

<i>Language</i>	<i>Word For Person</i>
Hausa	mutum
Ibo	nmadu
Yoruba	eniya
Swazi	muntfu
Sotho	motho
Xhosa	umntu
Zulu	umuntu

In many Sub-Saharan languages the *nbun* prefix generally can be translated to mean the expression, extension, individualisation or personification of, In Zulu, which is my language, *umuntu* means the person. If we break down the word into its components, we shall have:

The Article— *u-* meaning *the*

The Concord— *-mu-* meaning *personification of*

The Rootword— *-ntu* meaning *Ntu*, the person

Zulu, like, Xhosa, Swazi, Ndebele and Bhaca, belongs to the closely related languages which together form the Nguni cluster. The Xhosa still refer to Black humanity as *umzi ka Ntu*, the family or descendants of *Ntu*.

Like the other Nguni communities, the ancient Zulus believed that the cosmic order was an infinity; that as such it was a unity and that it was the environment in which the person really existed. If primordial substance was infinite, there could not be anything which existed outside of it; all phenomena emerged, existed and "died" inside it. The person was one such phenomenon; he and his environment were inseparable complements.

This relationship gave rise to the following derivatives from *Ntu* :

Ulutho	The nameless something; a phenomenon; substance.
Uluntu	The vital force; the powerful stomach muscle which regulates the peristaltic process.
Umuntu	The personification of <i>Ntu</i> ; the person.
Isintu	Humanity.
Ubuntu	The art of being human; virtue.

The above shows how we can speak of *nu-* or *su-* or *ntu-* oriented cultures which together form the unity known as African Civilisation. We can also

speak of *Nudic* or *Sudic* Civilisation in place of African Civilisation. In the present discussion *Sudic* will be used in place of *Buntu* because the apartheid regime has given to the word *Buntu* an unacceptable political meaning.

EGYPTIAN HERITAGE

The ancient Egyptians are divided almost as much by time as by geography from Sub-Saharan Africans. At the same time, the two are united by their attitude to the person. The values which constitute this attitude are together the philosophy which *Sudic* civilisation has been translating into experience in at least the last 10,000 years. Let us glance at the main ingredients of this philosophy.

The *Book of Knowing the Evolutions of Ra* tells us that⁶ the creator-god *Neb-er-tcher*, the "lord of the company of the gods" gave the following description of creation:

I am he who evolved himself under the form of the god *Khepera*, I, the evolver of the evolutions evolved myself, the evolver of all evolutions, after many evolutions and developments which came forth from my mouth. No heaven existed, and no earth, and no terrestrial animals or reptiles had come into being. I formed them out of the inert mass of watery matter, I found no place whereon to stand....I was alone... there existed none other who worked with me. I laid the foundations of all things by my will, and all things evolved themselves therefrom....I sent forth *Shu* and *Tefnut* out from myself.... *Shu* and *Tefnut* gave birth to *Nut* and *Seb*, and *Nut* gave birth to *Osiris*, *Horus-Khent-an-maa*, *Sut*, *Isis*, and *Nephthys*, at one birth, one after the other, and their children multiply upon this earth.



The Egyptian god, *Osiris*, receiving offerings from a woman of standing. The ancients believed that the immortal aspect of a virtuous person became an *Osiris* after the day of judgement.

In another version of the story of creation, Osiris has this to say⁷:

I came into being from primeval matter, and I appeared under the form of multitudes of things from the beginning. Nothing existed at that time, and it was I who made whatsoever was made. I was alone, and there was no other being who worked with me in that place. I made all the forms under which I appeared by means (or, out of) the god-soul which I raised up out of Nu, out of a state of inertness (or, out of the inert mass)....

I found there (i.e., in Nu) no place wherein I could stand. I worked a spell on my heart, and I laid a foundation before me, and I made whatsoever was made. I was alone. I laid a foundation in (or by) my heart, and I made the other things which came into being, and the things of Khepera which were made were manifold and their offspring came into existence from the things to which they gave birth. It was I who emitted Shu, and it was I who emitted Tefnut... and Shu and Tefnut were raised up from out of Nu wherein they had been.

One of the most important aspects of creation emerges from the following quotation:⁸

In the very ancient *Egyptian Creative Legend*, the Supreme Creative Principle is depicted as saying: "I existed by Myself; for They (i.e. the Gods) were not born. My name being Heka, I opened my mouth to proclaim myself."

The Egyptians tell us in the *Negative Confessions* about the spells they used to win entry into Annu, the heavenly city; that life's purpose for the person was to "live forever," to "live for millions of millions of years" and to be "the prince of eternity."

Eighteenth Dynasty spells⁹ say the person should "proclaim" or define himself in these terms:

I am Baba, first son of Osiris, whom every God united to himself....

Mine are yesterday and [each] morrow, [for I am] in charge of [its] successive births. I am the Hidden Soul who made the gods....

My manifestation is the manifestation of Khepri [one name for the creator-god].... I have entered as an ignorant one; I have come forth as an initiate.... I shall be seen in my human form forever....

Several points emerge from the above quotations from ancient Egyptian texts. To begin with, the ancients regarded creation as an evolving process whose beginnings they traced back to the nature of Nu, their name for primordial substance. Primeval matter evolved into the watery mass, also known as Nu, from which the creator-god, Nu, emerged. Nu created the earth (Nu) and the gods from whom there descended the "things to which they gave birth." The *Book of Knowing the Evolutions of Ra* explains that "their [the gods'] children multiply upon this earth."

The Egyptians set great store by autogeny. The creator-god evolved himself from primordial substance and uttered the word of power by which he "proclaimed" or defined himself. He did not create "things" out of nothing; he facilitated their evolution from forms in primordial substance into phenomena. He raised Shu and Tefnut "from out of Nu wherein they had been." The facilitation was what the ancients regarded as creation.

The creator-god informs us that the *god-soul* was the mould in which he cast "all the forms under which [he] appeared." This god-soul was *The Law of Appearing*; it was Ultimate Value or Immutable Form. Each phenomenon first existed as a value or form, and then evolved in response to the challenge of its nature. The formula H₂O was the ultimate value of water. This value evolved into the liquid we drink, snow, ice, and steam in response to the challenge of its nature in different environments. The nature of the value did not change; it remained the same from aeon to aeon; it was the eternal person whose destiny was to live for millions of millions of years.

The creator-god was an infinity and, therefore, a unity. Nothing could co-exist with him; there was no outside of him; all things were inside the infinity; he expressed himself and appeared in all the things he brought into being. Through an act of will, he "made whatsoever was made." The will was translated into phenomena and the "things to which they gave birth." The chain of evolution and succession continues to this day.

Primordial substance was forever evolving in response to the challenge of its nature; it was forever individualising itself, through phenomena, to produce new "things"; it was always growing in response to the challenge of its nature or *Law of Appearing* or god-soul.

Everything inside the infinity was alive, for there was no death in the infinity; everything was a materialisation of the *Law of Appearing*; of Ultimate Value. Everything was consubstantial with primordial substance and with everything in the cosmic order. The consubstantiality combined with *The Law* to keep the cosmic order a unity.

In this setting, each phenomenon "proclaimed" or defined itself in everything it did. The self-definition proclaimed the section of *The Law* which gave the phenomenon its nature; it defined itself in its qualities.

The person differed from other phenomena in one fundamental respect; like the creator-god, he defined himself in his own terms. He knew what and who he was; what he knew was his secret; it was his source of power. He evolved into this earth and became *homo* in order to discover more satisfying

dimensions of being human. Perpetual evolution was his destiny; his nature required that he should forever discover more satisfying dimensions of being human.

Each person defined himself in terms valid in or dictated by his environment and each such self-definition was as simultaneously legitimate, valid and important as that made by his neighbour, no matter who the particular parents of the latter were.

The principle of simultaneous legitimacy gave the Egyptian the feeling that he and his neighbour were inseparable and mutually-fulfilling complements. Each was the obverse side of a whole to which the neighbour was the reverse. The maximisation of the neighbour's ability to realise the promise of being human was a precondition of fulfillment for the person.

