

The Concept of Phenomenology of African Mind, The Law of Vital Force

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Abstract:

This article deals with the phenomenology of African mind centering on the law of vital force. The article accepts as a premise the thesis that what makes the difference between the European mindset and that of the African people is their collective system of values and beliefs. This system of beliefs and values forms their ontological unity (the unit that gives collective identity) and provides the basis for their logic of reality. The unity is an ontological one, internally organized in such a way that the mental organization derived from it provides a conceptual paradigm in which one premises reality. This ontological unity lays a profound basis for value judgments and informs people's conception of what is right and wrong, tolerable and intolerable. If this is not disturbed by an epistemological heterogeneity, it may give rise to a homogeneous culture. This internal organization of reality is expressed in terms of concept, language and the ordinary practices of life. The truth of these hypothesis is attested to by both the naturalistic epistemology of Aristotle and the spiritualistic epistemology of Plato. In Plato's doctrine of the forms, well elaborated in the theory of the Divided line as pictured in the Allegory of the Cave, reality rests in the world of ideas, a virtual noetic heaven, while sensible phenomena exist only as the image of the reality to which the world of Ideas belongs. Therefore, for Plato, one obtains true knowledge in the world of Ideas, the spiritualistic world.

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Introduction

In his monistic ontology, Aristotle sees reality as one constituted by what subsists as matter and form. Form is the principle of determination. It determines the essential principle of operation and activity of a thing. It can be known also as essence. Matter, on the other hand, is the principle of individuation. For a particular human being, for example matter individuates the essence of humanness, the form that establishes the person as a human being, in order to bring into being an individual person in a such a way that the form or essence is enveloped within this particular matter.

The 'matter' of the human being, the body has extension and location; in virtue of the human person's physical extension, which is a dimension proper to all material beings, this particular human being is localized in time and space. Here it is worthwhile to note that Aristotle combined that dualistic world view of Plato to make it monistic while at the same time retaining the essential attributes and functions that Plato had ascribed to each world.



1. THE FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

For both Plato and Aristotle, knowledge or truth is principally knowledge of essences. Basing his thinking on the ontological unity of matter and form whereby form or essence is enveloped within matter, which in turn is always quantifiable, Aristotle developed an epistemological theory of abstraction. In this theory Aristotle advances the thesis that knowledge begins from experience, but at the same time it is fundamentally within the unity of the intellect. In other words, one knows forms or essences. Therefore, knowledge is at the foot of knowledge of essence discovered through the process of abstraction. Hence, it is in the intellect where knowledge resides in terms of ideas that originate through the process of abstraction.

1.1 The concept of truth.

Certainly, ideas are communicated through language. Language consists of symbols which express ideas. Thus, a kind of synthesis of Aristotelian and Platonic epistemology suggests that knowledge terminates in the formation of concepts expressed in language. Knowledge and truth are interchangeable. This is because the object of knowledge is the truth. One seeks to know because he seeks to know the truth. Thus, once one has knowledge, he is in possession of the truth of what he knows.

Consequently, in establishing the empirical foundation of knowledge, Aristotle establishes the empirical or phenomenological foundation of truth and hence of a value system. What is important for us here is the conception of truth formed either through the Platonic process of recollection (transcendental dialectic) or through the Aristotelian process of abstraction. Both philosophers put emphasis on the role of the intellect that unites with the essences in the formation of knowledge and in the conception of truth. The formed conception of truth serves as the basis for value judgments.

1.1.1 Is the truth relative or objective?

From the Platonic/Aristotelian perspective, is truth relative? Yes, in a way it is. Even if one were to hold that truth is objective, it still stands that we conceive truth from a relative position depending on the knower's angle of incidence, his position in time and space. The formed conception of truth forms the internal unity and cohesion upon which things are perceived the way they are perceived.

