

# THE URGENCY OF THOUGHT: THE ETHICAL DILEMMA OF A RESPECTFUL ENCOUNTER WITH OTHERS: A SPACE FOR DISCOURSE BETWEEN AFRICA AND THE WEST.

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Philosophers from time immemorial, let alone writers such as Heidegger, Levinas, Rousseau, Freud, Sartre, Girard, Kant, Label, Edgar Morin, Albert Camus, Luc Fery, Goethe, Vladimir Jankelevitch, to name these, have called attention to the difficulties humans have in living together, and have put forward multifarious explanations to these difficulties. Yet, it is very baffling, for the purpose of this paper, to account for the position of each of them, but would need to limit myself to those whose remedy converge with the sapiential function in African thought, namely in its unexplorable linguistic corpus. Notwithstanding, this paper would need as well to transcend this point of convergence.

It is noticeable that in our contemporary world thought has created an unspeakable fragmentation and has perpetuated and engendered a mode of existing founded on division. Hence a manifest duality in fabricating conflict. It suffices to take as an example Jean Paul Sartre, who appears, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the theoretician of the conflicting relations with others, describing in "Huis Clos"(No Exit)<sup>1</sup> the fundamentally conflicting nature of human relations. According to the existentialist philosopher, "Hell is the others". As such everyone is the other's torturer, whom he constantly argonizes by endlessly subjecting him to his judgment; by condemning him as such to death by the sole fact that he congeals him in his essence and thus depriving him of his existence. Now, as a response to the argony reifying us, the only possible exit is nothing but reprisal. Hence the inevitability of conflict between us. By virtue of Sartre's conclusion the essence of human relations is not community but conflict. As far as Sartre is thus concerned the fact that the other judges me and everyone in such wise hopes to exercise his power over the other, conflict is imminent. He drew from this the inference that conflict will in no circumstances cease from existing among human beings."Homo homini lupus", Plautus' and Erasmus' formula, resumed by Thomas Hobbes, marvellously illustrates this hypothesis. If every being has as ambition the domination of others, their appropriation (to make an Anschluss out of them), it originally holds, as Hobbes had observed, owing to the equality of the potentialities of men. The English Philosopher maintains that from this equality of aptitudes ensues the hope of attaining our ends. That is why if two men desire the same thing whereas it is impossible for both to appreciate, they become enemies; In their pursuit of this end, they toil to dominate or destroy each other. The similarity of desire, therefore, seems to be a determinant factor for conflict, engendering violence. This tragic vision of human relations is incontrovertibly in direct antithesis to the optimistic vision of Philosophers like Jean Jacques Rousseau,<sup>2</sup> who looks at human relations in the framework of sympathy. This

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<sup>1</sup> Sartre, *Huis Clos*. (Sartre's play) The inner logic of human relation is conflict not community. This conflictual nature of human relation is also implicit in Sartre's philosophical work, *L'Être et le Néant* (translated in English as *Being and Nothingness*).

<sup>2</sup> Rousseau. *Le Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes présenté par Rousseau au concours de l'Académie de Dijon en 1755*. His thesis: "man is

theoretician of Sympathy maintains that if sympathy is naturally cultivated, would give birth to love and friendship, considering that men are naturally inclined to be good to one another. Thus in his *Discours sur L'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (*Discourse on the origin and foundations of the inequality among men*), expresses his faith his rational faith in the natural goodness of man, that would incite him to do good with the less possible evil to the other. The first dispositions of men as such should be thus primitively devoid of hostility, and if there is any conflict, then it takes place owing to the entry of men in society together. Clearly speaking, sympathy appears a natural psychological sentiment susceptible of uniting men together without being in conflict against one another. Behind Bergson's thought this vision of sympathy (the instinct of sympathy) is prevalent. It is therefore admissible that among our natural dispositions with regards to others, hostility or conflict does not constitute the only envisageable relation.