Man's first neighbour was woman and vice versa. The great goddess, Isis, was:¹⁰

the great and beneficent goddess and mother whose influence and love pervaded all heaven, and earth, and the abode of the dead, and she was the personification of the great feminine, creative power which conceived, and brought forth every living creature, and thing, from the gods in heaven, to man on the earth, and to the insect on the ground; what she brought forth she protected, and cared for, and fed, and nourished, and she employed her life in using her power graciously and successfully, not only in creating new beings but in restoring those that were dead.

This was Universal Woman, without whom Man could not exist. Man, also, was a precondition of Woman's existence. Society began when the two complements established a family. The function of society was to create the conditions in which the person could discover more satisfying dimensions of being human and realise both the promise of being a person and the glory of being a self-defining value.

The person was endowed with a many-sided or ciliate mind which would enable him to achieve everything he desired and make him become whatever he wanted to be. This unparalleled confidence in the person and the readiness to face squarely, over thousands of years, the implications of this commitment to the primacy of the person draw in the sharpest lines the difference between the Sudic and Caucasian attitudes to the person.

The confidence was translated into political realities in the plurarchic state which the Egyptians established. The plurarchy was based on the recognition of the simultaneous legitimacy and validity of the cultural self-definitions developed by different peoples in their environments. Pharaohs arose from time to time who sought to impose a uniform mode of behaviour on the peoples in Egypt's different nomes. We are told that the pharaoh Menkaure was outraged by the policy of forcing the Egyptians to adhere to the same

formularly when performing religious rites. He issued a decree abrogating the former laws and making it legal for his people to worship as they chose.

The plurarchy was an open state in which the people were bound together by a political loyalty which allowed them to realise the promise of being human in the light of their choices. The Greeks and the Romans never understood the relationship between the Sudic attitude to the person and the plurarchy. A well-known British Egyptologist described the failure in the following terms:

...the cultured Greek writers must have, and did, as we know, look with mingled pity, and contempt, and ridicule, upon the animal cults of the Egyptians, and they had no sympathy with the materialistic beliefs and with the still more materialistic funeral customs and ceremonies, which have been, from time immemorial, so dear to certain Hamitic peoples, and so greatly prized by them. The only beliefs of the Egyptian religion which educated Greek or Roman truly understood were those which characterized the various forms of Aryan religion, namely, the polytheistic and the solar; for the forms of the cults of the dead, and for all the religious ceremonies and observances, which presupposed a belief in the resurrection of the dead and in everlasting life, and which had been in existence among the indigenous inhabitants of north-east Africa from predynastic times, he had no regard whatsoever. The evidence on the subject now available indicates that he was *racially* [author's emphasis] incapable of appreciating the importance of such beliefs to those who held them, and although, as in the case of the Ptolemies, he was ready to tolerate, and even, for state purposes, to adopt them, it was impossible for him to absorb them into his life. It is important to remember this fact when dealing with the evidence of Greek and Roman writers on the Egyptian religion and mythology, for it shows the futility of trying to prove an absolute identity in the indigenous religions of the Aryans and Egyptians.¹¹

What was true of the educated Greek or Roman three thousand years ago is to a large extent true of White South African, Western and Soviet scholars who attempt to interpret the Sudic experience. For them to persist in misinterpreting the African in the way they do is a dimension of race discrimination, regardless of whether or not the culprits misinterpret the African unconsciously or deliberately.

Like their Greek and Roman predecessors, the advocates of apartheid, Western scholars and Soviet students of Africa judge the African on the basis of criteria which will not enable them to perceive his experience in the clearest terms possible. The tragedy of our times is that this ignorance is the basis on which White South African, Western and Soviet policies for Africa are, in the final analysis, founded.

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN THEOLOGY

Western scholars have difficulty in understanding the "religion" of the ancient Egyptians. Henri Frankfort is one of those as yet few scholars who seriously tries to see the Egyptian experience as the ancients viewed it. But even he lands in difficulties when he seeks to understand the fundamental inspiration which Egyptian civilisation translated into experience. He observes:¹²

Religion as we Westerners know it derives its character and its unity from two circumstances: it centers on the revelation of a single god, and it contains a message which must be transmitted....

Akhenaten was a heretic.... He denied recognition to all but one god and attempted to convert those who thought otherwise. His attitude presents no problem to us; we acknowledge a conviction too deep for tolerance. But Egyptian religion was not exclusive. It recognised an unlimited number of gods. It possessed neither a central dogma nor a holy book. It could flourish without postulating one basic truth.

We find, then, in Egyptian religion a number of doctrines which strike us as contradictory.... The ancients did not attempt to solve the ultimate problems confronting man by a single coherent theory; that has been the method of approach since the time of the Greeks....

Ancient thought...admitted side by side certain *limited* insights, which were held to be *simultaneously* valid, each in its own proper context, each corresponding to a definite avenue of approach. I have called this 'multiplicity of approaches'.... this habit of thought agrees with the basic experience of polytheism.

Polytheism is sustained by man's experience of a universe alive from end to end. Powers confront man wherever he moves, and in the immediacy of these confrontations the question of their ultimate unity does not arise.

This statement of the difficulties Western scholars encounter when it comes to understanding the philosophy by which the ancients gave meaning to reality and life draws in sharp outlines the difference between the Sudaic and Graeco-Romano-Hebraic perspectives.

One finds it difficult to understand how Frankfort arrives at the conclusion that the question of the ultimate unity of the forces which confronted man did not arise. The Egyptians believed in the consubstantiality of phenomena. *Nu* was primordial substance out of

which the Creative Principle emerged; all phenomena were extensions of the Creative Principle. That which was consubstantial was a unity.

The person who had led a virtuous life on earth became a 'shining one,' an Osiris, a companion of the gods and their equal after death; he became the "prince of eternity."

The key to the understanding of Egyptian philosophy is the ancients' attitude to the person; they regarded the "form" of the human being, that is, that which was eternal in him as destined to live forever. Philosophy centred around this conviction. Institutions were developed to enable the person to evolve to the best of his ability in response to the challenge of his nature. Egyptian society and civilisation were person-centred in the sense that they maximised the latitude within which the human being could make what they regarded as the best possible use of his life.

The Egyptian attitude to the person and its implications are not yet as clearly understood in Graeco-Romano-Hebraic civilisation as they should be. The definition of the person as a creature continues to be a stumbling block.

The Egyptians inclined to the view that dogma was a dangerous thing; it readily degenerated into a prison of the mind. They preferred an open society which faced most of the implications of man being an extension of *Nu*, via the creator-god. Pharaoh Menkaure became famous because he made laws which allowed the ancients once more to worship gods of their own choice, in their own ways.

The chain of consubstantiality which explained the Egyptian's regard for the person emerges from the quotation Neb-er-tcher from the "lord of the company of gods," in *The Book of Knowing the Evolutions of Ra*,¹³ is important enough to repeat here:

I am he who evolved himself under the form of the god Khépera, I, the evolver of the evolutions, evolved myself, the evolver of all evolutions, after many evolutions and developments which came forth from my mouth. No heaven existed, and no earth, and no terrestrial animals or reptiles had come into being. I formed them out of the inert mass of watery matter. I found no place whereon to stand.... I was alone.... There existed none other who worked with me. I laid the foundations of all things by my will and all things evolved themselves therefrom.

In these early writings we see the ancients laying stress on self-evolution from *Nu*. The creator-god does not make phenomena from nothing; he forms them out of the watery mass of *Nu* or out of his essence. Each form has its unchanging value and evolves in response to the demands of this value. Perpetual evolution is its destiny because there is no end to evolution; it goes on forever.

The ancients faced the implications of this definition of the person and established a society designed to enable him, who knew his name and kept it a secret, to translate his secret into action to define himself to his family, home and society.

The lord of the company of gods tells us that he evolved himself and that he laid the foundations from which "all things evolved themselves." He evolved himself from *Nu*, and formed heaven, the earth, terrestrial animals and reptiles from *Nu*, the inert mass of watery matter. He, the creator-god and his evolved "creatures" were made of one substance; that was why "all things evolved themselves" from forms or "foundations of all things" laid by his will.