2. THE IDEA ACCORDING TO PLATO

While Plato lays his foundation of knowledge on spiritual facts in order to establish the truth, for him concepts or ideas or values are not the product of empirical experience; they are eternal, universal and immutable realities. Aristotle makes a synthesis of the Platonic world view as he wraps the two Platonic worlds into one world, the spiritual world wrapped into material world, thus laying the foundation of knowledge on empirical facts. Aristotle and the notion of abstraction to the Platonic conception of contemplation. The Platonic world of ideas (epistemic world, the noetic heaven) with its characteristics features of eternity, universality

and immutability is the counterpart of the Aristotelian notion of essence. In this sense, both Plato and Aristotle see values as resting in the epistemic world, the world of Ideas and only keen minds can reach there through contemplation, recollection or abstraction.

Plato sees that the epistemic world manifests itself in the world of events or in the world of becoming as its shadow. Likewise, Aristotle, who makes the Platonic synthesis, sees form as the principle of operation that is rendered manifested physically in matter. So knowledge is identified in human judgment in terms of the knower's operational activities. However, just as the appearance of the shadow of anything is affected by the position of the sun, the way we conceive this eternal, universal and immutable truth depends on our vantage point, our angle of incidence. This is where Aristotle, in synthesizing the two Platonic worlds with terms of matter and form, gives an existential dimension to the Platonic world of Ideas, that the workings of Ideas are affected by the localization of the body in time and space.

3. AFRICAN VITALITY

What the present article wants to establish is that, though we may agree that truth is objective, our notion of it depends on various relative factors or positions related to distance, time and space as well as to the apriori categories of the mind. This present article advances the thesis that the African law of vital force is the key principle of activity, of operation. It is the internal principle or logic which organizes the African notion of truth or values. It holds the position that unless the African mental package is systematically discovered, it would be impossible to address the African confusion of values that one is experiencing now. This confusion is an agent of African interminable poverty.

3.1 Scholastic Contributions

This article makes a thorough use of the reasoned and argued body of ideas advanced by Placides Tempels', John Mbiti, Martin Nkemkia, J. K. Nyerere and Leopold Senghor to construct a specific manifold of conclusion. The present article takes the position that the question of the African principles of action and ensuing the activity and their inherent moral posture cannot be understood outside of a philosophical investigation focused precisely on these principles. It is an epistemological question grounded on the metaphysical question, for the epistemological question. How do we know something or what can we know? Presupposes the metaphysical question, what is the nature of reality? It is indeed from this philosophical investigation that we are able to understand the principle of the African integrated unity of reality, that reality known as African ontology and consequently its posture and the imperatives contained within it.

3.2 African Phenomenology of Mind

Unless we are conscious and critically aware of the African construction of reality, we will not be able to uncover meaningfully the African mystery of interminable poverty. The title: *The African phenomenology of Mind*, is obviously a philosophical title. It is a title that proceeds from the analysis of the African composition of reality, as it were, in this mathematical manner; $1+1+1+1+1+1+1+1+1+1=10$. In this mathematical manner, 10 is a total unity of the added numbers.

This ten is an abstract unity or abstract quantity, it is an abstract phenomenology. The analysis of 10 brings into one all the elements that compose 10. The concept of African

phenomenology of mind is here, then, to be understood as the African abstract unity of phenomena. This abstract unity of phenomena forms what the writer calls the phenomenology of mind. This is the unity of perceived phenomena. This unity of perceived phenomena is made possible by apriori categories of the mind.

3.3 Philosophy, the foundation of African Philosophy

From the etymological point of view, the term philosophy is derived from two greek words, *philo* meaning love, and *Sophia* meaning wisdom. Thus philosophy from its etymological point of view is defined as the love of wisdom. If that is the case, as Aristotle would put it, we can then assert that everybody is a philosopher in as much as he is immersed within various elements of life and the cosmos and from there, he tries to suggest explanations for these phenomena and live in accordance with these explanations. The African conception of the universe is phenomenologically expressed in their way of life embedded in myths, proverbs, folklore, folksongs and folk wisdom. As a totality, these expressions form an abstract unity of their mindset as well as their theoretical vision of the universe.

3.4 The African Law of Vital Force

3.4.1 A Theoretical Vision of the Universe

When one wants to study seriously the Bantu theoretical vision of the universe, there is no more appropriate place to start than the pioneering studies of Placide Tempels'. Tempels' made a serious study of African ontology. His conclusions concerning African behavioral values, no matter how imperfect they may seem to be, cannot be thrown into a dust bin without plunging oneself into self-deception. Tempels' study about the existence of African culture and therefore of African philosophy and thought structure. In this book, Bantu philosophy (French edition 1954, English, 1950) Tempels' present his understanding of Baluba religion and philosophy.