On the other hand another voice jars against this optimistic vision of human relations going by the name of sympathy. If man was good as Rousseau, Bergson, among others, claim, why should he necessarily be asked to love his neighbour?, argued the Austrian psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud. Disapproving thus of Rousseau's thesis, by showing that conflict is inevitable, man being, as he gives us to understand, naturally inclined to harm his fellow human beings. The carnage and barbarism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century answering to the names of war, genocide, as well as the conflict predominating up to date seem to confirm Freud's thesis. Accordingly, the ethics of our civilisation in total peril. We are thus summoned to ask ourselves whether other relations are envisionable and whether the conflict-relation predominating up to date does not constitute a major pathology. It would be convenient to ask as to which attitude should be good and legitimate to adopt in our relations to others.

If, therefore the relation of sympathy is in the minority and systematic hostility represents a great peril, what appropriate attitude could be adopted to ameliorate our relations with others?

For us, respect seems to be the only suitable attitude in conformity with the need we all have. Sympathy and hostility are natural sentiments of a psychological nature. Respect is of another nature, being a moral sentiment of an ethical sort. It obliges us. Now the other being as me, a subject, endowed with a conscience and self-awareness, I am held to treat him as such, without making out of him an obstacle in the satisfaction of interests foreign to him. In all evidence, it is fundamentally illegitimate in our wanting to subordinate any of our fellows. The other not being an object, moral sentiment compels his being respected. Ethics, thus, requires a profound respect for the other. Immanuel Kant,<sup>3</sup> the

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born good, society corrupts him". Based on social inequality. The axial point of his reflection in the text: the man's behaviour in the state of nature. The question treated is: what is the spontaneous attitude of man in relation to his fellows? Is it wickedness? His obvious answer is man repudiates doing evil in the presence of evil, he is inclined to pity. His arguments being, it is pity that leads us without reflection to help those we see suffering.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Kant. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1785; *Kritik de Praktischen Vernunft*, 1783; *Kritik der Urteilkraft*. 1790; *Die Religion innerhabl der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, 1793; *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1797. In these works, Kant treats topics such

great theoretician of moral clearly recommends respect for the other and this for two reasons: for he is as me, free, conscious and worthy of respect but equally, in the case of want of respect for the other, I put my own identity of being human in jeopardy. Works published by Kant contain approximately 300 occurrences of the term “Achtung” (respect), with approximately 40 occurrences functioning with reference to a conceptual network signified by the notions of “person”, “the dignity of humanity”, “humanity”, “consideration for fellowman”, for “others”. In addition to this network are occurrences where there appears the term “esteem” which we rightly considers as being the equivalent of the term “respect”, in formulas such as “man’s esteem”, “human dignity”. Also, Emmanuel Levinas’ thought,<sup>4</sup> (the contemporary philosopher, 1905-1995), revolves around the mystery of the other. For him relation is the alpha or the starting point, to such a point that he writes: “in the beginning was relation”. This thought, poetical though is profoundly philosophical. In Emmanuel Levinas’ thought we find the occurrences of concepts such as “respect”, “relation”, “the other”, “solidarity”, “and person”, “encounter”, “love”, “unity and diversity”. His thought therefore can be applied to contemporary questions beyond the mystery of interpersonal relation, such as the problem of racism, the confrontation of cultures and of religions, to name but these. Hence only ethics, according to Emmanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur,<sup>5</sup> is the space for openness to the other. Concerning the other, Levinas feels that ethics is a necessary option. Thus the title of his work “Totality and infinity” (Fr. *Totalité and Infini*, 1961) underlines the contradiction contained in the understanding of the other within a system. The sense of the other is that he transcends my concepts and understanding, whether it is a question of a vision of the world, the movement of history or political project. The other, according to Levinas, is a “signification without context”. The other has his meaning by himself, independently of the relations existing between him and I and which makes us to fall in the same context. We must not mistake the other in a provisional and relative sense of which, in the final analysis, appropriable by me and the other in the absolute sense of that which has an unconditional meaning. Levinas paradoxically finds in Descartes, the appropriate notion: it is the idea of infinity, this idea which only emanates from me. Recognizing the other as other is not to make out of him a concept but talk with him, implying the acceptance of his right on my discourse.”To approach the other in speech is to accommodate his expression where at every moment the idea that would carry a thought. It is therefore to welcome the other beyond the capacity of the self; which precisely signifies: to have the idea of infinity. But that also means to be taught. The rapport with the other or speech is a non-allergic relation, an ethical relation, but this welcome speech is a teaching. But the teaching does not return to the maieutic one. It comes from the exterior and brings more to me than I contain. In its non-violent transitivity there occurs the epiphany of the face. Kant’s and Levinas’ approaches join hands with the sapiential function in African thought; namely in its unexplorable linguistic corpus. It is therefore worthwhile to look closer, via linguistic analyses, how we can define the sapiential function in African culture.