The Egyptian mind thought in terms of evolution where the Graeco-Romano-Hebraic mind thought in terms of creation; the former regarded evolution as flowing naturally from the consubstantiality of *Nu*, the creator-god and "all things." The Greeks, Romans and Hebrews saw a relationship of otherness between them which separated the Creative Absolute from its creatures; this relationship gave rise to the bias for categorisation. The Greeks thought themselves a people apart from others and regarded outsiders as barbarians. The Romans regarded *numen* as the determinant of categories. Solomon Grayzel tells us in *A History Of The Jews*¹⁴, that the Jew who lived between 516 B.C. and 70 A.D.,

felt that he was superior to the pagans. Their cruelty, their lewdness, their silly notions about gods, made the pagans seem lost tribes of humanity. Herein, however, the Jews saw their task: they were destined to be 'the witnesses of God,' the teachers of mankind. Their forefathers, the Patriarchs, had been chosen to found a new people. That new people had consecrated itself by accepting the Ten Commandments at the foot of Sinai. From this the Jews felt justified in drawing certain conclusions. One was that the Jews were a superior people, if not because of the merits of their own generation, then because of the fact that they were descendants of such illustrious ancestors. The other conclusion was that the Jewish people was not a racial group (a blood-group), but a group with a mission, that is, a group united by ideas.

This Jew regarded his community as "the chosen people" whose destiny was to teach mankind the commandments carved on stone by God. The Jews stood in a category by themselves; as having been appointed by God to teach the human race.

Ancient Egyptian documents suggest that the idea of commandments carved on stone was not peculiar to the Jews. E.A. Wallis Budge tells us in his introduction to *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* that according to the *Nebsemi* papyrus one of the earliest chapters of this book was "found in the city of Khemennu (Hermopolis) on a block of ironstone [?] written in letters of lapis-lazuli, under the feet of the god."

The Turin papyrus of the XXVIth dynasty or later says the man who found the stone was Herutataf, the son of Pharaoh Khufu (Cheops) of the IVth dynasty, which puts the date of the discovery at about 3733 B.C.

Herutataf, we are told, was one of the best-educated men of his time. He played a leading role in bringing the sage Tetteta to the court of his father, Cheops.

Moses received the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai during the 13th century *before Christ*, about 2,400 years after Herutataf.

Let us return to the bias for categorization. When the Europeans met the Black, Brown, Red and Yellow peoples, they used race and colour to define new categories of the human race. The non-Caucasians became the *barbarians* who had not been endowed with the *numen* which made the Caucasians the *teachers of mankind*; they became the *heathens* who did not have the *grace of God* and had to be won to Christ by the *missionaries*.

The Egyptian teaching on evolution and autogeny gave to the person the character of a self-defining value. *The Papyrus of Ani* tells us how Ani, a scribe, described himself after death as he journeyed to eternity. In *The Chapter of Changing into the Soul*, there is written:

I am Rā who [came] from Nu, the divine Soul, the creator of his own limbs. Sin is an abomination unto me and I look not thereon; I cry not out against right and truth, but I have my being therein. I am the god Hu, and I never die in my name of "Soul." I have brought myself into being together with Nu in my name of Khepera. In their forms I have come into being in the likeness of Rā. I am the lord of light.¹⁵

The Egyptians regarded primordial substance as infinite. By definition, an infinity was a unity; nothing could co-exist with it; nothing could have a will to oppose the will of the infinity. The infinity operated in terms of its Law, which was its will. Everything existed in the body of the infinity; everything operated in terms of the Law.

The person was created according to the Law; he was conceived according to the Law; he was born, fed and clothed in the Law. All he did; all his thinking and behaviour; all his hopes, victories, fears and defeats translated the Law into action. He could not violate the Law because he incarnated it. Nothing could oppose the Law because everything in the cosmic order conformed to the Law. Conflict itself was a translation into action of the Law. The person grew up and thrived in terms of the Law; he matured, aged and died according to it; he evolved perpetually into eternity according to the Law.

The logic of the Egyptian attitude suggests that the person could not sin even when he wanted to do this because sinning would translate into

action another aspect of the Law. He hurt his neighbour and committed crimes because he did not know the Law sufficiently; because he was ignorant.

In all this, the Egyptian expressed unparalleled confidence in the person and this confidence had its origins in his belief in the consubstantiality of the phenomena which constituted the cosmic order. This was how he stated this belief:¹⁶

O Atum, who has gone forth as the Great One of the surging flood [the Waters of *Nu*]... pray speak thou to the Ancestors: [The deceased] comes as one who is in their midst.... Indeed [she] who bore Re [Rā] yesterday is the one who bore [the] deceased [too].

The "she" who bore Ra was primordial substance, *Nu*, in the form of the watery mass of antiquity. The creator-god evolved from *Nu* and phenomena evolved from the creator. The cluster of forces which together constituted the eternal in Ani, the Scribe, says this of itself:

I behold Rā.... His strength is my strength, and my strength is his strength.

What Ani tells us in this passage is that primordial substance is infinite; that since the infinity is a whole which cannot co-exist with anything and since it must always remain whole, it needs him as much in order to be this whole as he needs it in order to exist; that, in the final analysis, there cannot be any relationship of otherness between the Creative Principle and the phenomena it brings into being. There inheres in him the power by which he could transform himself into a god. Ani continues:

Behold me, for I am exalted upon my resting-place, *Nu*, upon the place which is adjudged unto me. I am *Nu*, and those who work evil shall not overthrow me. I am the eldest and the first-born of matter; my soul is the gods, who are the eternal souls.... I come, and my soul advanceth over the way of the Ancient Ones.... I am strong to pass over the sky.... My soul and the soul of my body are the uraei, and I live forever, the lord of years, and the prince of eternity. I am exalted as lord of the earth.... I grow youthful in my homestead, my name is "My name decayeth not" I am the Soul, the creator of *Nu*...I am the lord of millions of years. I make my nest in the limits of heaven.... I do away with my faults.... I am provided with what I need.

After defining the person in such exalted terms, the Sodic evaluation of the human being could not be anything other than a protean philosophy which each community translated into experience in terms valid in or dictated by its environment. The logic of this philosophy went beyond tolerance; it created a dimension of consanguinity which regarded all the children of *Nu* as an evolving unity.

The "she" who bore Ra was primordial substance, *Nu*, in the form of the watery mass of antiquity. The creator-god evolved from *Nu* and phenomena evolved from the creator. The cluster of forces which together constituted the eternal in Ani, the Scribe, says this of itself:

