

THE AFRICAN MIND AND THE PRIMORDIAL THOMISTIC PRINCIPLES

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Abstract

The African mind is generally in search of holistic existence. This quest sometimes appears to be somewhat hampered by the realistic living conditions in most African contexts, thus making it hard for the searching mind to attain its ideals. Nonetheless, the African mind learns to establish poise through substantial understanding. Although tossed between the daily experiential oscillations of the swift shift (move) from cultural amiable values to enigmatic secular tendencies, the African mind becomes enriched with wisdom rediscovered in the wider cultural milieu. Hence, the knowledge from the broader perspective empowers it to introduce needed changes for a positive upsurge in both the individual and society. The thomistic primordial notions of the “Habits of the First Principles” provide a framework for this sagacious embrace and transformation in a world still mutilated by injustice, corruption, intolerance and violence. According to this proposal, the quintessence of truth and integral existence is recaptured by the very nature of these conceptions. In Thomas Aquinas' viewpoint, these habits constitute the “act of being” (actus essendi) human. Because they have two principal aspects, the speculative – in the form of principle of non-contradiction (PNC) – and the practical, namely, synderesis, they name what constitutes the essence of the human person. In other words, the thomistic habits are not only essentially rooted in human nature, they also form the core of human actions. Invariably they redirect individual persons to wise fundamental human option: “to do good and avoid evil,” albeit the contextual cultural varieties. In this paper, I demonstrate that the African mind shares in the wisdom of the rich resources of primitive philosophical notions geared towards individual and societal integral development.

Keywords: Africa, Thomistic, Mind, Principles

An Overview Of The African Mind-Set

Supposedly, the significance of 'mind' is taken for granted as a known 'entity' and is used by all, professional and non-professional alike. However, to get into this analysis meaningfully invites a delimitation and contextualization of this keyword, mind/set as used in the paper. ¹From Aquinas' perspective, as O'Callaghan appositely suggests, “mind' or 'mens' is taken from the verb to measure (mensurando)... So, the word mind is applied to the soul in the same way as understanding is. For understanding knows about things only by measuring them.” ²Aquinas also uses 'mind' in two different senses; he uses it in an analogous way, with the proposal that mind applies to the soul, since the powers flow from essence of the soul. In another sense, Aquinas speaks about 'one mind' insofar as things fall under the 'one mind' as parts under a whole. This implies the use of 'mind' in its appropriate sense as the utmost entity. ³In this essay, 'mind' is considered in its

¹According to the oxford dictionaries, one of the connotations attached to the term, is that 'mind' is: “A person's ability to think and reason; the intellect” and mind-set is taken to be: “the established set of attitudes held by someone” (in this case, a group).

²John O'Callaghan, *From Augustine's Mind to Aquinas' Soul*, Jacques Maritain Center: Thomistic Institute: Summer 2000, The University of Notre Dame Thomistic Institute, July 14-21, 2000.

³See *ibid.*

proper thomistic understanding. It is also used interchangeably to mean the *intellectus principiorum* (intellect), the incisive power of understanding.

Considering the above, it is necessary, from outset of this discourse, to note that the paper is not intended to amalgamate Africa, which is a heterogeneous group, with thousands of ethnicities and languages. On the contrary, this essay seeks to utilise the shared features of race, geographical background, and basic experiential values as depicted in general 'worldview',⁴ (where worldview, on a generic note, implies, "a particular philosophy of life or conception of the world"), to make its assertions. Accordingly, Baldwin offers that,

race constitutes the principal binding condition underlying the evolution of definitional systems. Such systems in their most basic and fundamental nature therefore have a 'racial character'. That is, they are peculiarly specific to the racial-cultural group with which they are identified. It is further argued that definitional systems reflect the distinct styles of survival maintenance characterizing different racial groups, deriving from their common geographical and historical experiences. Each racial group can therefore be regarded as having its own distinct definitional systems [i.e. worldview].⁵

Baldwin's preceding premise permits for a kind of study envisaged herein, that is, that of using elements common to Africans to describe the African mind-set.⁶ Besides, it is not just the global worldview that justifies a group's realistic outlook. As Dixon maintains, "analysis does not imply that only the philosophical traits of a particular world view characterize people in that ethnic group. Rather, it implies that this set of traits of a particular worldview is dominant, relative to their embodiment of alternative sets."⁷ Hence, this investigation does not, in any way, pretend to be thorough in its treatment because it would be absurd given its natural lack of uniformity and the⁸ enormity of the task involved.⁹ To commence, the search will try to situate the African mind in order to proffer some hypotheses. This is geared towards a constructive integration of its mentioned worldview for the purpose of holistic growth. One cannot adequately discuss 'worldview' without touching on individual or societal psychological human construct. Given the above-stated fact of heterogeneity, African peoples are considered in this essay as a race and not as a people. This is because, as Kelsey and Ransom aptly suggest, "across sex, income and race, race had the strongest effects among these variables."¹⁰ For the stated reasons, incorporated in this paper are pertinent aspects of psycho-philosophical dimensions of issues, findings, and resolutions relating to the African.

Accordingly, Dixon submits that axiology (values), epistemology (knowledge), and reasoning (logic) are crucial tenets of any worldview structure.¹¹ Combined, these constituents specify a

⁴For more on the worldview, see (Carroll, 2010, p. 113): According to Carroll, "Those within African-centered psychology and those who practice African-centered psychological theory attempt to discuss worldview as it relates to questions of cosmology, ontology, axiology, epistemology, teleology, logic, and other related philosophical assumptions, all of which contribute to determining the way people make sense of reality and their lived experience."

⁵(Baldwin, 1980, p. 98).

⁶When one thinks of the mind-set of a group, what readily comes to mind is the cultural setting of those in question. Although culture is not all that it takes to define the mind-set of a group, it plays a crucial role. The mind-set of a people is a complex whole as described by Dixon. See (Dixon, 1971); (Dixon, 1976).