From his analysis of African structural thinking, that is to say, the African thinking pattern, Tempels' comes to the conclusion that tradition people have a concrete metaphysical notion of being and the universe. It is this notion of being of theirs, this ontology that gives a special character and a local colour to their beliefs and religious practices, to their language, to their institutions and customs, and to their psychological reactions, generally speaking, to their whole constellation of behavior and to the categories that constitute their mindset structure.

3.5 African values

For Tempels', the key concept to African values is the notion of vital force. According to Tempels', it is within the scope of this key value that we are able to make sense of the Bantu value judgment. This principle of vital force, according to Tempels', is the basic metaphysical principle on the basis of which things are evaluated and judged as good or bad, virtue or vice, appropriate or inappropriate. The principle of vital force assumes the hypothesis that the African manifold of truth lies within their metaphysical connection with the mystical world seen as permeating hieratically everything that exists.

It is in this force, that life is restored; consequently, the preservation of life depends on being in harmony with this force. Accordingly, truth as a transcendental reality is embedded within this force that itself descends hierarchically from God to ancestors to grandparents and finally to parents. Since this force permeates everything hierarchically, the logical conclusion

Tempels' draws about Bantu people is that for Bantu people, existence is precisely existence with force which means, force and being are interchangeable.

Tempels' concludes that for Bantu people, the essence of being is force, in which case that force defines being. Everything participates hierarchically within this force in an ontological ascendancy. This participation within force in ontological ascendancy lays the basis for moral and political commandments.

Chronologically, the older you are, the more powers or forces to command life you have. And since force is a kind of activity, it follows then that, the Bantu man or woman is defined by his activity hierarchically. This means that a Bantu's ontological existence is not a static existence but a dynamic one. His/her existence is defined by the forces he or she possess. This is the essence of being, meaning force is being and being is force.

As indicated above, the vital force principle increases and diminishes with a corresponding order in the hierarchy of being. Vertically from the bottom to top, it increases as one moves from the world of phenomena to the world of spirits according to its place in the ontological order and diminishes as one move downward. The upward movement is the movement of mind and will towards a passionate commitment to the mystical world, the world of the past where there is the restoration of life making people glorify the past without learning from it. The benefits associated with the upward motion and the disadvantages with downward motion make it imperative that everyone should seek the upward motion so as to increase vital force. This force acts as a passive genesis of Bantu behavioural values. Such kind of gentle force terminates in the ancestor.

Since this force finds its terminating point in the ancestor, ancestor values act as a social and spiritual cohesion. The living is united together by a common social cohesion in a kingship system with communal social values. This king here not only has a political power but also spiritual power that connects the living to the dead. He presides over spirituals and sacrifices. In this context, the phenomenon of land is not only for economic purpose but also for spiritual purpose, a place where the living is connected with the principles of life force. This is the land of ancestors. I am living in our land that our ancestors left us. I am connected to them by living in the land they left to us and by offering libations and sacrifices. Consequently, removing a person from his ancestral land is not only depriving him of his means of living but, worse, is disconnecting him psychologically from his ancestors, a situation that creates more mental resistance because it offers a huge threat to his existence.

Tempels' analysis concerning the content of African culture has presented a preliminary background to our attempt to explain the content of African cultural values as well as their hierarchy within the principle of vital force. It appears logical to deduce that, since vital force increases in an ontological order of being, the vital force offers an order that has the character of imperativeness; consequently, there is in an African mindset a natural tendency towards participation and accommodation into the world of the spirits. The spiritual permeates the whole universe; everything in it has a link to the spiritual. If everything is imbued with the spirit as its operative principle, then the operations on the level of nature manifest the working of the spirits. Disturbing nature including perturbing the being is at the same time disturbing the spirits.