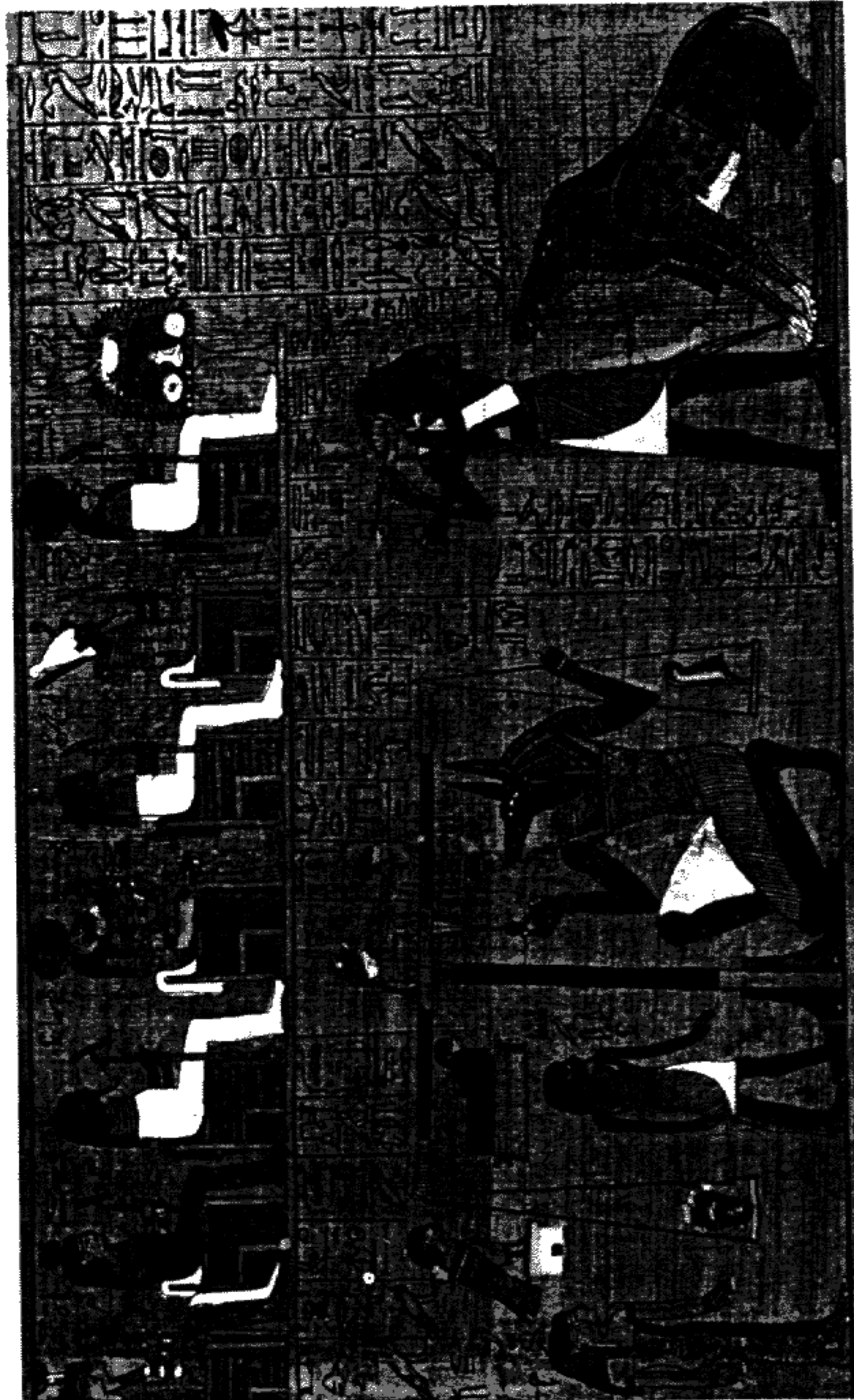
This is how Ani defines himself in *The Chapter of Changing into a Bennu* (p. 339):

I came into being from unformed matter, I created myself in the image of the god Khepera, and I grew in the form of plants. I am hidden in the likeness of the Tortoise. I am formed out of the atoms of all the gods. I am the yesterday of the four [quarters of the world], and I am the seven uraei which came into existence in the East, the mighty one who illumineth the nations by his body.... I am crowned, I am become a shining one, I am mighty, I am become holy among the gods. I am the god Khonsu who driveth back all that opposeth him.

Ani adds the following definitions of himself in *The Chapter of Changing into a Heron* (p. 340):

My hour is within me.... I am *Nu*, and I shall never be overthrown by the Evil-doer. I am the god Shu who sprang from unformed matter. My soul is god; my soul is eternity. I am the creator of darkness, and I appoint unto it a resting place in the uttermost parts of heaven.... My name is "Never-failing." My name is "Soul, Creator of *Nu*, who maketh his abode in the underworld."...I am lord of millions of years....

This definition of the human being produced an inner-logic which emphasised the primacy of the person; the consubstantiality of primordial substance, the creator-god, and phenomena; autogeny; self-definition; perpetual evolution and living forever. At the same time it gave to the Egyptian evaluation of the person the character of a protean philosophy which people in different environments translated into experience in different ways in response to the challenge of their destiny. This destiny was to live for millions of millions of years; to be princes of eternity.



A moment on the day of judgement: the god Anubis weighs the heart of the deceased while the god Thoth records the findings. The British Museum

THE ZULU INTERPRETATION

The three connecting links between the Egyptian and Zulu experiences were the commitment to the principle of consubstantiality, the attitude to the person and the teaching that perpetual evolution is the destiny of the human being.

Where the ancients believed that all phenomena emerged from *Nu*, which was primordial matter; where the chain of evolution began with *Nu* and proceeded to the waters of antiquity (*Nu*), the Original Mound or Earth (*Nu*), the creator-god from whom all things evolved, the lesser gods and the person, the section of the Nguni from whom the Zulus descended believed that all phenomena (*izinto*; sing, into, *ulutho*) had their origins in a living reality or consciousness which they called *UQOBO*.

This reality had no beginning and no end; it was alive and existed from eternity (*ingunaphakade*) to eternity. Each phenomenon had its *UQOBO* (reality or value) which was an integral part of the infinite Value; each was *uqobo loQOBO* (value which is a portion of VALUE).

The person evolved from this VALUE in response to the Law of Appearing (*Umthetho weMvelo*) or the demands of his nature (*isimo*) or Perpetual Evolution (*Ukuma Njalo*.) His destiny was forever to evolve (*ukuma njalo*) and discover more satisfying dimensions of being (*ukuba ngumuntu*).

These pronouncements on the origins, nature and destiny of the person exist in *Izaga* (*Aphorisms*) and form an important section of the *Law of Being Human*, (*Umthetho woBuntu*) which issues from the *Law of Appearing*.

Each phenomenon was a cluster of smaller values. All phenomena were alive because the infinite *UQOBO* was alive; all phenomena existed inside *UQOBO* because there was nothing outside it.

The ancient Nguni referred to the perspective from which they viewed the cosmic experience as *Umthetho* (the *Law*). What the ancient Greeks called philosophy was known among Nguni as the *Law*. This *Law* was passed down from generation to generation and exists to-day in its purest form in *Izaga*.

The five main sections of the philosophy are: the creed, the body of traditions by which communities defined themselves, customs, laws and other legal usages, constitutions and Social Purpose.

The central teaching of Buntu is that all things originate from *UQOBO* and evolve in response to the challenge of their nature; that the person is a self-defining value (*umuntu ngumuntu; umzimba uzwiwa ngumniniwo*; that is: the person is human; it is the person who knows best the workings of his body) and that life's purpose for the person is perpetual evolution (*ukuma njalo*).

The person, however, cannot exist of himself, by himself, for himself; he comes from a social cluster, exists in a social cluster and "dies" physically in order to live in the community of spirit-forms (*amadlozi*). Just as he defines himself, so does the cluster define itself. It tells itself and its neighbours who it is through its interpretation of the *Law*, through the traditions it developed down the ages to guarantee its survival. Each social cluster (or family or nome in Zulu society) has its own traditions (*izinkambo*) for establishing its identity.

Later in this chapter, I shall give an example of the Ngubane self-definition or tradition to illustrate how the tradition was passed from generation to generation to instruct posterity on what it means to be a Ngubane.

In a preliterate civilisation variations had to occur even within each family or nome. But this did not bother the Nguni because Buntu regarded the person as a self-defining value; all self-definitions which served the purpose of the community were simultaneously legitimate. This protean character of Buntu gave a flexibility to self-definitions which survived because the collective sovereignty of the group guaranteed the individual sovereignty or primacy of the person.

The sum-total of family or nomarchic self-definitions was the constitution of the family or nomarchy.

Customs, laws and other legal usages were part of the self-definition on one plane; on another, they were expressions of the *Law of Appearing* in different environments. One of the functions of the mind of the person or the nome or the nation was to translate *UQOBO'S Law of Appearing* into social law and action.

The customs, laws, traditions, and other usages gave structure to society; they were its constitution. The function of this constitution was to create, regulate and perpetuate a social order in which the person could realise the promise of being human and the glory of being a self-defining value. This was what *ukuba ngumuntu* meant.

