, there are cultural universals." [21] Wiredu goes on to elaborate various areas of cultural universals: biological, epistemic, and moral. One might concede all of this, however, without adopting a universalist conception of philosophy.

Although it is not the primary theme of the book, Wiredu does state his conception of and support for the universality of philosophy. In speaking of the controversy between particularists and universalists, he notes that both sides want to take African culture and its philosophical heritage seriously; but he credits the universalists with insisting that African philosophy must be "critical and reconstructive" and use modern philosophical resources from foreign sources. The universality of philosophy means, he says, that in dealing with some issue one can "shift tactically from the traditional African framework to that of Western philosophy, appropriating whatever I find of worth in it." [36] So, like Gyekye, Wiredu is primarily concerned with the issue of cultural borrowing. He claims that on the basis of human and cultural universals,

the same philosophical problems occur in different cultures and that one can move back and forth between various cultures in order to arrive at the best solutions to these problems. To return to my earlier typology of various kinds of universalist views, Wiredu's position seems to be that it is the *problems* of philosophy that are universal. But even if there are some universal philosophical problems, surely not all or even most would seem to be of this sort.

But where Wiredu goes seriously wrong, in my view, is in his further contention that universality and with it cultural borrowing are possible because there is such a thing as "truth" in the discipline of philosophy. At any rate, Wiredu's conception of truth is both inconsistent and confusing. His well-known claim that "truth" is nothing but "opinion," (a claim which occasioned dialogue between him and Odera Oruka) as well as his attempt to link his view to the pragmatism of John Dewey, is inconsistent with his yearning for objective truth in philosophy. The possibility of cultural borrowing may indeed be related to the existence of cultural commonalities, but it is not because there is such a thing as "objective truth" in philosophy. The claims to truth in philosophy are usually attempts to universalize particulars. As John Caputo has put it so well, when anyone claims to speak for Truth, it's time for the rest of us to run for the exits. [Caputo, 1993, 145]

It must be conceded, I think, that Wiredu is by no means unaware of the danger of false universalization, that is, of the tendency to claim as universal what in reality is merely a cultural particular. Throughout the book, he cites instances of the Western tendency to proclaim its values as universal. Nowhere is this clearer than in his chapter on "Universalism and Particularism in Religion." He accuses Europeans coming to Africa, and especially missionaries of a "facile universalism" both in their negative judgment of African religion as immature and in their positive universalizing of the Judaeo-Christian conception of God. Here, it seems to me, Wiredu's rather transparent hostility to Western Christianity blinds him to the exact parallel in Western philosophy. The Western missionaries he so deplors were part and parcel of the whole enterprise of exploiting Africa in the name of the universalized particular of Western civilization, including philosophy. The outrageous remarks about Africa and Africans made by the West's most "enlightened" philosophers like Hume, Kant, and Hegel provided the rationalization for this exploitation. And one might add that Western missionaries have for the most part made more progress in recognizing the value of African culture than have Western philosophers. It was, after all, the Western missionary Placide Tempels who first acknowledged that Africans were rational and had philosophy. Ironically, when discussing Hume and Kant in his book, Wiredu sticks to the issues on the canonical list of Western philosophical problems, ignoring their views about Africa.

In summary, I agree with both Gyekye and Wiredu that cultural borrowing is both necessary and desirable and that all human beings and cultures share much in common, but none of this requires a non-trivial universalist view of philosophy. This does not mean that there are no philosophical problems which cross cultural boundaries. Just as Wittgenstein argued that language games have no single essence but instead exhibit family resemblances, my view is that philosophies are expressions of particular cultures but

also exhibit family resemblances which allow for philosophical discussion and even borrowing across cultures. And that leads me to another Wittgensteinian observation. It seems to me that both Gyekye and Wiredu are both held captive by a particular Western philosophical picture, namely, that of *essentialism*. They are both enamored with the notion of a *philosophia perennis*, and in reading their work one finds oneself strangely pulled between the Middle Ages and modern Africa. Again, it was Wittgenstein who taught some of us to stop looking for essences, to stop assuming that words point to a single meaning in all the diversity of their uses.