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as respect for the law, respect for person; respect as sentiment of the dignity of human nature; law and duty; law, duty, respect.

<sup>4</sup> Levinas. *Totalité et infini*, 1961, La Haye: Martin Nijhoff, p. 12; p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> P. Ricoeur. Sympathie et respect, Phénoménologie et éthique de la seconde personne, *Revue de la métaphysique et de morale*, oct.-dec. 1954.

In Greek Philosophy, the *σόφος* (the sage) who has ended by becoming the *φίλοσοφος* (the philosopher) is the man who knows how to utilize his intellectual faculties to ask questions inherent in the presence of man in the universe. The function of the *sophos* is actually a function found in all human societies. It is precisely what we call here the sapiential function. The originality of ancient Greek society consists, among other things, in the fact that this sapiential function, in the wake of sundry Sisyphean labors including the political assassination of Socrates, ended by imposing itself as an autonomous intellectual discipline in search of its own object and its own methodology as Philosophy. Later on it succeeded to give itself a name which became *φιλοσοφία* but, even after two thousand years of history, she has not succeeded to clearly define its object nor succeeded to definitively define her method. However, before the cultural emergence of Greek antiquity, the sapiential function was in high esteem in Africa and Egypt, raised to the cosmic throne under the name of **Maat** or **Tchaas**. Elsewhere in Africa it carried different names. The Bantus called it **Bohlale**. Hence the moral authority which every society and human beings need in order to subsist as read in the thought of Levinas and Kant as we can also find in African culture is what we call the sapiential function in society. Thus we find the African equivalence of “respect” as we have just read in Kant and Levinas, in the Kiluba language termed **bulême**, signifying: honour, veneration, respect, esteem, deference, consideration, prestige, celebrity, fame, dignity, influence. In Kiluba, the verb **Kulema** first of all has the physical meaning of : “to have weight, to carry weight, to be weighty, heavy; to grow heavier, to rely on as in expressions: **-méso ábaléma**: my eyes are heavy(from sleep); **kiselwá kilema**: the load is heavy; **meza álema**: the table is heavy. From this comes the verbal substantive: **bulemi** meaning the heaviness or the weight of an object: **mwána kádi po na bulemi**: the child is not heavy; **malemi ábidi**: two weights. The verbal forms derived from this are, among others: **kulemena**, meaning: to weigh on, to put charge on, from whence expressions such as **myánda imbi ilemena mu nda mwábo**: bad actions weigh on the heart; **kulemezya** which signifies: to make something weigh on, to make heavy, to overwhelm. **Kulemena** which means: to grow stronger , to lean stronger toward, to turn to, to go on one side: **Muntu walemènèà ku bulo**: the man who leans entirely on his marriage. The latter verbal form allows us to form another nominal which is **kilemenezi** which has the same meaning as **bulemi**. In the figurative sense, the verb **kulema** (which can have **kunema** as regional variant) means: “to be respectable, to be important, esteemed, considered, influential; to merit respect” and which expresses the opposite of **kupela**: to be careless, thoughtless; in the moral sense: to count little, “to be disconsidered”. Hence we have the expression: **muntu nànshya ùleméne nàmànyi**: a man however respectable he may be. Avermaet relates thus the following saying: **kyalemènè kyàpela: mushinzi kàkùpilà ntambo: mvungù le ubà-kapùla yo pi yo kolupila ntambo mapi?** What was esteemed can loss esteem: a squirrel starts striking a lion, it is asked: you squirrel from whence do you derive your strength of striking a lion? The verbal form derivative of **kulemeka** has a moral meaning: to respect, to honour, to venerate, to have deference, to have consideration, appreciate, to be polite, which makes the nominal derived **mulemeki** signify a respectable man. We also have the verbal substantive **bulemeki** meaning the act of honouring, the act of respecting. Also, the verbal forms directly derived from **kulemeka** all have a moral meaning such as the reflexive **kwilemeka** meaning: to make oneself respected;-the applicative **kulemekela** or **kulemekena** meaning: to venerate, to honour as in the sentence: **kàmulemekelé po**: he has not respected him/her; the passive **kulemekwa**: to be venerated, to be respected; that does not provide us with another nominal: **mulemekelo** which means: the way of venerating, the way of honouring. There exists an adjective of the same root: **-lême** which is used to mean “something of value,