This intuitive logical conclusion suggests that the African mind is, or at least should be, in harmony with nature. In this sense, the people and nature are spiritually connected and thus have a mystical relationship, the human being ought not to disturb this mystical relationship. African traditional kinship norms prescribe this mystical relationship. This spiritualistic cosmos culminates in the immutable wisdom of the ancestor. The cardinal principle

embedded in the African law of vital force is the principle of participation. The phenomenal world participates in the spiritual world, the seat of abundance and life. Thus the phenomenal world of the spirit which is the seat of abundant vital force. The value of anything, then measured against this principle of participation, participation in ancestral wisdom. It is by means of participation in this ancestral wisdom that life force is granted in terms of fortune, health, fertility and other material benefits.

4. PEOPLE AND NATURE

Since the basic premise is that people and nature are spiritually connected, it follows then that they have to live in harmony, they should not harm each other. Harming others might provoke God's anger, which may manifest itself in terms of misfortunes and calamities. Here emerges the first African principle of social relations, living in harmony with other people and with nature. This holistic connection of African life with the spiritual powers with which the ancestor is endowed means that the society's and family's welfare could depend on the right relationship between its members and the ancestor spirits.

From this relationship flows determinants of what is right and wrong. What should be known and what should not be known, what is ethical and what is not ethical. This provides the basis for African epistemological and ethical homogeneity. The foundation of this ethical homogeneity is the constellation of spiritual/mystical powers of the ancestors for they provide unquestionable social cohesion. Inherent in the mystical power of the ancestor is the collective personality engendered by kingship, in the sense that, in African tradition, one cannot talk about one's mode of behavior without touching upon the central role of the ancestors in molding the collective behavior of the descendants.

Again, this mode of behavior finds reinforcement from the central thesis that in African society, family's welfare depends on the right relationship between its members and the ancestral spirits. The established right relationship will determine the prosperity conferred upon the members of the community as a collective entity. Meanwhile the absence of such relationship invite punishment. A kind of mystical sanction necessitates the existence of collective personality. This is quite different from the parts of Europe, for example, west Germany, that were not formally communist satellites. In these states, the mindset seems to prevail that one's personality is characterized by individualism and independence; an individual may come to identify himself or herself according to self-motivated activity that bears no direct connection to the mystical bond or to the past. This is different, of course for the spiritual/mystical relationships of those devout souls from various religions that are always and for perpetuity in relationship with Jesus, Mary, the angels and the saints in other words, with the world of spirit.

One achieves a vast array of knowledge of the principle, vital force through one's incorporation into the mystical world and his/her ensuing participation in the world. This leads to the perception that the whole thinking process of the Bantu man unfolds backwards towards what has come before in the mystical world, the process culminates in the Absolute Spirit (God). Because their mind, so to speak is directed backwards, it is towards the mystical realm that people incline. It is also within this mystical realm that is set the foundation for the now, (the present) and it is in terms of this mystical realm that the *now* is explainable and should be understood (mbiti, 24) The whole African mind therefore, is in a state of transverse: it is a transversal from the phenomenal world to the world of spirit. This identifies one's life as essentially religious. And indeed less sensitive to the data of experience.

4.1 The concept of Justice

The analysis above directly brings to the surface the question of social justice in Africa as a fundamental element in human life. Aristotle defines justice as the giving of what is due to another. Plato, meanwhile, defines justice as the harmony that prevails when all persons function in accordance with their prescribed duties.

Justice can be communicative, distributive and legal. In African society, since the universe was and is a religious universe, African leaders were invested with divine kingship. The categories of right and wrong depended on how one participated in divine kingship. It is within this divine kingship that all rights are reserved. The consequence of this is a mindset or disposition that has little tolerance for diversity. The ruler wants to be adored as a small god. Associated with this royal desire is the appeasement mentality, that is the sacrificing of truth for the sake of harmony.

From my point of view, a basic impediment to the African cultivation of social justice is the legacy of homogenous thinking that ancestral metaphysics left for us. This kind of legacy is more prominent in Tanzania where the *ujamaa* principle held sway as an extension of kingship rule. *Ujamaa* though did create social harmony in Tanzania, it formed Tanzanians into homogeneous thinkers rather than into heterogeneous thinkers. In a world that requires a constant re-definition of one's position and a constant exploration of new possibilities or new ways of doing things, an African person finds himself or herself constantly dramatizing the past even if it does not work in practice to the present moment. He is quite prone to the fear of trying new ways of doing things.