⁷(Dixon, 1976, p. 54).

⁸On this, Gyekye rightly observes that: "even though the philosophical contours of the various African thinkers are yet to be seriously delineated, yet it is safe to say that it is impossible for the philosophical understanding of African peoples to be similar or uniform." (Gyekye, 1987, p. 190).

⁹The inquiry here focuses more on the 'pure' worldview specific to the African race, that is to say, its dominant traits or its primary reality.

¹⁰(McCombs, 1996, pp. 47-56).

¹¹See (Dixon, 1976, pp. 54-55).

group's understanding of the universe, nature of being (ontology), values, reasoning and general knowledge, all of which contribute to the ways in which people make sense of their reality. Referred to the African, they portray the African mind-set through the discovery of the African cosmological, ontological, and philosophical apprehension of the universe. "These components of worldview are then necessary for accurately understanding the mental, behavioural and spiritual dimensions of African reality,"¹² a primary approach to establishing the African's ontopsychological disposition. And, according to Nobles, an African worldview postulates "oneness of being."¹³

Further, as Montgomery and his companions propose, "The findings of ... preliminary research clearly suggest support for the notion that cultural differences may indeed exist between 'Black' and 'White' ... indexed by the construct of worldview."¹⁴ Although their verdicts were only a beginning, they made a positive stride towards further empirical analysis of the worldview concept. Moreover, "... there have also been numerous attempts at creating measures to accurately assess the manifestation of worldview differences among African descended and European descended peoples."¹⁵ In this attempt, Banks affirms that Africans have steadily demonstrated a "sense of directedness, of definite ends, of definite purpose" that can be comprehended through "the sense of commitment and extended investment that characterize" an African perception of self.¹⁶ Banks' teleological approach to the discovery of the African mind-set is an added incentive to further inquiry on this worldview juxtaposed with other worldviews.

Ruminating on the theme may additionally excite such questions as, is there anything like the African mind different from other minds? Does a contribution like Nobles' statement above imply that the European or any other race's worldview notions are substantially different from African peoples or give them a pride of place? The answer to the questions is as intricate as the questions themselves. Ordinarily, the human mind is a universal reality and does not admit of particulars, as such. On a generic note, human beings are all created with similar mental and psychological compositions which, no doubt, are conditioned by the environment and human experience. These experiences may relate back to what Aquinas with some of his interpreters describe as *habitus* (*habits*),¹⁷ and Strawson¹⁸ with some contemporary philosophers and psychologists consider as dispositions. In view of the foregoing, one might ask, who are then the Africans?¹⁹

Africans are generally considered as the 'black race.' They originally belong to the African landscape, which is their Motherland, and are the natural people of Africa. The diversified skin

¹²(Carroll, 2010, p. 120).

¹³See (Nobles, 1978, p. 684). This African ontology leads to a sort of cosmological participation and gives room for "the African individual ... to be perceived as being interconnected to the existence of everything else."

¹⁴(Montgomery, 1990, p. 49).

¹⁵(Carroll, 2010, p. 124). One needs to affirm here, the proposal of Kelsey and Ransom that, "... the results from this study imply that worldview perceptions of Blacks and [w]hites are worthy of serious consideration by educators, counselors, psychologists and other helping persons when considering such things as, curriculum development, teaching, counseling and intervention and treatment approaches."

(Kelsey, 1996, p. 45).

¹⁶(Banks, 1992, p. 266).

¹⁷According to Aquinas, habits connote the perfection of the mental faculties. It can be said that he considers habits formally by their relation to the nature (the soul) in which they inhere. See (*In XII libros Metaphysicorum (In Metaph) – In V Metaph*, lect. 20). On this view, Inagaki suggests that Aquinas' opinion is that habit is fundamentally related to the very nature of a thing *qua* its end (in this instance, the mind's nature) see (Inagaki, 1987, pp. 168-169). If it is so, the nature of a thing has to do with its internal processes that belong to the inherent quality accentuated by Pangallo see (Pangallo, 1988, pp. 33-34).

¹⁸Strawson thinks that human beings generally share a common attitude by way of mental disposition. Hence, he submits, "Human beings in different cultures are much more alike, psychologically speaking, than most present-day anthropologists and sociologists suppose."

(Strawson, 1999, p. 130).

¹⁹The words, 'Black' and 'White' are interchangeably used for the 'African' and 'Western' (European or any other race that is not African). Emphasis added on the named words.

tones and hair textures are all specific variations of living in the varied African geographical space. Consequently, the darkness of the skin alone is not an indicator for the African identity as there are so many native Africans, who due to some inherent factors are light skinned. Hence, 'African' refers singularly to the historical African indigenes and their progenies in diaspora.

The enduring search and debate for a true African identity have led African-oriented scholars to nuances of Africentricism²⁰, afrocentricism, Africology, Africana studies and so on. Historically, the African has been redeemed from the common Western concept, of a denial of a complete dignified human worth to a quasi-second-class citizen state. At present, it appears that African humanist psychologists have found a response for the 'long-sought' quest by their varied egalitarian definitions, but those are not the main focus of this paper.

The African Mind's Encounter With The Western Mind

Attempting to classify the black, the West has described the African mind as basically intuitive by participation, mystical, unsystematic, whimsical, and counter or extra rationalistic.²¹ African philosophy, therefore, is perceived as a body of thoughts and beliefs formed by this unique way of understanding. The Western mind, on its part considers itself as an ordered, analytical, rational and discursive by utilisation, and systematic mind.²² This notion has also subtly instructed the manner of approach and treatment of the African by the West.²³ No doubt, the unsettling individual and societal conditions that are crucial problems for the contemporary African hang on this undignified definition of the African and the defeatist response of some Africans to such misconceptions. Contrary to this biased belief, as demonstrated by psychologists, the average African has a natural searching mind and is fully endowed with ingenuity.