something of weight, something worthy of consideration, something considerable. So it is said: **muntu mulême**: a respected person, a person venerated, a respectable person. (Bantu) **bâlême ne bàpele**: the big and small (those worthy of consideration and those who are not). Also, **konakunya buleme bwa mukwenu**, to ruin the honor of your neighbour or fellow man, **buleme bwa Iwimu**: respectable salutations or greetings. The Kiluba language always constructs a nominal substantive on the same root: **kalemo**, meaning: respect, veneration, deference, politeness, civility, affinity, manners, propriety. Respectability, decorum, respectability as in the sentence: **muntu wa kalemo**: a polite, distinguished person, full of civility); **dizina dya kalemo**: the name give to through respect, decent term, polite (to avoid or evade or coarse, offensive, indecent expressions as Avermaet comments). This substantive can also be used as an adjective under the form of **a kalemo**: “respectful, courteous, polite” or as an adverb in the form of: **na kalemo**: “with politeness, politely, respectfully”. The genius of the Kiluba language allows the formation of the substantive in the germinate form: **kalemeleme**, respectful manners in opposition to **kapélepele** referring to the contrary or the lack or want of respect, the want of good manners. The acme of the Kiluba conceptual construction is thus found in the syntagm: **mulemantu** which has a plural: **balementu**, referring to a person who respects himself/herself, thus in turn making himself or herself respected, because he or she is a wise or virtuous person, faults free, wise, prudent, pleasant, welcoming, respected, venerated. Therefore there is a sort of social ideology from the **bulemantu bwabuntu**, the true dignity of man, the true grandeur of man, giving him the right to respect, wisdom, kindness, affability, cordiality etc., well expressed in Kiluba, which could also be found in all African cultures, with other words on condition that we labour to look for it. It is this ideology which expresses best what I term the sapiential function in African culture, and is also expressed in the thought of the world’s major thinkers. Beyond the Bantuphone zone, we have one of the languages situated in the Southern continent of Africa, the Sesotho or the language of the Basothos. We notice that they have a word called **bohlale** which linguists have first of all translated as substantive: “wisdom, knowledge, erudition, learning; discernment, judgment, sagacity, prudence; light; cunning, sharpness” and as an adjective: wise, clever, cunning. Their language has constructed a series of verbs and other substantives from such as we can see from the following examples. The Sesotho substantive: **bohlale** which has as plural **mathale**, meaning: wisdom, knowledge, erudition; discernment, judgment, sagacity, prudence; light, sharpness, cunning as we have just observed. The root **-hlale** also serves to form something active and substantive which respectively signifies: prudent, intelligent, sharp and wise man, the wise, magician, the same as **nthale** and **kgwale** referring to a smart, shrewd or cunning person who succeeds to draw from a matter. **Mahlale-hlele** also seems to refer to a cunning, crafty, sly, or wily person. The verb **ho hlalefa** which seems be derivative from the substantive **bohlale**, signifies: to become wise, to be cultured, to be civilized, to be intelligent; to be informed. Without any further ado, I would like to hit on the substantives that is of interest to this paper: **ho hlalefêlana**: to be wise one another, to mutually understand each other; **hlalefisa**: to render wise, to render intelligent, to instruct; **ho hlalefisana**: to mutually render wise, to teach one another. The verb **ho hlalosa**: explain, whose reflexive is **ho ithalosa**: to make oneself clear; to explain who we are. Also produces a series of nominals and the following verbals: **mohlalosi**, he who explains; **bohlalosi**, the way of he who explains or makes remarks. **Mohlaloso**, the way of explaining. **Tlhaloso**, **hlaloso**, explanation, commentary. **Hlaloseha (ehile)**, to be clear. **Hlalosetsa(ditse)**, to explain to. **Mohlalotsetsi**, he who explains to. **Mohlaloseso**, explanation, instruction, commentary. **Hlalosetsana**, to explain to each other.