So if what is important for African philosophy in the new millennium is a recognition of the importance of "cultural borrowing," it would seem that neither the universalist nor the particularist thesis will be of particular use to African philosophy. Before finally abandoning particularism, however, I want to comment on what I take as its greatest significance.

A recent article by Nicholas Wolterstorff of Yale University has the fetching sub-title: "The Revenge of the Particular." In this paper Wolterstorff discusses what he calls philosophy's "Grand Project." That project of the mainstream of Western philosophy from Plato to the present, has been to grasp objective truth, and has been seen as incompatible with particularist perspectives; for one must transcend the particular in order to attain what is universal and objective. Objectivity, Wolterstorff notes, means being in touch with "what's out there" and also "being impartial, not reflecting one or another particular perspective on what's out there." But now, and commenting only on Western philosophy, he notes a growing "revenge of the particular" manifested in such things as feminist epistemology, gay literary studies, and liberation theology. Even in the West there is a growing protest of various particulars against the objectivist and universalist claims of the traditional power centers. [Wolterstorff, 1997, 81-85] How much more then, it seems to me, is such a revenge of the particular understandable as a feature of African philosophy.

I would like to suggest that much of twentieth century African philosophy had understandably, properly, and necessarily been *deconstructive*. African philosophy had not merely been marginalized; it was off the page entirely. By deconstruction I mean the de-centering of what is the central text (in this case a Western philosophy which denied reason to Africans) in order to re-center, to bring into the text, the "other" who has been ignored. For the deconstructive phase of African philosophy, particularism was very important. For it was particularism above all which challenged the alleged universalism of the Western particular. If Outlaw is correct, as I believe he is, in saying that the first moment in African philosophy was necessarily deconstructive—a de-centering of Western logocentrism, then he is also correct in suggesting that reconstruction is the next moment. I do not mean to suggest that the deconstructive process is complete. Deconstruction, I think, is an ongoing task. But I think it is also fair to say that if the dominant motif in the old millennium was the deconstructive task for African philosophy, then it may also be the case that in the new millennium, African philosophy will move more forcefully into a reconstructive phase. And for that reconstruction, the cultural borrowing advocated by Gyekye and Wiredu will be one important feature.

So what direction for African philosophy in the new millennium? A first answer, I think, is that African philosophy would do well to replace both universalism and particularism with *pluralism*. To the extent that African philosophy is prepared to move beyond deconstruction, it should feel free to draw from its own varied traditions and from whatever other philosophical traditions may prove useful in particular cases. In other words, and in a very general sense, African philosophy might well cash in its *essentialist* framework for an *existentialist* one—not in the sense of mimicking Kierkegaard, Sartre, or Heidegger, but in the basic sense of attending to the existential situation(s) in which African communities find themselves. The present conference has been a good example, I think, of this pluralism and existentialism.¹ African philosophy need not go out of its way either to be different, to be wholly other, or to conform itself to Western norms merely to gain respectability. My recommendation leaves plenty of room for cultural borrowing. But African philosophy must be true to itself; and must learn also from the errors of the West, one of which has been over-professionalization. A recurrent theme in discussions among Western philosophers is that the profession has become irrelevant to the general society; that philosophers can only talk to each other.

I am fully aware that it was my friend and a great philosopher of Kenya, the late Odera Oruka, who liked to talk about professional philosophy; but it was also Oruka who went to the villages to find the sages who were not professionals. In keeping with the spirit of Professor Oruka's legacy, African philosophy would do well to continue his effort to combine the academy with the village. The common critique in the West today is that academic philosophy has lost all touch with the village. May African philosophy not make the same mistake.

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Endnote

1. The reference is to the Sixth Annual Conference of the International Society for African Philosophy and Studies (ISAPS) at which this paper was originally presented. It held at the University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya, from March 9th to 11th, 2000. Ed.