The self-defining value was his own legislator and policeman; he told his compatriots what sort of a person he was in what he thought, said and did. His compatriots were his judges; they presumed that he had entered their society—that is he had chosen to be born into it—in order to enable it to make the best possible use of its life in the light of him, by placing at his disposal the social experience it had developed down the ages. It could do this to the best of its ability only if it was open; that is, if it was based on mutualism.

Social Purpose was the exploration of the person and his environment in order to enable him to discover more satisfying dimensions of being human. The person's ciliate mind was the torch by which he lit his path in the mazes of the cosmic order.

Buntu insisted that the person was adequate for the accomplishment of every task he set out to do; that his ignorance was the only factor that

limited his adequacy. To overcome the weakness, he had to regard his neighbour's mind as an open book of discovered knowledge; to recognise his neighbour as the reverse side of an entity to which he (the person) was the obverse. This demanded extremes of discipline which continuously enlarged the personality. To cope with the demands of these freely imposed disciplines was the glory of being a self-defining value.

The assumption here was that adequacy meant that an innate responsibility had been built into the person's many-sided or ciliate mind; that this quality could be awakened and developed in every person provided society was aware of its duties and obligations to the person. If the person could be guilty of crimes against society, the latter could also be guilty of crimes against the person.

The assumption predicated on adequacy faced the implications of its meaning. A value was neither good nor evil: it responded to the challenge of its nature or its environment. Society thus had always to be on the lookout for the difference between crimes committed out of ignorance or out of the will to hurt or out of society's failure to do its duty by the person. This had important implications for Zulu attitudes to guilt.

The Zulu view of *umuntu ngumuntu* (the person is human) meant that to be human is to have a many-sided mind. When a person attained heights of excellence which dizzied the mind, the Zulus said: *Umuntu ngumuntu*. When he fell to depths of degradation which defied description, the Zulus said: *Umuntu ngumuntu*. This was their way of saying the person defined himself in everything he did; that in everyone of his thoughts, modes of behaviour and deeds he told his family, neighbours, society, the world and the cosmic order what sort of person he was.

The Zulus coupled the ancient aphorism, *umuntu ngumuntu*, with *umuntu akalahwa* (the person is never so evil he is beyond redemption). The Zulu-speaking nomarchies of antiquity believed that all things had their origin in *UQOBO*; everything in the cosmic order evolved from *UQOBO*. This *UQOBO* was primordial consciousness; it had no beginning and no end; it was the infinite total of the values of all things which together made the cosmic order.

UQOBO was forever forming clusters of itself and combining these to produce phenomena. The agmination was regulated by *Umthetho weMvelo*, the *Law of Appearing*. Since *UQOBO*, the consciousness, was alive and there was no death in it; since it was an infinity, human behaviour in all its forms, on every plane and in all situations translated the *Law* into action. Nothing on earth or in the cosmic order could violate the *Law* for the violation was itself an expression of the *Law*.

When persons knew the *Law*, they did not fall into error; they did not hurt their neighbours; they developed a dimension of consanguinity which enabled the person to regard his neighbour as the reverse side of a

phenomenon to which he, the person, was the obverse. His neighbour was all mankind.

Ignorance was the person's only enemy; ignorance was inadequate knowledge of the *Law*; it pushed persons into error and forced them to do evil things.

Each living person had experiences which made him a unique book of discovered knowledge. He fulfilled himself and his neighbour when he shared what he knew with his neighbour and when the latter shared with him what he, the neighbour, knew. For the neighbour was the first precondition of fulfillment for the person. The person and his neighbour were fulfilled when their personalities were improved by what they shared. In this regard, the person and his neighbour were mutually-fulfilling complements.

Society existed to enable the person to grow in his knowledge of the *Law*; to teach and enable him to discover more satisfying dimensions of being human and to see to it that he realised both the promise of being human and the glory of being a self-defining value.

Society, which was a total of self-defining values, committed crimes against the person when it failed to equip or enable him to realise the promise of being human or when it did not see to it that he made the best possible use of his life. By failing to do its duty by the person, society denied him the opportunity to be the best human being that he could be; it left him ignorant and made him a danger to himself, his neighbours and society. He could thus not be condemned unconditionally and regarded as beyond redemption when he did wicked things.

Thus, Zulu law, which was an extension of the *Law*, drew the distinction between guilt and culpability and sought to focus as much on the person's wilful desire to remain ignorant and lead an evil life as on his society's failure to equip and enable him to be the best that he could be. That he had a many-sided mind was proof that he could be a better human being. He could not, in this setting, be so wicked as to be beyond redemption.

The person was neither good nor evil; in everything he did he responded to the inner necessity which inhered in his nature. He became a person of virtue, *umuntu ofundiswe umthetho* (the person who has been trained in the *Law*) or *into engenamthetho* (the thing which is without the *Law*) depending on how he "proclaimed" his nature or defined himself.

As a result, ancient Zulu philosophers, like their contemporaries in other language-groups, developed a large collection of *Izaga* (*Aphorisms*), each of which summarised the *Law*. These wise sayings told the person what to do in order to realise the promise of being human (*ukuba ngumuntu*); they defined the person as seen from perspectives provided by the Zulu interpretation of the Sudic Ideal.

The Zulus defined the person also in their statutes, customs and other usages:

The dimension of consanguinity taught that the person and his neighbour were unchanging relatives because both were agminates of *UQOBO* and both were self-defining values. *UQOBO* was an infinity and, as such, transcended race. If different environments gave different races different skin complexions, hair textures and eye shapes, that did not affect consanguinity. Primordial substance, like the *Law of Appearing* and the self-defining value which metamorphosed into the person, were above race.

The fact that each person in every part of the earth was a value, an unchanging *UQOBO* form, like every other person, made the human race a unity, just as the cosmic order was a unity. It was this unity which gave simultaneous legitimacy to all cultural self-definitions. To seek to destroy this unity was a criticism of primordial consciousness; it was to try to invert the perpetual evolution of the cosmic order; it was a ploy for running away from facing the challenge being human. In short it was Ultimate Insanity.

Apartheid errs because it makes it impossible for the non-White person to face the challenge of being human; it prescribes his destiny and says he must see fulfillment in going back to the childhood days of the human race; it says, in effect, that virtue for him consists in apologising for being human.

But apartheid must never be seen out of context; it translates into experience the pessimistic and devaluative view of the human being which was developed by the ancient Greeks, Romans and Hebrews. It creates catastrophic disharmonies in the personality and produces conditions which make it impossible for the person to realise the promise of being human (*ukuba ngumuntu*) if he is not White. Its inner logic drives Black and White through cycles of conflict to final disaster. To see this logic in clearer light, let us have a quick glance at how the Zulu-speaking nomads translated the bias for agmination and the dimension of consanguinity into action before the advent of the Caucasians.

A NEW IDEAL OF NATIONHOOD

The shift in the positions of the earth's poles produced cataclysmic changes in Sudic societies. Large numbers of African communities were forced to emigrate from their ancestral lands and settle in other parts of the continent.

The largest of these communities were the *Ba-NTU*, the descendants of *NTU* or *NU*. These moved in a southern direction. The Xhosa, who, like the Zulu, Mpondo, Swazi and Bhaca, were members of the Nguni family and spoke mutually intelligible languages, spearheaded the southward migration. They were, for this reason, isolated from the larger, *Ba-NTU* communities fleeing from the desiccated Saharan tablelands. Largely because of this isolation they retained some ancient Nguni words and expressions;

words which other Nguni language-groups dropped from their vocabularies.

The relevant expression found in Xhosa today is the description, first, of the Xhosa community and, second, of mankind, as *umzi ka NTU* (the family of *NTU*).

The Nguni were not the only Sudic people who reached South Africa. The Sotho language group, which includes the Sotho, Tswana and Pedi, was among the people from beyond South Africa. Smaller language-groups like the Venda and Tonga also settled in South Africa.

The southward migration must have stretched over thousands of years if the evolution of the different languages of Black South Africa is any guide. The Nguni and Sotho pushed the Ba-Twa and Khoikhoi farther south and settled on the lands they conquered.