**Tlhalosetsano, hlalosetsana**, mutual explanation. **Hlalosisa**, explain well; to define. **Hlalosiso**, definition.

In front of such conceptual richness, we only have a confusion of choice. I do not know what the Bantu and Basotho thinkers have done so far in rendering the same ethical concepts as read in Kant's and Emmanuel Levinas' ethics to take humanity out of really difficult situations and also out of the traps that men stupidly lay on one another in their daily existence. On the other hand, I find that **kulemeka** (respect, venerate, deference, consideration, esteem, appreciation), **Kalemo** (respect, veneration, civility), **ho hlalefelana** (mutual understanding etc.), **hlalosetsana** (to explain to each other), **ho hlalefisana** (to teach one another), **tlhalefisano, hlalefisano** (mutual teaching) etc., are perfectly convenient for the ethics of respect, especially on the framework of communication giving way to an exchange of point of views, implicitly supposing dialogue and collective consultation instead of resorting to violence. To acknowledge the other as other, according to Emmanuel Levinas', is not a matter of conceptualizing him, but a matter of speaking with him, but in speaking with him, one does not only have an idea of infinity but one is also taught in the process. In our contemporary world, the other is regarded as being responsible for economic difficulties, natural calamities, and the enemy. Hence, Jews are only to be parked for "final solution", there is nothing else but track down Armenians and Croatians; nothing else but to take out knives and matchets to chase away the "Tutsis". In technical terms is what we call the practice leading to genocide. Confrontations between cultures escalate before us today in violent conflicts. Since the attack on world trade center of September 11, 2001, we are aware that cultural rivalry can be utilized as a justification for terrorism. Thus, duality has necessitated the fabrication of conflict: the big Satan of the western world/Moslem people, a duality based on cultural identity. If there is a painful question in our present world, it is that of conflicts between cultures and ethnic conflicts. Since the fall of the Berlin wall and the demise of communism the crux of conflicts have changed their nature, turning out to be less ideological and have become more of protest campaigns as to defending the interests of different cultural communities. At the root of these conflicts, there is a claim of a cultural identity. This identity appears as a watermark in all the vocabulary we use today. Terms such as: "the Kurd people", "the Palestinian people", "the Jewish people", "the patriotic American sentiment", to name but a few, supposing the acknowledgment of a sort of identity. The problem is, this identity is not perceived as a natural component of diversity, yet becoming a conflictual aggregation. The problem resulting only from the fragmentation where the mind persists, from the fragmentation of my personality, and from social fragmentation resulting from division. From the moment in which I pose my identity in an objective way in the form of historical, political, religious, and linguistic definitions, the problem already poses itself as to know how to reconcile this multiplicity in me. At any rate, whether we want it or not, humanity has entered a multicultural era, the whole question is to know how we will arrive at pacifying the relation between different cultures. But thinkers including philosophers, ethnologist, anthropologists, linguists, etc. have proposed different solutions to human conflicts, which, thanks to limited space, I cannot enumerate here. Levinas sees the solution of this problem in ethics and parole. He suggests to us that the relation to the other or thinking is ethical. Suggesting to us that we should never forsake or jilt the thread of speech for the recognition of the other as other. If speech is indeed a discursive act aimed at intercomprehension, necessarily involves an ethical recognition of the other.