Many African-study scholars have contributed largely to the definitions of the African mind's encounter with the incursion of the West, either in form of colonisers or as missionaries. Many view this encounter with mixed feelings.²⁴ The reality of this history remains that, after the Whites' activities among the blacks; there was a dramatic shift from cultural amiable values to enigmatic secular tendencies. This phenomenon is evinced among the majority of the blacks in places and occasions where self-reliance is ostensibly lacking.

Most African scholars like Mudimbe, Ogundokun, Houtindgi, believe that the original African mind was distorted by the endeavours of the West to civilise and raise Africa to literacy. This confirms Aimé Césaire's premise that, "There are two ways to lose oneself: walled segregation in the particular or dilution in the 'universal.'"²⁵ This denotes that, usually, when two cultures meet, the less powerful or influential tend to submit to the superior, however the ideal should be as Césaire suggests, "My conception of the universal is that of a universal enriched by all that is particular, a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars."²⁶ Most

²⁰ According to Grills, "The Africentric framework is a genre of thought and praxis rooted in the cultural image and interest of people of African ancestry." (Grills, 2006, p. 173).

²¹ See (Oruka, 1981, p. 1).

²² See (Senghor, 1964, p. 74).

²³ One of such prejudiced view of the African mind is evidenced in the submission of the historian, Tempel: "Now, Africa is willing to appear before the world not only as a mere political expression but also as a cultural entity. It therefore, cuts for itself an image which represents its aspirations and real being. One of the ways by which this can be attained, is the re-orientation of Africans." As cited in (Sikiru Adeyemi Ogundokun, 2015, p. 180).

²⁴ Concerning the mixed feelings, some of the scholars think it would have been better if the White has not intruded in the unsullied African environment, others see it as a welcome anecdote for the African mind, still others believe that, if it were possible, the 'mix' should have been of a shorter duration and not unduly prolonged.

²⁵ (Césaire, 1956).

²⁶ Ibid.

African writers suggest that the African mind's experience is subjugation to the overawing mind of the West, what Mudimbe regards as being shelved in the "Colonial Library".²⁷ Ogundokun believes that, the West through colonisation did not introduce the phenomenon of civilisation into Africa; prior to the invasion of their territories, Africa already had its own original kind of civilisation.²⁸ Ogundokun appends that development in Africa is included in and finds expression in African philosophy.²⁹ Mudimbe, in his celebrated work, *The Invention of Africa*, suggests that the Western enterprise (missionaries and colonisers alike³⁰) among the Africans was a cultural propaganda, patriotic interests, and commercial motivations³¹. It was more complex than simple transmission of faith or a political urge. The intent was the transformation³² of the African mind since, for the White, the African mind is primitive. For this reason, it necessitates conversion of the so-called backward cultures and their incorporation into human history, which was, at the period, identified with the history of the civilised West³³. Implicitly, this transformation implies a 3-step conversion understood by Mudimbe in a negative sense: Firstly, conversion of minds, perceived as a process of alienation, an imposition, an intrusion. This attitude further indicates a lack of respect for the non-western values/worldview. For the West, the African mind had to convert, as an access route to escape primitiveness and paganism.³⁴ In order to survive and be considered as humans under the Western lordship, Africans were subtly coerced to accept³⁵. Secondly, the conversion of space is a process through which the West shifted the African space from the village centres to their centres of worship, hospitals etc.³⁶ This lured the African mind into another aspect of abandonment of its cherished values. Moreover, one witnesses that, "Missionary activity in general is conflated with God's will and politics."³⁷ Thirdly, Mudimbe's designates a conversion of names; this implies the West's robbery of the African personality,³⁸ not only that the mind has been previously deprived of its dignity, the entire personality follows. Practically, the African mind is considered a 'non-being' able to decide for itself.

So far, classifications of people like Mudimbe of the African mind's journey in history are cogent. However, for the nature and sake of this investigation, I designate three moments of the African mind's experience in the process of its self-definition. The first moment is an unsullied moment of the original African mind. The second is the moment of encounter that I regard as the 'mix' or 'blend' and the third is a stage of integration and wholeness. Objectively, one could articulate these stages in all cultures and worldviews. The only difference is in the time and the nuance of occurrence. No two races are exactly alike; hence, one does not expect to have identical

²⁷ See, (V. Y. Mudimbe, 1991, p. 4), see also (V. Y. Mudimbe, 1997, p. 96). The "Colonial Library" is a presentation of the 'universality' of European culture as the yardstick for normalcy and the only scheme for all cultures, which offer themselves for conversion. It was the creation of the colonisers, anthropologists and missionaries, for the provision of moral foundation for civilizing and christianising non-western societies.

²⁸ See (Sikiru Adeyemi Ogundokun, p. 184).

²⁹ See *ibid.*

³⁰ For Mudimbe, the missionaries and the colonisers are accomplices ... See (V. Y. Mudimbe, 1997, p. 41). In Stenger's words: "The philosophy, methodology and attitudes of the missionaries, based on divine authority, were often the answer to the needs of the colonial administration." (Stenger, 2002, p. 283).

³¹ See (V. Y. Mudimbe, 1988, p. 45).

³² Transformation as used here, does have a teleological and theological dimension of positive change; it has a negative connotation of what Mudimbe refers to as three steps of conversion.

³³ See (V. Y. Mudimbe, 1997, pp. 38-42).

³⁴ See (Stenger, 2002, pp. 284-285).

³⁵ See (V. Y. Mudimbe, 1991, p. 48).