The Xhosa always had the freedom to move to new lands in response to population pressures while the Zulu who settled in Natal were trapped between the Indian Ocean and the Drakensberg Mountains on the east and the west and between the Xhosa in the south and the Sotho-speaking communities in the north.

The different positions of the Xhosa and Zulu forced them to develop different political institutions in their efforts to create satisfying Sudic societies. The bias for agmination and the dimension of consanguinity preserved the autonomy of the different Xhosa nomes. If a nomarch broke away from his main cultural group, he could settle farther south where he would keep in purity the principles of his group's interpretation of the Sudic Ideal and preserve the autonomy of his nome.

A different situation existed among the Zulu-speaking Nguni. The circumstance of being trapped gave to the bias for agmination and the dimension of consanguinity the character of threats to nomarchic autonomy. As the population increased over thousands of years, nomarchic overcrowding created hunger for living-space. Nomarchic tensions and wars more or less became the order of the day.

Our main source of information on these developments is still the body of panegyric poems or patronymic legends (*izithakazelo* = words by which one is welcomed) which were attached as titles to each family name. These poems, which described the exploits of distinguished ancestors, were passed from generation to generation because in them each family defined itself, stated its interpretation of the Sudic Ideal and preserved its identity and uniqueness.

If a person with the family name Ngubane handed over something to his neighbour, the latter expressed his thanks by reciting the Ngubane patronymic legend:

Ngubane! Nomafu!
Ngogo zabantu,
Nezezinkomo!

[May you live long] O Ngubane!
Element of the clouds!
In your disdain for your enemies
You crushed people and their cattle;
Their skeletons tell the story.

Most of these poems describe a golden age in the experience of the Zulu; an age when warrior-heroes strode the land and achieved the impossible. Warrior-heroes come to the fore in conditions of social and political turbulence.

In this setting, the Zulus turned inward, to themselves, in the bid to discover a formula for co-existence which would normalise life in what was later to be known as Natal. Nomarch Malandela Zulu ruled over a tiny nome which called itself the Zulu, the people who belonged to the heavens or universes. The only claim to fame the Zulus had was that they were excellent farmers; they produced a quality of tobacco which was in demand over many parts of Southern Africa.

The most powerful princes set out to impose their own solutions on the Natal Nguni. Powerless as Malandela was, he nursed the ambition that one day, he might have a son who would lead his people to the heavens; who would restore order in Natal.

Some time during the second half of the fifteenth century, one of Malandela's wives gave birth to a baby boy. Malandela was convinced that the boy was the leader who would bring peace to Natal and lead the Zulu-speaking nomes along safer routes to a better future. To ensure that the boy lived and achieved as expected, Malandela gave him the name Zulu.

Zulu ka Malandela Zulu did not live up to expectations and the turbulence did not subside. By the eighteenth century a power-vacuum had developed which each of the major princes tried to fill by asserting vigorous hegemonistic initiatives.

Each prince or princelet employed one or more of the best-educated poets in his nome to chronicle events. The court poet composed a long poem in honour of the prince. Tradition vested him with the authority of an oracle; a voice of destiny. He could say things in public which nobody could utter; he could criticise the prince freely in his compositions. At the same time he could form opinion and influence it in given directions.

Senzangakhona ka Jama Zulu was an eighteenth century successor to Zulu ka Malandela Zulu. Like most of his predecessors he was too involved in questions of survival to bother much about conquest or considerations of destiny. His Court Poet, however, was determined forever to confront him with the call of destiny. The Poet was under a new type of pressure. The Zulu who were best-educated in their culture had begun to reject the idea that conditions would be stabilised by a strong prince; they saw salvation in an ideal of nationhood which would not be associated with the family of any ruling prince; an ideal which would unite because it

was seen to produce the desired results; an ideal which evoked similar and co-ordinable responses to similar challenges.

The Court Poet to Senzangakhona enunciated the ideal in these terms:

Ngisuse phansi, ngiye phezulu,
Ngibuye nencombo,
Ngibhule, ngipheke.
Ndaba, bayosala beshumayezana,
Abasezitheni nabasekhaya!

Masiphoth'intamb' ende,
Menzi ka Jama;
Siye emazulwini,
Lapho nezithutha zingey' ukufika;
Zobasakhwele,
Zephuk' amazwanyana!

Raise me from the depths;
To heights take me,
That with grain I may return;
The grain I shall winnow;
The grain I shall cook.
(Should you do that) O Ndaba,
They will forever preach to each other about it.
The foes will;
So will those on our side.

A cord of destiny let us weave,
O Menzi, scion of Jama,
That
To universes beyond the reach of spirit-forms
We may ascend.
(So long must the cord be)
The spirit-forms themselves
Will break their tiny toes,
Should they dare to climb!

The people to whom the court poet addressed himself needed no extraordinary powers of imagination to understand his message. They believed that they were incarnations of eternal values and that the eternal in them was real and positive to all things; that it could do whatever it imagined. Since perpetual evolution was its destiny, it had the power to traverse space and move from one universe to another in the endeavour to find more satisfying dimensions of being human.

The poet told them that they needed no props to respond to the call of destiny; they needed no gods; their ancestral spirits could not reach the heights of achievement which the person could. The disciplined self could imagine all things, achieve all things and rise to all heights because he was human. All the person needed to do to awaken the powers locked in him was to have faith in the person; to discipline himself and to proceed from this to explore himself—to search the eternal microcosm that he was—for satisfying dimensions of being human.

The person had all the future before him to evolve perpetually into the type of human being he wanted to be. Society and the spirit-forms were his allies and supporters; they were always ready to reinforce him whenever he disciplined himself and marched to a clearly stated goal.

The assumption behind this approach was that the person was adequate; that he had in him all the powers he could need to realise the destiny he chose for himself. These powers inhered in him as a person; he did not receive them from any source outside of himself.

Any belief in an external power was superstition and superstition was the person's mortal foe. Shaka killed groups of diviners and witch doctors in the effort to free his people from the grip of superstition. He wanted a nation of truly free men and women who needed no props outside of themselves in order to realise the promise of being human.

The Zulus were not the only people who regarded themselves as the people whose destiny was to traverse universes; in Rhodesia there were the MaZezuru, the people who belonged to the heavens!

Shaka the Great was the son of Senzangakhona. He adopted the court poet's ideal as the main inspiration of the revolution which he led after his father's death; it was the ideological blueprint on which he built the Zulu nation.

But the revolution must be seen in context. The Zulu philosophers whose thinking was reflected in the new ideal of nationhood had evolved out of the stage when they were dependent on religion for guidance on the establishment of a better society. Nomkhubulwana, the princess of heaven, was the last of their deities.

Religion had been alive in the thousand years before Shaka. In all these years, it failed to resolve the conflicts in Natal; it forced men to see it as a prop, a prison of the mind which was used by the strong to entrench their power and not to solve the problems of suffering humanity.

Shaka sailed into this situation and preached that wherever human beings were oppressed, they were, in the final analysis, oppressed by consent. The person had a many-sided mind which could traverse space and move from universe to universe and transform the human being into a conscious citizen of the cosmic order. This meant that if the person was prepared to impose certain disciplines on himself, he could become the creator of his destiny.

Using his mind to traverse the heavens in search of more satisfying dimensions of being human was the challenge of being a self-defining value.

Point was given to the challenge by the Zulu interpretation of the Sudic Ideal which taught that the person had entered the earth as an act of choice; that his purpose in entering it was to discover more satisfying dimensions of *ukuba ngumuntu* (being human). The quest was the commitment for which he lived; it shaped his thinking, motivated behaviour and inspired action. *Ukuba ngumuntu* was its own reward. The person could not look outside of himself for a reward for realising the promise of being human. He and he alone had chosen to enter the earth; he was the author of his mandate for existence on it.

Perpetual evolution, the Sudic Ideal taught, was the destiny of both the person and the cosmic order. My grandmother on my mother's side, who had served in King Cetshwayo's Ingcugce Regiment, about forty years after Shaka's death, insisted that I should never say, "Ngiyabonga" ("Thank You") if given anything. She taught me that I should express thanks by addressing the following blessing to the giver: "Ume Njalo!" (May you stand forever).