In spite of all these shortcomings, however traditional rulers were not only political leaders, they were also spiritual masters and so acted as a moral force in the discharge of their duties. However, the replacement of quasi-theocratic political leadership with a radically different theory of the state in Africa has required a mindset with a capacity for critical thinking. If critical thinking is absent, it will be difficult for African countries to realize whatever dream they have for development and social justice.

It is interesting here to note that Mbiti who thinks he adopts a position that is different from the conclusion of Tempels' rightly open his introduction about African religion and philosophy with these words: "Africans are notoriously religious. Religion permeates into all the departments of life" (Mbiti 1975, 1)

According to Africans, as Mbiti puts it, as an individual gets older, he is in effect moving gradually from the *now*, the physical world of the now, into the non-physical realm, the realm of myth, the *past*. It is this mythical realm that gives a sense of foundation and security to the *now* world and thus binds together all physical realities so that all are embraced within a macrocosmic order.

Thus as a person moves from a physical to a non-physical world at death, he/she enters into the realm of the mystical in virtue of which he or she becomes the ancestor (provided that he/she lived his/her life in accordance with the prescribed norms). It is this mystical person who gives a sense of foundation unity and security to the *now* (the one living in the present) binding and embracing them together within the macrocosm of the kingship or kinship (Mbiti 1975, 16). Everything is thus explainable within that foundation.

It is in this sense that we suggest that the African world view and its ethical dimensions are not so much the product of analysis of empirical phenomena or of theory subject to the requirements of empirical verification, nor is it the product of analytical reasoning, but rather, it is based on metaphysical belief grounded in intuitive reasoning. By intuitive reasoning we mean an immediacy that normally involves instinctual feelings and inspirations, that give rise

to an immediate insight, to an understanding without a consciously systematic reasoning process. For instance, I may hold that life is good because it has been always believed that life is good. Although I may be right in holding so, I have no conscious explanation as to why I think life is good.

What has been established so far allows us to say that African moral values derive from what emerges within a knowledge that is characterized by immediacy, and by inspiration of the spirit, always from within the relationships that the African transgresses with the ancestor and ultimately, with God. These values, then are not subject to sense perception and empirical verification. They constitute a morality cultivated from within metaphysical belief and not within empirical analysis. Is this perhaps what brought W. E. Abraham to arrive at the following statement when discussing Akan (African) morality?

4.2 On African morality

Because morality was based on metaphysical beliefs, the ethics of the Akan were rationalistic. Since the moral actions were spirit regarded. Traditionally it was not merely a disgrace to be immoral, it was almost sinful for immorality was held to jeopardize spiritual welfare. The rationalistic and so absolutist nature of the ethics also explains the reluctance to admit degrees of gravity of the same.

The point Abraham wants to establish here, I think, is the fact that morality in African societies, Akan in this case is based on the relationships one establishes with the spirit (with ancestors), the mystical reality. It is this natural tendency towards the spirit which is somehow imperative, embraces everyone into a mystical relationship with the spirit who in turn, explains their destiny. It is this mystical dimension that binds everyone together into a macrocosmic relationship of kinship.

This is ontological unity and solidarity which nothing can break or destroy (Mbiti, 16). It is worth reiterating that people constantly look towards the mystical world, the past because the mystical world, the world of ancestors, had foundations upon which the phenomenal world, the present world of the present rest and by which it is explained and understood (Mbiti, 24). The center of gravity for African thought and activities is the past period past that ushers forth into the world of the spirits, towards which the now moves. It is the mystical world that gives a sense of foundation or security to the living (those within the present, the now and binding together all the living in the web of kingship so that all are embraced within the macro-time (Mbiti, 23).

We can therefore define kingship as the mystical ties that binds the living dead, that is to say, the spirits of those who have died with their surviving relatives in the rhythm of life. Such rhythm begins with birth, proceed to puberty, initiation, marriage, procreation, old age, death, entry into the community of the departed and finally entry into the company of the spirits (Mbiti 24).