³⁶ See (V. Y. Mudimbe, 1994, p. 111), In Mudimbe's words, "The missionaries take responsibility for the fate of the village and its life by opening up workshops, farmyards and various projects." Although on face value, this appears to be worthwhile, but behind it is a scheme that deprives the African mind of its basic right rational decision of free/mature choice based on proper knowledge.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ See (V. Y. Mudimbe, 1973, p. 94). He asserts: "The new custom robbed us of our personality. The real name was kept hidden like a shameful sickness."

experiences in the growth process of any group. Despite its originality, the first moment often goes with a kind of primitivity, illiteracy, mystery, legends etc. The second period of 'blend' goes with crisis of self-definition, tension between cultures and worldviews, tension for growth and insertion into the wider group, enlightenment, embrace of the wider world, general move towards civilisation and industrialisations, etc. The last is a period of consolidation and integration. No culture or race has all that it takes to make a group civilised. No group or race has totally moved out of ignorance or the second stage or is tied to the first stage. Although the white introduced many admirable things into the unsullied African space, perhaps inadvertently, the African was cowed by their presence into a denial, abandonment, and loss of most their noble values.³⁹ As a result of this, there is a high rate of crisis of identity manifested in different undignified forms. This may imply a harder labour and duration in the African mind's move towards integration. Be it as it may, the search for holistic existence has begun and would progress and materialise someday.

Thomistic Principles And Their Functionality, a Substantial Route For The African Mind's Integration

The notion of habit extends through various humanistic disciplines. Among others, the principal concern of this analysis in the philosophical ambit is the Aristotelian-Thomistic signification and use of the term *habitus*⁴⁰ as the perfection of the faculty. In this approach, *habitus* can be studied prominently under two perspectives: namely, the psychological and the moral. The psychological aspect, as Renard asserts, searches into the metaphysical causes of *habitus* and considers its intimate nature. In other words, this is the speculative aspect, namely, *intellectus* (the intellect). On the other hand, the moral viewpoint examines the relations of the good and bad habits (virtues and vices) according to nature and in view of the ultimate end.⁴¹ Although considered from diverse perspectives both of these, namely the speculative and the moral habits, are interconnected because they appertain to the same nature and as Aquinas suggests, are originally in the make-up of any human person. Consequently, they appertain equally to African mind especially as it is classified as more intuitive... Moreover, the concept of *habitus* presupposes a subject. Who/what is its subject?

To respond to the question, every normal reasonable person universally apprehends and utilises the fundamental judgmental principles as totally definite (metaphysical) or, at least, implicit truths. As Aquinas fittingly asserts, the intellect cannot be mistaken about self-evident truths.⁴² This is explicable with the positing of a 'natural' disposition that enables the human cognition for such a grasp. Moreover, if the human intellect were not enabled by such basic judgmental principles at the inception of the mind's bestirring, there would have been no dependable foundation for further establishment of the intellectual knowledge or any cognition at all. This propensity is best explained by the recognition of a natural 'innate habit'. As Christianson appositely supposes, the mentioned intrinsic habit furnishes the human mind with the aptitude of certitude in knowledge about fundamental realities and for subsequent cognitions.⁴³ This habit is what Aquinas often

³⁹According to some scholars and historians, the presence of the West (missionaries) among the Africans left the latter in a quandary of feeling that: "One cannot be a good African and a good Christian at the same time." (V. Y. Mudimbe, 1973, p. 94). Thus, in many cases, "African conversion, rather than being a positive outcome of a dialogue – unthinkable per se – came to be the sole position the African could take in order to survive as a human being." (V. Y. Mudimbe, 1991, p. 48) So, because of inferiority complex, most Africans resorted to denial of identity or similar options in order to be accepted by the West. The phenomenological import of 'conversion' for the black becomes an escape from "primitivity and superstition."

⁴⁰See In V Metaph, lect. 20.

⁴¹See (Renard, 1948, p. 88). The moral habits cannot be independent as such from the data from the speculative search. This is because if the facts from the speculative inquiry were left out in the moral realm, then ethics would simply be relegated to mere solution of practical problems and only become casuistry. Consequently, it would fall short of the realistic philosophical science. See (Ugobi-Onyemere, 2015, p. 186).

⁴²See ST, I, q. 17, a. 3, ad 2.

⁴³See (Christianson, 1988, p. 269).

refers to as *habitus principiorum primorum* (habit of the first principles).

In many of his assumptions, Aquinas distinctly speaks of a specific and unique habit that he depicts as *habitus principiorum primorum*. In Thomas Aquinas' viewpoint, this habit is present both in the speculative and in the practical aspects of the intellect.⁴⁴ Together, the two habits constitute the "act of being" (*actus essendi*) human. The twofold presence of this species of habit in the human mind is so arranged in nature by God that the human person may not lack in any knowable reality. In effect, this *habitus* is distinct because it is 'naturally' implanted in the human intellect as Aquinas ingeniously accentuates.⁴⁵ For the speculative intellect, Aquinas nominates this habit as *intellectus principiorum*, which is the principle of non-contradiction (PNC).⁴⁶ This habit, PNC reflects and is founded on the existential reality that, nothing is naturally self-contradictory otherwise it cannot stand. There is no/yes simultaneous principle, maxim, law/norm, and realistic situation. This is to say that there is nothing that is and is-not simultaneously. Real experiential conditions show that the intellect of any race is so formed originally to work with and produce with what is and not the non-existent. Hence, the African mind is so construed and obeys the same natural maxim. Nonetheless, it appears that the African mind itself is yet to fully appreciate this universal endowment and maximally employ it without allowing itself to be subjugated to the Western mind by ceding way to utilise influential ideas generated by the latter. Moreover, the contemporary problem that seems to arise everywhere is human's attempt to manipulate the principle (PNC). When this happens, there issues natural friction, tension, stress. It might not be an overstatement to assert that the major problem of African societies as well as Western societies is based on natural upheaval, the quest for 'self-contradiction' e.g. societies militating against the norms on which they are established, self-conquest, self-defeatist, self-destructive acts.