When I asked her why I should say to people they should stand forever she told me that in the mists of antiquity, when stones cried if pinched, early Man walked upright and sometimes on all fours. Then, one day, he found a formula in his mind for walking upright. He shared it with his neighbours and from that day each human being was so grateful they all thanked or blessed each other by wishing each should forever walk upright.

The Zulu-Nguni philosophers whose teachings the court poet preserved for posterity in his ideal had not reacted negatively to the religious experience; they had simply outgrown it when it ceased to have valid meaning in their lives. To do this was to respond to the challenge of being human; to the call of perpetual evolution.

Shaka presented the court poet's ideal as the formula for co-existence which would raise all persons to a satisfying dimension of being human and stabilise conditions in Natal. Shaka urged those who would listen to him to believe that life would have a better meaning for themselves if they abandoned loyalty to the nomarchy and committed themselves to the creation of a state in which the person would be equipped, enabled and seen to make the best possible use of his life regardless of who his parents were; to a state founded on an ideal which could be seen to satisfy in the conditions which prevailed in Natal.

Shaka created the open state and open society in which race and ethnicity were of no political significance. What mattered most was commitment to weaving the cord of destiny.

In *Shaka Zulu*, E.A. Ritter, a White writer, tells us how sections of the Zulu-speaking nomarchies responded to Shaka's translation of the bias for agnation and the dimension of consanguinity into political action:

Many of the most intelligent people beyond Shaka's boundaries who were above military age moved with their whole kraals to Zulu-land, which now indeed lived up to its name of "Heaven-land." Because of their superior intelligence they realized that they too would some day be "smelt out," merely because their sharper wits brought them more prosperity than their neighbours. In the same way that the Pilgrim Huguenots and Pilgrim Fathers had been attracted to countries with more liberal ideas, so Zululand—as yet an embryonic state—became the Mecca of thinking people beyond its boundaries, and an asylum for all the oppressed.¹⁷

The unification of the nomes into a nation-state was one of Shaka's most remarkable achievements. In this eternal monument to himself, he showed what the human mind was capable of doing. His other remarkable achievement was to raise women to the highest levels of government. He appointed Mkabi and Langazana joint governors of the *Isiklebe* military base while Mkabayi was governor of the Baqulusi nome. Mawa was in charge of another military base. Nomzinhlanga ruled over another.

He thought it childish that people who were mothers of the human race should be relegated to the tasks of producing children, tilling the soil and administering family affairs only. Women, he argued, were the producers of the most precious phenomena in a society: children. This enjoined on them the duty of having the biggest say in the affairs of a society. With this in mind, Shaka organised them into regiments which administered the country's affairs and helped to maintain law and order when the men were out in the wars.

His highest achievement, however, was the creation of a society in which the person realised the promise of being human regardless of who his particular parents were or of whether or not she was the particular child of her parents. Ritter lived with some of Shaka's contemporaries who quoted Shaka as having given the following reply to a Zulu xenophobe:

Any man who joins the Zulu army becomes a Zulu. Thereafter his promotion is purely a question of merit, irrespective of the road (*ndlela*) he came by.¹⁸

Shaka's problem was to justify the revolution he led. It was not enough for him to condemn the Old Order; he had to offer a viable alternative; he had to define the morality of the revolution in terms that were seen to have valid meaning in the life of every Zulu.

His most powerful weapon for doing this was not his army, as those who have not studied the Shakan revolution continue to say; it was a consensus on final goals which translated into action the Sodic principle of simultaneous legitimacy.

Shaka's character and thinking were influenced to a large extent by the superfluity of humiliations heaped on him by one nome after another as he grew up. When he was not being punished for being the child of his particular parents, he was denied the status of a royal personage, to which he was entitled. The persecution played a by no means small role in making him a revolutionary.

He set out to destroy the Old Order which had produced the nomarchic state. This type of state was based on each nomarchy's understanding of the Nguni interpretation of the Sodic Ideal. Consanguinity was to a large extent the cement which bound together the citizens of the nomarchy. The citizen's first loyalty was to his nomarchy.

Where the Natal Nguni were trapped, the hunger for living-space combined with rival nomarchic loyalties to produce an explosive security problem; it created a power-vacuum which Shaka set out to fill with the nation-state.

But for this state to perform as desired, it had to destroy the political power of the nomarchies, protect their cultural identities and reconcile political integration with cultural autonomy; it had to transform cultural autonomy and political centralism into interlocking mutualities. To weld the nomarchies into a viable power-structure, the new state had to be based on a formula for co-existence which recognised the simultaneous legitimacy of the cultural self-definitions developed by all the nomes; it had to develop a unifying consensus based on interlocking reciprocities: the nation-state guaranteed the security and protected the identity of each nomarchic group while the surrender by each nomarchy of its sovereignty to produce a collective sovereignty, maximised the nation-state's ability to create the conditions in which the citizen could be equipped, enabled and seen to realise the promise of being human.

For lack of a better word, we shall refer to this type of state as a *synarchy*.

We might digress a little here, to draw into sharper relief the complexity of the problem Shaka faced. Each nome proclaimed its commitment to its version of the Nguni interpretation of the Sodic Ideal—which each called the *Law*—by "writing it in blood"; by making given marks on the bodies of its citizens. Others made no marks.

Most Caucasians, even those who pass for authorities on Africa, still refer to these incisions as "tribal marks." The label establishes the White

man's right to prescribe destiny for the African. In the view of the Africans, the marks are evidence of commitment to a given understanding or interpretation or translation of the Sodic evaluation of the person; of the *Law of Being Human*. They are public declarations of ideological commitment.

The Sodic experience regards the *Law* as so important it has to be "written in the blood," as the Zulu members of the Sodic family say. The "writings" go beyond identifying the person; they prescribe the ways in which he should be treated, what he should eat, who he should marry to avoid incest and how he should be expected to respond to co-existence with his neighbours.

These marks were the external descriptions of the value the person incarnated. We shall come to this value shortly, but before we do that, let us have a quick glance at another aspect of writing the *Law* in blood.

The ancient Egyptians were an overwhelmingly African people.² They had communities of foreigners mainly in the areas near the delta. The aboriginals had been originally divided into nomes, some of which made marks on their bodies to proclaim their different commitments to the Sodic Ideal. Pictures of some Egyptian deities, like that of Maat, goddess of truth and justice, show us pierced earlobes like those we can see in many parts of contemporary Africa. Pharaoh Amenophis IV also had holes in his earlobes.

Thus, when I meet an African with particular marks on his body, I see in these declarations of commitment to a given perspective on the Sodic Ideal. These open forms of identification are important in an open society based on the primacy of the person; they tell all concerned how the person with the marks feels, thinks, behaves and expects to be treated.

Pharaoh Tutankhamen is at the moment the best-known of the kings of ancient Egypt in the United States, if not in the West. The West is dazzled by the splendour of his jewelry. To me, the most important thing about him is the way his earlobes are pierced. The piercing tells me something about his family, the nome from which he came and the ideological identity which the nome gave itself; it gives me a perspective on Tutankhamen and his times.

I am interested in this perspective because the piercing acts like an open book to me; it tells me that Tutankhamen was committed to an interpretation of the Sodic evaluation of the person which was not alien to the one to which my father, whose earlobes were also pierced, adhered.

When I read ancient Egyptian classics like *The Book of the Dead* and numerous papyri from Egyptian tombs, I find that the fundamental inspiration which gave meaning to reality and life and which the Egyptian experience translated into action was not unlike the one which inspires the cultural experiences of the Nguni, Sotho, Shangane, Venda and other Sodic communities of South Africa.

Each set of marks is treated with respect in a civilisation which emphasises the primacy of the person and the right of his community to define itself in terms dictated by or valid in its environment; a civilisation which respects each group's right to see the truth in its own light and which acknowledges the simultaneous validity of the truths discovered by different communities in different environments.