4.3 The living dead

It is within the African context of the above ontological rhythm that personal immortality is realized. By personal immortality we mean that after physical death, the individual continues to exist in the now period by means of the memory of his/her relatives who are still alive; the one who has died does not immediately disappear from them. She/he is remembered by relatives and friends who knew him/her in this life and who have survived him/her. He/she is called by name and people remember his/her character and personality. His/her words and certain incidents of his/her life. If he/she appears, he/she is recognized by name. Mbiti says that the departed appear mainly to the older members of their surviving families and

practically never to children. They appear to people whose now period is the longest (Mbiti, 25).

Mbiti coins the word, *the living dead* to designate the idea of personal immortality in contrast to collective immortality. He says: the living dead is a person who is physically dead but alive in the memory of those who have known him in his life as well as being alive in the world of the spirits. So long as the living dead is thus remembered, he is in the state of personal immortality. This personal immortality is externalized in the physical continuation of the individual through procreation so that the children bear the traits of the parents or progenitors (Mbiti, 25). The survivors, according to Mbiti, concretize or externalize the idea of personal immortality in acts such as respecting the departed; giving bits of food to them, pouring out libations, carrying instructions to them and giving them either food or drinks when they appear (Mbiti, 25-26).

4.4 The phenomenological concept of time and the ethical unity in Myths

We have so far defined myth as the exposition of a notion in a figurative, metaphorical form whereby human imagination mingles with hidden truth. Myth presupposes a kind of thinking whereby the center of gravity of human thought and activities is the past. According to Mbiti, mythical thinking finds its theoretical explanation and ontological unity in the phenomenological notion of time.

Mbiti, having done a profound study of Africa, particularly in East Africa, came to the conclusion that the African phenomenological notion of time is a key to the understanding of African metaphysics, ontology and the interpretation of African religion and philosophy. Etymologically, the greek word *phenomenon* means an event, when the suffix *logy* is added to it, we understand the study of what constitutes an event.

Thus a phenomenological concept of time would mean time as it is studied or measured by events. Events determine time and corresponding provide time with a standard for measure. Time goes hand in hand with events. It is therefore events that constitute time, they are prior to time. Since events are prior to time, the importance of time goes hand in hand with the importance of events. The weight given to events will be translated into the weight given to time. Here various important implications emerge.

First, because events are experiential, time should also be experienced or should have been experienced. Therefore, time is located within the framework of the now and the past, while the future seems to be virtually absent because events which lie in it have not taken place, they have not been realized and cannot therefore compose time (Mbiti, 17). Second, since it is the events that compose time, much importance is given to events *per se* rather than to time. Third, the progression of thought from the past to the present then recedes back to the past.

Thus people neither plan for the distant future nor live with hypothetical speculation or speculative thinking. Anything to be thought of has to be experienced either in the past or now. Fourth, since the whole movement of thought is cyclically sailing backward to the mystical world, the *past*, there is strong mystical bond between the dead and the living (surviving relatives). Fifth, since the whole movement of thought is backward sailing towards the *past*, the *past* becomes the temporal horizon for this movement. It is this *past*, the period of myth, that creates the foundation, the center of gravity, so to speak for human thought and activities. It is the source of ethical unity, giving the sense of foundation to the *now* period and binding together all members into ethical kingship system. Sixth, since events are produced by human beings, the central focus is the person who produces that event, everything draws

its meaning from the relationship to the person and how it promotes his/her life. This makes the whole of African ontology anthropocentric.

Although their starting are different, then both Mbiti and Tempels' arrive at the same conclusion. Tempels' has started from a metaphysical analysis of the Bantu's notion of being that coincides with their way of ordering thought, Mbiti has analyzed the African manner of ordering thought by appealing to the cosmological process and a phenomenological notion of time. Both arrive at the same conclusion; African ontology, the African notion of reality is basically religious and uncritical.