On the practical realm, Aquinas designates this original habit in the practical reason as *synderesis*.⁴⁷ These two facets of the habit of first principles are incorruptible, so to say, permanent in the human intellect. Hence, Aquinas corroborates: "Such are the habits of the first principles, both speculative and practical, which cannot be corrupted by any forgetfulness or deception whatever."⁴⁸ Furthermore, both of them are the inventive and true sources of any knowledge/demeanour. Aquinas demonstrates that no one errs in the knowledge of the truth with the two features of habit of the first principles, i.e. the speculative and the practical.⁴⁹ God imprints both habits for the purpose of the knowledge of speculative truth and truth in the order of acts concerning right and wrong. In the case of the intellect, it is the innate seed for the fundamental knowledge of the verities, and from there stems all other scientific knowledge and innovative configurations.⁵⁰ *Synderesis* is likened to a seed for the act of conscience wherein practical truth is realised.⁵¹ The two *habitus primorum principiorum*, therefore, are mutually related in their causative nature of all the first principles and in the knowledge of the truth. This is true of the

⁴⁴See *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate*, q. 16, a. 1. Henceforth to be cited as *De Ver.*

⁴⁵See *In quattuor libros Sententiarum (In Sent)* – *In I Sent*, prooem, q. 1, a. 3b, ad 3: "*Habitus principiorum primorum non acquiritur per alias scientias, sed habetur a natura.*"

⁴⁶See *In I Sent*, prooem, q. 1, a. 5; etc. See also (Ugobi-Onyemere, 2015, p. 205).

⁴⁷See *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 79, a. 12; *ST, I-II*, q. 94, a. 1 ad 2; *ST, II-II*, q. 47, a. 6 ad 1; Henceforth to be cited as *ST*, see also *De Ver*, q. 16, a. 1; *In II Sent*, d. 24, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1: "*Synderesis dividitur contra alias potentias, non quasi diversa per substantiam potentiae sed per habitum quemdam; sicut si intellectus principiorum contra speculativam rationem divideretur.*" *Synderesis* is a Greek word that gradually entered the English lexicon. Although Saint Jerome introduced 'synderesis' into Latin literature, perhaps, etymologically, it is a variant of the Greek term, *synesis* (insight). For further reading on its history, see (Sellés, 2008, pp. 417-424). Specifically, about the mistranslation, see also (Westberg, 1994, p. 100).

⁴⁸*ST, I-II*, q. 53, a. 1: "*Huiusmodi autem sunt habitus primorum principiorum, tam speculabilium quam practicum, qui nulla oblivione vel deceptione corrumpi possunt.*"

⁴⁹See *In II Sent*, d. 39, q. 3, a. 1.

⁵⁰See *In libros Posteriorum Analyticorum (In APst)* – *In I APst*, lect. 44, n. 3.

⁵¹See *De Ver*, q. 17, a. 1, ad 6second series (ss).

intellectual make-up of the African.

To better appreciate their appropriate import for the African mind, we shall briefly consider their peculiarities in regard to their functionality. In Aquinas, the word *intellectus* has a plurality of meanings. This does not diminish its primary character as an immaterial faculty wherein are generated most operations in the human person. Instead, the multiple aspects of its operation strengthen its nature as an immaterial core of being. Its functionality in many modalities does not duplicate it as a faculty and the substantial form of the rational being. The intellect, therefore, is a principle and an entity with diverse operations.⁵² For the sake of this paper, our interest is in the notion of the intellect as a habit of the first principles (*intellectus principiorum*).

Aquinas often talks about the *intellectus principiorum* as the habit of the first indemonstrable principles. In one of the instances he affirms that “the first indemonstrable principles belong to the habit of the intellect.”⁵³ What does he imply by the habits of first indemonstrable principles? The human mind is multifunctional. Concerning this argument, the intellect acts as an inherent disposition of the intelligence that conducts the mind to the retention of the terms of the first principles. Aquinas portrays it as the vision through which the mind is determined.⁵⁴ Some Thomists, considering this efficacious functionality of the human intellect, look at the mind as a mysterious entity. Elders for instance, appositely thinks it is an inexplicable phenomenon that the mind could gather the terms and hold them together in order to facilitate their implementation.⁵⁵

On the other hand, Cottier suggests that as *habitus* perfects the faculty, there is an extension in the case of *intellectus*. In this circumstance, as the faculty and the habit are in view of the act which they specify, the term may know a new extension. Consequently, he assumes that the intellect will still designate the operation of the faculty, or that it is the concept elaborated by the operation, or that it can even be viewed as the very known object in this concept.⁵⁶ Justifiably, according to Cottier's idea, the intellect is the actual faculty being perfected by its very nature of this disposition (*intellectus principiorum*) as the operation. In other words, it produces the habits and, in turn, is elaborated by their operations, and the *intellectus* is the terminus of the known, which is the 'truth'. From this arises part of the perfection of its subject (which is the human person) by *sapientia* (natural wisdom). Subsequently, its functionality as *habitus* is a cyclic one that is not vicious but which is an optimal virtue⁵⁷ that perfects the intellectual mind through innately acquired wisdom. This process is no less true of the African mind, if anything, its natural endowment with primitive intelligence should privilege it with originality in this regard. For the African mind, therefore as well as for Westerner, the *intellectus principiorum* goes back and forth to its very immaterial nature producing knowledge of different kinds because of the individual endowment identifiable in it.

Moreover, the intricate nature of intellect involves its subtle dynamism in operations. Within this context, the intellect develops the first fundamental principles that enable its expression of first judgments and the notion of *scientia* (science). As Bogliolo appropriately thinks, in order to communicate these attributes, the intellect forms the first judgments, which are the original expressions of the full contents of the perception process.⁵⁸ For this reason, Bogliolo assumes that

⁵²For details on the analysis and its functionality, see especially the author's considerations in Chapter Three of *The Knowledge of the First Principles in Saint Thomas Aquinas*, under the subtitle, *Simplex Apprehensio: Intellectus (Nous) vs Ratio (Logos)* – (Ugobi-Onyemere, 2015, pp. 119-137).