When the White missionaries came to Africa they condemned the making of what they called "tribal marks" as heathen. In doing this, they set out to destroy a vital principle which gave rhythm and balance to African communities: the doctrine of simultaneous legitimacy and validity. This teaching acknowledges the legitimacy and validity of different "tribal" self-definitions; of different cultural experiences. It opposes the imposition of one cultural experience on another.

This draws in sharper outlines one of the factors behind the race quarrel. The Sudio Ideal attaches importance to simultaneous legitimacy and validity while Caucasian civilisation lays stress on what Henri Frankfort has called "a conviction too deep to allow for tolerance." Such a conviction will justify the Inquisition and its successors and the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Dachau, etc. In the Sudio view, such a conviction distorts the personality and violates the person's right to see the truth as it stands revealed to him or her.

This conviction might have a place in homogeneous Caucasian communities. In racially and culturally polyglot societies, it is a clear invitation to disaster. For the quarrel between Black and White is, in the final analysis, a collision between a civilisation which teaches that life's purpose is to discover more satisfying dimensions of being human and its opposite, which stigmatises and inferiorises the human being. In this setting, to be different is to be wrong; to have a different skin complexion is to commit an unforgivable crime.

Simultaneous validity was given added significance when I travelled in West Africa in 1958, and the United States in 1969. I discovered that the West Africans saw reality from perspectives I had, in my ignorance, regarded as peculiar to the "Buntu" teaching in my part of the continent. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the common factor in Southern and Western African experiences was our evaluation of the person, which gave identical rhythms to our different cultural experiences.

As I delved deeper into the Egyptian experience, after my contacts with West African experiences, I came to the view that ancient Egypt's attitude to the person ultimately was what made it possible for me to understand the "Buntu" assessment of the human being better.

The points of convergence in the ancient Egyptian view of the person and the one which inspired Sub-Saharan attitudes to the human being were so many, I began to ask if there was any relationship between the *Land of Punt* and the *Land of the Buntu*. It was not improbable that in the ears of the Greeks, on whose testimony we rely for

much of our knowledge of antiquity in Egypt, Nubia and Punt, the word *Buntu* could have sounded like *Punt*.

I had neither the time nor the leisure to determine whether or not there was any relationship between Buntu and Punt. What I could do, and what I did, was to recognise the ancient Egyptian experience as one more window through which we could view the protean Sudio attitude to the person in action.

The experience of both the Zulu and the ancient Egyptians sheds valuable light on the problem of "tribalism"; it shows that ethnicity in Sudio communities is only a vehicle for translating a given ideal of fulfilment into social action and that the diversity of ethnic groups is compatible with a synarchy.

This setting throws into bolder relief both the harm the Christian missionaries did in Africa and the dangers of defining the African experience in terms designed to prescribe destiny.

The missionaries, like those Whites who sought to impose ideological destinies on the African, were interested mainly in forcing or persuading the African to define himself in terms which served their interest. They were not interested in preserving that harmony in his personality which made the African what he was and gave symmetry to his personality. The ideological missionaries wanted to fill the African's head with ideologies which would enable him to be exploited and humiliated by consent. Locking the African personality in a prison of the mind to facilitate the exploitation by the Caucasians of African resources is the cause of race conflict which focuses attention on the urgency of clarity on the difference between Sudio and Caucasian minds.

THE ZULU DEFINITION OF THE PERSON

We always have to bear in mind the fact that by declaring the person a self-defining value and by recognising the simultaneous legitimacy of all cultural self-definitions, the Sudio evaluation of the human being gave itself the character of a protean philosophy which different communities interpreted differently in different environments. All these self-definitions were simultaneously legitimate because self-definition was a quality of being human.

The Sudio mind set out to reconcile these self-definitions; to develop a formula for co-existence which would evoke identical and co-ordinable responses to similar challenges.

The challenge the different nomes which inhabited what later came to be known as Natal faced was that they were trapped between the Indian Ocean in the east, the Drakensberg Mountains in the West, the Xhosa-Nguni in the south and the Sotho-speaking groups in the north. This created a hunger for living-space which produced irreconcilable tensions and conflicts. The Zulu-Nguni interpretation has to be seen in the context provided by this environment.

Zulu philosophers took the position that there could be no peace in the world they knew and no order and stability in Natal if the forces which together made the person were not harmonised. An undisciplined person created a disorderly society and chaotic world. Their first precondition for a harmonised personality was a philosophy which defined the person in positive terms and faced the implications of this definition. In their view, a philosophy succeeded or failed in proportion to the degree that it harmonised the personality.

The Sudic Ideal, which was their starting-point, set out to effect the harmonisation by emphasising the primacy of the person and to create a society designed to secure and promote the primacy; a society which equipped, enabled and ensured that the person realised the promise of being human (*ukuba ngumuntu*); that he was seen attaining the glory of *ukuba ngumuntu*.

In literal terms, *ukuba ngumuntu* meant: *to be or to become human*. The components of the process were *umuntu* (the person); the definition of the person as *umuntu ngumuntu* (the person is human; he or she possesses a many-sided or ciliate mind); the injunction that life's purpose for the person is *ukuba ngumuntu* (to realise the promise of being human); the admonition that in order to realise the promise, one has to evolve through *amabanga okuba ngumuntu* (distances of being human). The ciliate mind's progression toward being human would be influenced by the extent to which the person knew or was ignorant of the *Law*. He would fall into error if he was ignorant. But the *Law* taught that there was no extreme of error beyond which the person could not be redeemed. The final component in the process of *ukuba ngumuntu* was a dimension of compassion: *umuntu akalahlwa* (the person cannot be thrown away, like trash).

The dimension of compassion was predicated on the postulate that the value was neither good nor evil; that it responded to the necessity which inhered in its nature and the demands of its environment. If the environment was sufficiently developed to provide scope for the full expression of every side of the ciliate mind, if it was sufficiently informed to harmonise the ciliations, it produced the person with a harmonised personality. If it was not adequately equipped for enabling the person to make the best possible use of his life, it disorganised the personality and moved him and his neighbour in cycles of conflict to ultimate disaster.

The dynamic which enabled a society to produce a harmonised personality or a disorganised one was the attitude to the person. In the Sudic tradition, this attitude regarded the person as a self-defining value; he had a many-sided or ciliate mind in order to cope with every aspect of the challenge of being human. Each Sudic culture translated this central teaching into a body of values which were valid in or were dictated by its environment.

The main parts of the philosophy were:

1. *The Core of the Teaching or Buntu (Umnyombo weMfundiso)*
(Recognition of the person as a self-defining value)

2. *Logic of the Teaching (Inkambo ye Mfundiso)*
(The protean character of the Sudic Ideal)

Zulu Xhosa Sotho Shangane Tonga Venda, etc.

3. *Applications or Values of the Teaching (Amasiko e Mfundiso)*
(Simultaneously legitimate self-definitions)

Ngubane Nxumalo Mtshali Kubheka Cele Khumalo, etc.

4. *Perpetual Evolution (Ukuma Njalo)*

The reader has noted that in the Sudic view, life's purpose for the person was not to conform to a mandate imposed from outside; it was *ukuba ngumuntu*; it was forever to respond positively to the challenge of being human. This challenge did not exist outside of the person—in the abstract, so to speak; it was a constituent part of his being; it was one of those parts of himself which made him human. He and he alone understood this challenge because he had responded to it when he elected to enter the earth; only he and he alone could explain what he had come to this planet to do. He defined himself when he explained what he had come to do.

The environment in which he defined himself was not a vacuum. His ancestors had defined themselves before him; they had, down the ages, developed a whole tradition of self-definition which linked them with the person. Thus, when he communicated with them he did not go out of himself to make supplications to external powers; he summoned powers which inhered in himself as an extension into the future of those who had gone before him; he was his forebears in a different guise, living in a different period. That was why he took on their names and titles in his family *isithakazelo* (panegyric legend).

When he summoned the inherent powers, it was because these were another quality of being human. He was not indebted to any power outside of himself for these. They were his and his alone. The more he