Philosophy of language has developed much in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, in this development (“linguistic turn”), the relational aspect of language was well taken into consideration. On the one hand, it was realised that speaking is not only to express a content (semantic) but also a speech act (performative) by which we engage in such and such a way, according to such and such rule of the game, vis à vis real or potential partners (cf. American philosophers C.S. Peirce and J.R. Searle and the British philosophers L. Wittgenstein and J.L. Austin). On the other hand, we realised that speaking is using an instituted language and belonging to a cultural community, that is to say, participating in a pre-comprehension of the world shared with others (cf. German Philosophers M. Heidegger and G. Gadamer). But again there is more in speech, as underlined, in the wake of “linguistic turn”, by recent German Philosophers K.O. Apel and J. Habermas. The act of communication itself contains the foundation of the ethical recognition of speakers and, simultaneously, a fundamental universal norm. Because, it should be a real performative contradiction, that is to say, a contradiction in the exercise itself which we pose, rather than claiming on the one hand to the validity of what we are engaged in saying in a serious discussion (claim to truth if it is a question of a theoretical discussion, claim to justice if it is a question of political or moral discussion) and, on the other hand, to back up one’s words on intimidation, exclusion and violence. Discussing really supposes, at least in principle, renouncing such means which not being arguments or polemics, can no doubt influence but certainly not convince. There is *a fortiori*, strictly speaking, an ethics of discussion (*Diskursethik*). Discussion presupposes the acceptance of an absolute, categorical imperative: equality of the rights of every speaker, present or potential, and his equal co-responsibility in the search for a solution about which we are talking. This presupposition, as Apel notably specifies, is pragmatic (otherwise said related to the act of claiming to something in a discussion) and transcendental (that is a priori necessary condition of validity). The obligation of respect of the speaker is contained in speech as such whereas, in facts, it happens to us to fail in this respect when we talk in a strategic way, that is by exerting pressures more or less acknowledged in the simple aim of manipulating our speaker. It remains, even in this case, necessary for us at least to pretend from time to time, to intend communicating really and not to recourse to other means than the valuing our arguments (this should be in a sort of way if we go back to the word of La Rochefoucauld, of vice to virtue). However, the solution of ethical and linguistic philosophers to our contemporary problem pregnant with conflict is really a chimera for they themselves, at least, misunderstand the nature of the functioning of the ego, the innermost recess and singularity of the speaker, the strategy of the ego is that he is his own *raison d’être* alone, the *raison d’être* of separation, the *raison d’être* of cultural conflicts, the *raison d’être* of the aversion for the other, the *raison d’être* of the incapacity to see the other in oneself in an infinitely broader consciousness. Other thinkers and writers have suggested other solutions. Theoretical intellect has produced the mental concept of tolerance, without burrowing beneath the surface of the problem. François-Marie Arouet,<sup>6</sup> called Voltaire termed tolerance as the privilege of humanity and that we are all moulded with weaknesses and errors; that we should reciprocally forgive our follies, this being the first law of nature. Plus, according to Wolfgang Goethe,<sup>7</sup> tolerance only ought to be a transitory state. It must lead to respect. But it remains difficult to bring down tolerance at the practical level where the master ego rules with its sense of division

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<sup>6</sup> François-Marie Arouet, dit Voltaire, 1694-1778.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfgang Goethe, 1749-1832.

and separation. Going beyond cultural separations is not the fruit of a theory, but a question of the openness of the heart, the openness of consciousness, and above all of a vision of unity. Hampaté Bâ, the African writer, who has rethought for us the tradition of his people, the Bambaras, in an ideal way. In his symposium on the notion of the person in black Africa in 1971<sup>8</sup> and in his communication of 1972<sup>9</sup> during the symposium on African religions, organized by C.N.R.S., tells us the creator of the universe, **Maa Naala**, according to the Bambara people, by intending to perfect his work, created man as a spark, emanating from himself. He named him **maa** as part of his own name while he confined the secret of the universe to number two; he kept his own name in number one, he confided to **maa** (man) the secret of the universe of the transformation of matter as well as the word (**Kuma**) as a means of communication. Work and the word are infallible signs of the presence of the spirit. While work ensures the material survival of the community, the word or parole ensures its survival. According to the writer, the tradition considers the human body as a reproduction in miniature of the earth, and by extension, the entire universe. In this sense, the vision of man is situated with unity. In the consciousness of unity, the sense of the ego completely disappears. There is no “me”, “my” as in the sense of “my culture”, etc. The sense of mine is extended to the dimensions of the universe, in such a way that the self contemplates the self. It is a vision of unity which, accordingly, is evoked in the existence of all things. According to the genuine thinker, Luc Ferry,<sup>10</sup> speaking about openness to singularities, it is a question of an invitation for us to be opened to what is universal in others. He gives us to understand his suggestion by evoking the great works of humanity, works belonging to all cultures, to all singular epochs, but though singular, have something universal in them, which render them precious before us. Tolerance is inexact for the word itself already supposes separation, a fact we immediately feel in the presence of difference which we must toil to accept for better or for worse. That is why, according Edgar Morin, we are in the prehistory of the human mind, meaning that the human mental capacities are still under-exploited, especially at the level of our relations with others. If the consciousness of unity prevails, where is “difference”? Ergo, where is the necessity for the mental rule of respect called “tolerance”? The intimate sense of One, of the presence of the self is everywhere and diversity is an echo that refracts one to infinity. We can only talk about tolerance solely from the mental point of view for which diversity is reified. From the moment in which duality stays in the mental, there is I/the other. There is I (Black African, Jew, Arab, Christian, Moslem, American, etc.) and the other (black African, Christian, Jew, Arab, Moslem, American etc.). As far as I situate myself in duality, as far as I am difference intoxicated, I loss the entire view of unity. I think in division, in fragmentation...and it is from there that the necessity for tolerance imposes itself. Let us go farther than ordinary thinking; farther than ordinary vigilance. That is called lucidity. If you look at your wife, your husband, your friend without any image, an entirely