⁵³*ST*, I, q. 79, a. 9: “Principia prima indemonstrabilia pertinent ad habitum intellectus.”

⁵⁴*ST*, I, q. 12, a. 13 ad 3: “Et sic, in quantum deest visio, deficit a ratione cognitionis quae est in scientia, nam scientia determinat intellectum ad unum per visionem et intellectum primorum principiorum.”

⁵⁵See (Elders, 2003, p. 66).

⁵⁶See (Cottier, 1988, p. 217).

⁵⁷On the nature of the intellect's perfection by truth, the intellect's formal good, see also *ST*, III, q. 64, a. 3. Virtue here is in the formal sense of the knowledge of truth, the optimal excellence of the mind, which according to Aquinas' own avowal perfects the intellect.

⁵⁸See (Bogliolo, 1983, p. 36).

intellectus entis (understanding of being) and intellectus principiorum (understanding of principle) mutually unite in one habit of knowledge to which Aquinas attributes more than scientia (science) that is, "aliquid scientia altius."⁵⁹ This Bogliolo's supposition also affirms Aquinas' hypothesis that,

... man's act of reasoning, since it is a kind of movement, proceeds from the understanding of certain things – namely, those which are naturally known without any investigation on the part of reason, as from an immovable principle – and ends also at the understanding, inasmuch as by means of those principles naturally known, we judge of those things which we have discovered by reasoning.⁶⁰

The African intellectus shares to a greater degree in this knowledge (super-science); what could still be lacking in some cases could be its expression of the quiddity of its primordial acquisition of knowledge given the vicissitudes of its living conditions and its lack of corresponding literacy. As indicated earlier, every culture passes through this level when individuals grapple with emergence from archaic tendencies. So, it is not an African identity.

In line with Bogliolo, we corroborate that Thomistic sense of 'superscience' here is of the superlative kind. It is the scientia equated to that of the angelic knowledge, the "altissimum nostrae scientiae". Every human person, irrespective of race or colour, in its unsullied state or grace-filled moment can access this state of mind. Accordingly Aquinas affirms:

Therefore, the relation of our intellect to those principles is similar to that which an angel has to all that he knows naturally. And since the knowledge we have of principles is the highest form of our knowledge, it is evident that on this summit of our nature we reach to some extent the lowest point of an angel's.⁶¹

The above reference of Aquinas to the habit of intellectus as the lowest form of the angelic way of knowing is not a detection of a defect in the human context but an elevation of the human mind. The reason is that human intellect through this habit is at the peak of the human capacity's propinquity to the angelic order.

The intellectus principiorum is a permanent and unconscious disposition of the mind to have fine and noble insights into the existent realities as in the knowledge and formulation of ens et prima principia (being and first principles). The African mind as one more attuned to its original state is gifted with this reality to know better and invent because at its finest state, the mind is most creative. The above thomistic excerpt further implies that this 'unique' mode of the intellect is attributable more to the angelic cognitive process than to rational beings. Thus, justifiably, we perceive with Bogliolo that this scientia is a primordial super scientia⁶², since according to Aquinas it transcends normal human processes. As shown in the preceding Thomistic quotation, it is a sublime moment of knowledge of the human mind, a kind of generative participation in the angelic mode.

⁵⁹See *Sententia libri Ethicorum* (In I Ethica) – In I Ethica, lect. 18, n. 17: "Laus est eorum quorum bonitas consideratur in ordine ad aliquid aliud. Sed optima non ordinantur ad aliquid aliud, quinimmo alia ordinantur in ipsa. Ergo optimorum non est laus, sed aliquid melius laude; sicut etiam in speculativis principiorum non est scientia, sed aliquid scientia altius, scilicet intellectus."

⁶⁰ST, I, q. 79, a. 12: "... ratiocinatio hominis, cum sit quidam motus, ab intellectu progreditur aliquorum, scilicet naturaliter notorum absque investigatione rationis, sicut a quodam principio immobili, et ad intellectum etiam terminatur, in quantum iudicamus per principia per se naturaliter nota, de his quae ratiocinando invenimus."

⁶¹De Ver, q. 8, a. 15: "Unde, sicut intellectus noster se habet ad ista principia, sic se habet Angelus ad omnia quae naturaliter cognoscit. Et cum cognitio principiorum in nobis sit altissimum nostrae scientiae, patet quod in supremo nostrae naturae attingimus quodammodo infimum naturae angelicae."

⁶²See (Bogliolo, 1983, p. 37).

Consequently, Aquinas submits, through *intellectus principiorum* the human intelligence touches the angelic nature.⁶³

Furthermore, the Thomistic notion of the *intellectus principiorum* as one that grasps the indemonstrable principles is seen in Aquinas' hypothesis in the sense that the intellect cannot be mistaken about any of its principles as in their terms and in their structures.⁶⁴ This implies that it is part of the permanent character of the intellect to know with precision and utilise the so-called self-evident intellectual laws. Since the African mind is said to know with precision and teleologically, this hypothesis applies primarily to it. Aptness is part of the nature of the intellect, which is perfected in and through its own quiddity, that is, the *intellectus principiorum*. About this, the note of immediacy has been strongly depicted by the West for the African mind; so, it is the sterling quality of the African intellect.

Aquinas also affirms the essential import of the *habitus* of the first principles for any knowable reality. Aquinas portrays *intellectus principiorum* as in a natural movement towards its end, which is the object of knowledge.⁶⁵ This implies that the habit of the intellect is like a constant natural drive that moves the intellect towards its fullest self-realisation and self-transcendence. In addition, the *habitus* of the intellect inclines the possessor to knowing that it possesses the 'habit' and the knowledge of other things. The implication is that one who possesses *intellectus principiorum* is certain of some crucial terms of any knowledge. This *intellectus* dissipates ignorance; it has an obvious quality. This premise reinforces Aquinas' assertion, previously represented, that *intellectus principiorum* is equated to a vision to which the African mind is accredited. Thus, Aquinas submits:

Hence, anyone who knows, knows that he knows, since to know is to perceive the cause of a thing, that it is the cause of it, and that it cannot be otherwise. Similarly, one who has the habit of the understanding of principles knows that he has that habit.⁶⁶

In view of the above, one can say that, all that could be assumed about the knowledge of first basic principles belongs a fortiori to the knowledge of "being in reality" which is the primeval endowment of every normal intellect. The problem of the African mind as such is not an ignorance of unique knowledge of truth and being in reality; rather, its greatest problem seems to be with application and lack of incentive and material resources to enhance the known.