4.4.1 Cosmological Process

From a cosmological process rendered manifest by a phenomenological notion of time, it is within the cycles of events that human beings determine time. The human person produces the event; he equally produces time. Mbiti comes to the conclusion that the human being is at the center. Everything in African finds its value in relation to the human being. This allows Mbiti to conclude that the category of African ontology is extremely anthropocentric, that everything is in relation to human being. The journey from the phenomenal world to the mystical world is not a journey for its own sake, it is a journey that establishes a mystical relationship with man, a relationship that provides means for his existence (Mbiti, 16). Such an unfolding journey begins in God, the originator and sustainer of human being, and terminates in God as well. It is in this light that Mbiti concludes, "Africans are notoriously religious" (Mbiti, 1).

We can then say that Mbiti has successfully managed to use the phenomenological concept of time as the ground base from which he interfaces *anthropocentrism* with *theocentrism*, that is an anthropocentric ontology with a religious ontology. Likewise, Tempels' who begins with the principle of vital force and brings to light the hierarchy of forces, can successfully manage to fit *vitalism* into *Theocentrism*.

While Mbiti concludes with the notion of Theo-anthropocentrism, the focus of everything is the human being who is the essence of religious being. Tempels' concludes with *Theo-Vitalism*; in everything there is a vital force which increases or diminishes according to the hierarchy. God is the principle of this vital force. The more you have a mystical tie with God the more you have vital force (life force).

Both Mbiti and Tempels' end with a pragmatic conclusions regarding the African conception of reality. Mbiti sees that for Africans, time is relative depending on the practical implications of events while Tempels' sees that the vitalism in one's life is not categorically fixed. It depends on one's effort to unite himself with the hierarchy of forces. Tempels' notion of vital force reasserts itself in Mbiti's phenomenological concept of time in the sense that as time moves backward there is a decrease of vital force while as time moves backwards oriented, even cyclically oriented, since the person's mindset is backward oriented, even cyclically oriented, since the person must follow the imperative to interlink with the Ancestor Forces.

Weaving together an African unified ontology as suggested by Mbiti and Tempels' makes it evident that within the African thinking process there exists a kind of conceptual retrieval, a movement of thought from the empirical present to the mystical the past, from the pragmatic *the now* to the idealist *past*. It is the idealistic *past* which interprets the phenomena of the *present*.

Since the *past* is the foundation of *the present*, it follows that the *past*, the mystical world of ancestors, embraces the *present* into a macrocosmic society together with the mystical world constituted by ancestors who, in virtue of their abundance in vital force are the storehouse of

wisdom, the force by which all members with kinship bonds are united harmoniously together; all lives by an anthropocentric, sociocentric and theocentric orientation. We can, therefore, say that by the dynamism inherent in the principle he advocates, Tempels' vital force theory dovetails marvelously with Mbiti's phenomenological concept of time.

5. THE FINDINGS AND RESULTS

5.1 *The findings*

The findings within my paper have been gathered from library. Data collected from various philosophical books. Some literatures bases on African context have been collected and those of western thinkers as far as Plato is concerned on phenomenology surveyed on related texts. My paper adhered to qualitative methods.

5.2 *Results*

From the findings, the researcher was able to unify ideas of Plato to those of Africans. Clear link was established as from western modes of thought to African mode. Generally, from my paper it shows that despite that we are writing works and calls them ours, but is just the continuation of what has already been done by various authors of the past. The ideas from various authors enlightened me while writing my own work.

Conclusion

Generally, we can say that in African tradition, one cannot talk of one's mode of behavior without touching the central role that the ancestors play in molding the collective behavior in which individual persons participate. The central thesis is that in the Bantu society, the family's welfare depends on right relationships between its members and the ancestral spirits. This established right relationship determines the prosperity conferred upon the community as a collective entity. The absence of the right relationship, however, invites punishment.

Such demands necessitate the existence of collective personality established on the basis of homogeneous thinking. However, for the European secularist who lives outside the former communist satellites and has abandoned the truly religious spirit, the individual personality is an intrinsic activity that seems to have no relationship to the past even though it can still be influenced by the current situation. Our central hypothesis, on the other hand, that the God who typically manifests Himself through ancestors as intermediaries, ancestors whose wishes are interpreted by diviners and medicine men or traditional doctors. This God is the all-powerful creator with a concern for justice, that conviction is at the heart of my paper.

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