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<sup>8</sup> *Colloques Internationaux du C.N.R.S: la notion de personne en Afrique noire*, Paris 11-17 Edit. Du C.N.R.S, Paris 1971, p. 181-192.

<sup>9</sup> *Colloques sur les religions traditionnelles africaines comme sources de valeurs de civilisation*, 1972. Ibid. *la notion de personne en Afrique*, p.187.

<sup>10</sup> Luc Ferry. *Qu'est-ce q'une vie réussie?* Ch.V. The humanism of the man-God. Life as a life in harmony with the human condition.Ch.11.A New approach to the question of happiness pp. 471-482. Ibid. Openness to the other, in what is unique and at the same time universal, pp. 474-476.

different relation establishes itself; then thought has nothing to do with it and there is a possibility for love. It is exactly the same problem concerning a stranger, the other, he who belongs to a different culture. It is a question of duality that thought brings about here: we/the others, my culture/their culture, my national identity/their national identity etc. If I am intensely present, passionately attentive, relation is always lively and new. And in this passion, compassion can be born and love takes its course. For there exist from now a communion, then communication becomes possible. Otherwise, communication is only an illusion or a deception.

How do you intend to communicate when everyone retains his own image of the other? A Jew cannot communicate with a Palestinian, A Serb cannot communicate with a Croatian, an American cannot communicate with an Arab etc. How could communication take place when cleavages among men still exist? Let the image fall, or better let it not appear, for then communion exists. And when communion is there, communication is warm and spontaneous. No longer any barriers. No more cleavage. It supposes a great humility. This means throwing away every fictitious identity laboriously constructed by the ego. Accept the extreme denouement of being a human being, close to a human being. Accept being vulnerable, accept being sensitive, accept knowing nothing, not intending to impose anything, accept being there to listen. Accept hearing the happening that is also mine, but which I have never heard. Accept welcoming and recognizing in me the whole humanity and say yes to what it is. Never to stick to verbal communication between myself and the other. There exist a level more profound where it is not a question of a simple verbal communication, but of a communion or with the same intensity, with the same passion; then we only talk about communion, a thing more important than a simple verbal hearing.

Only love can see unity in diversity, the intellect is incapable of attaining it. The intellect will always lay emphasis on diversity than unity. The intellectual attempts to encourage tolerance have a great value. It is necessary that we teach the richness of cultural diversity more and more. But it is not evident that that will suffice to solve the problem at its roots that is at the root of the human mind.

Nowadays, the situation is critical, we see the diversity of cultures, we continue to sustain division and we are all taken aback that it degenerates into conflict. The damages are there and the ideal is yet to descend on the real. Without man. Without you, without me, there will be no differences. *A fortiori*, a plea not to incite differences.

Au bout du compte, a last poetic theorem: the future universal democracy will have as its fundamental law: unity in diversity and diversity in unity.