On the other hand, with *synderesis*, the mind is always aware of the right to choose and the evil to be avoided. Aquinas and many mediaeval scholars consider *synderesis* as *scintilla rationis* (the spark of reason). Thus, *intellectus principiorum*⁶⁷ is for the speculative intellect while *synderesis* is for the practical order both of which are oriented to the 'natural' grasp of the truth in any intelligible reality. According to Aquinas, with *synderesis*, the human intellect knows in the way angels do by participation in the higher order. This *scintilla rationis* is the superior part of the intellectual soul, that which knows by intuition.⁶⁸ Rightly so, as pointed out above, the European generally described the African mind as one that knows by intuition; if this premise holds true, then

⁶³See De Ver, q. 16, a. 1. (See Holdsworth, 2016, p. 47).

⁶⁴See De Ver, q. 1, a. 12.

⁶⁵See De Pot, q. 2, a. 3: "Intellectus respectu cognitionis principiorum primorum, naturalem quemdam motum habet."

⁶⁶De Ver, q. 10, a. 10, ad 5: "Unde quilibet sciens scit se scire, cum scire sit causam rei cognoscere, et quoniam illius est causa, et quoniam impossibile est aliter se habere; et similiter aliquis habens habitum intellectus principiorum, scit se habitum illum habere."

⁶⁷*Intellectus principiorum* obviously is an original Thomistic elaboration through the Aristotelian background, but *synderesis* is linked to Jerome through Peter Lombard.

⁶⁸(Ugobi-Onyemere, 2015, p. 241).

the African is extraordinarily endowed with this spark. This implies that it intuits the first principles or the first laws of thought, those that control the mind to assure that the mind remains on the right path according to the soul's apposite nature. This nature of the intellect draws it to conform to things in order to possess the truth about them. This nature is also such that 'is' and must always be present in the mind while it accomplishes its acts. Since *scintilla rationis* is the knowledge of knowledge, the always-present cognition, it is, therefore, a habit and nature in the intellect of the first practical principles.⁶⁹ Consequently, the African mind naturally should be gifted with a better insight into pragmatic truths that enhance societal structuring and order, justice, peace, patriotism, and conviviality. Further, in Aquinas, we discover that the *scintilla rationis* is 'faithful' to its nature without being extinguished. Following this import, fidelity to the above-mentioned qualities should be part of the African mind-set and lifestyle since this spark is inherent in his nature. The implication especially for the African, as Giacon corroborates, is that according to its nature, *synderesis* is always right and good in its regulation. Added to the fact that it will never diminish with time, in its nature as *scintilla rationis*, it will never diminish in its responsibility to lead itself to truth.⁷⁰ Thus, Aquinas establishes that 'synderesis' does not err just as the speculative intellect does not err in the knowledge of first principles. Conversely, it is always repugnant to anything contrary to the principles naturally instilled in the heart.⁷¹ *Synderesis*, as much as it is the law of thought, cannot err about the first practical principles. Hence, the maxim, "good must be done and evil is to be avoided"⁷² is naturally given to all normal human beings without exception.⁷³ As such, *synderesis* is inscribed (written) in the African heart no less than it is in every heart.

Likewise, *synderesis* is not conscience or prudence, but the three concern the practical mind and acts. By way of definition, in Aquinas' understanding, "synderesis' is not a power but a 'habit'." It is a special habit of the practical order.⁷⁴ The reason is that, as somewhat noted earlier, contrary to power, an intellectual 'habit' is natural, permanent, and sticks to one's orientation. Aquinas elucidating on this affirms,

Now it is clear that, as the speculative reason argues about speculative things, so that practical reason argues about practical things. Therefore we must have, bestowed on us by nature, not only speculative principles, but also practical principles. ... Wherefore the first practical principles, bestowed on us by nature, do not belong to a special power, but to a special natural habit, which we call 'synderesis'. Whence 'synderesis' is said to incite to good, and to murmur at evil, inasmuch as through first principles we proceed to discover, and judge of what we have discovered. It is therefore clear that 'synderesis' is not a power, but a natural habit.⁷⁵

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰See (Giacon, 1973, p. 70).

⁷¹See In II Sent, d. 39, q. 3, a. 1: "Sicut autem non contingit in speculativis intellectum errare circa cognitionem primorum principiorum, quin semper repugnet omni ei quod contra principia dicitur; ita etiam non contingit errare in practicis in principiis primis; et propter hoc dicitur, quod haec superior rationis scintilla quae synderesis est, extingui non potest, sed semper repugnat omni ei quod contra principia naturaliter sibi indita est."

⁷²*Synderesis* is a habit of principles or a principle of principles. On the difference between *synderesis* and natural law itself, see (Maritain, 1998, p. 90) According to Maritain: "The only practical knowledge all men have naturally and infallibly in common as a self-evident principle, intellectually perceived by virtue of the concepts involved, is that we must do good and avoid evil. This is the preamble and the principle of natural law; it is not the law itself. Natural law is the ensemble of things to do and not to do which follow therefrom in necessary fashion."

⁷³See (Ugobi-Onyemere, 2015, p. 242).

⁷⁴(Ugobi-Onyemere, 2015, p. 235).

⁷⁵ST, I, q. 79, a. 12: "Constat autem quod, sicut ratio speculativa ratiocinatur de speculativis, ita ratio practica ratiocinatur de operabilibus. Oportet igitur naturaliter nobis esse indita, sicut principia speculabilium, ita et principia operabilium. ... Unde et principia operabilium nobis naturaliter indita, non pertinent ad specialem potentiam; sed ad specialem habitum naturalem, quem dicimus synderesim. Unde et synderesis dicitur instigare ad bonum, et murmurare de malo, in quantum per prima principia procedimus ad inveniendum, et iudicamus inventa. Patet ergo quod synderesis non est potentia, sed habitus naturalis."

In addition, Aquinas makes room for anyone who would like to merge or has already fused the two notions, synderesis and conscience. In acknowledgement of this fact Aquinas expounds that both incite against evil, but one is the permanent principle of an act, which is conscience, and he clarifies that: “since habit is a principle of act, sometimes the name conscience is given to the first natural habit – namely, 'synderesis': thus Jerome calls 'synderesis' conscience.”⁷⁶ Despite this, Aquinas clearly distinguishes between synderesis and conscience. From the Thomistic stance, Pieper describes conscience as the living unity between prudence and synderesis. McInerny, in response to the above submission of Pieper, cogently suggests that, although prudence and conscience presuppose synderesis and natural law, they are not interchangeable.⁷⁷

Actually, prudence and conscience have a close association, and this is demonstrated in Aquinas. Nonetheless, they are far removed from interchangeability. The basic difference is that, although conscience is an act, it is not a habit. A fortiori conscience has nothing to do with being a virtue, wherein prudence is located. Thus, Aquinas asserts that conscience “cannot properly be given to the power or the habit, but only to the act. For all the things which are attributed to conscience fit only this meaning.”⁷⁸ Moreover, in Thomistic understanding, conscience is an act that is a product of a faculty. Subsequently, Aquinas thinks that conscience is an act of the habit of prudence. In view of this, Aquinas suggests, “The operative habits of reason are applied to an act. These are the habit of synderesis and the habit of wisdom, which perfect higher reason, and the habit of scientific knowledge, which perfects lower reason.”⁷⁹ In like manner, the African mind, like any other, is naturally endowed with the three attributes, namely, the habit (synderesis), the act (conscience), and the virtue (prudence), in the practical order, but the scintilla rationis (synderesis) and the intellectus principiorum in the speculative order realm, remain the habit/hub of all its knowledge/acts.

One could easily ask, if these Thomistic hypotheses are superlatively true of the African mind-set, how about the problem of increasing evil and corruption in the African continent? By way of response, the scope of this paper does not include specific inquiry into this problematic. Nonetheless, a rough input could be that circumstantial factors, like poverty and bad governance, help to condition an individual's or a people's outlook and the society itself. The African mind might be experiencing a similar plight.

Conclusion

Through its primeval, 'blend' (Western embrace), and history of integration, the African mind with the help of its intellectus has since discovered 'being' (reality as it is and scientia) and the archaic practical principle of synderesis with its content of “do good and avoid evil.” These are crucial intellectual habits of every normal human person to which the African mind belong. Since no two 'worldviews' are exactly the same, the African intellect does so by employing its own contextual peculiarities. Despite these capacities, the African society and race, appears to be menaced by all sorts of series societal ills and general societal setbacks. The mentioned aptitudes would long have led the African mind to the best options for better self-definitions, positive societal building, political/governmental enhancement, scientific discoveries and civilisations, but for the intricate implications of its experience with the 'blend'.

⁷⁶ST, I, q. 79, a. 13. See ST, I, q. 79, a. 13, ad 3.

⁷⁷See (McInerny, 1974, p. 292). On another similar interpretation regarding the relationship between synderesis and natural law.

⁷⁸De Ver, q. 17, a. 1.

⁷⁹Ibid.

As complex as the situation is, the blend or Western incursion was not ended in most cases with formal independence after colonisations of the African peoples. The Western/African mix in the former unsullied African environment (landscape) continues in various forms as indirect rule by the West. Perhaps, because of its interest in further exploitation of the African mind with its rich resources, human and natural, the Western mind tends to pose as the 'superhuman mind' for the simple African mind. In most cases, such minds subtly instigate and govern through bad political leaders in most of the African former colonies. This brings back the 'black' to submit unconsciously to the 'white', who perpetrates servitude for the African in these shrewd ways. Apparently, by the white's extolling of its worldview as better and an elite style, the African mind, intimidated as it is, feels little and does not cherish, grow, develop, or choose its ingenuous discoveries. The situation elicits hindrance for the African mind in areas of dedication to creativity, innovation, hard work and planning for the upliftment of one's own society, critical thinking analyses, commitment to the societal patriotism, perseverance and responsibility for upgrading living conditions in one's own setting. Consequently, without evident scientific advancement, there are massive experiences of less productivity and pronounced poverty, which the Western mind manipulates in its interest as helping the disadvantaged race. Hence, the African mind remains impoverished with a litany of savage history and without proper cognizance by the global human society.

It appears that if the African mind were left on its own since the independence, it would have made significant changes in its history, by enhanced definition of itself and its goals. Be it as it may, the African mind, despite all odds, can still stand up to the challenges. Although it might seem overawing, it behoves the African mind to decide to take gradual but steady positive steps. It might imply, not just a few years' story but also that of many years; the African mind, with determination, must get to where the West are after centuries of effort. However, for this to be done, the defeatist attitude on the part of the African must be curbed, inferiority complex should be rejected, re-education on how to employ one's aptitudes should be revived, creativity and innovation have to be stimulated, and self-affirmation with industry should be encouraged. There should be positive accents to the fact that the African mind has a similar natural endowment of intellectus and synderesis with a nuance of its own worldview that gives it a different texture. The African intellect, with its giftedness of inventive skill and creative vision, can change the totality of African repute by making Africa a new world, giving it a facelift. It is high time the African mind started this exploration. This is the real process of integration after a broken 'blend' past experience.

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