

SECTION THREE

INFLUENCE OF AN AFRICAN COSMOLOGY WITH UBUNTU

PROLOGUE TO SECTION THREE.

I have grown up from childhood to adolescence in a climate influenced by radical liberation thinking and their organisational forms embodied in movements in Africa, South America and Asia, amongst Black peoples in the USA and the UK and also in women's organisations.

At the age of 30, having spent most of my previous years 12 – 14 years thinking about myself as being outside of the society and part of an alternative movement, I found myself alone in a world without the collective means to achieve what I thought my purpose in life was. I had left the organisation I had been a part of because I recognised it was not capable of evolving the type of society that I wanted to be a part of. It was a traumatic experience for me as my identity had been tied up in me being part of these organisations and seeking to make change. Being in purportedly revolutionary organisations had become so fundamental a part of my identity that I barely knew who I was. I remember wondering who would like me now that I was not part of 'the struggle'? Who was I? Or, perhaps more importantly, what use was I to the wider world now that I was not in an organisation? I began to engage with the world in new ways as I sought to earn a living, create an identity for myself to fill what felt like a vacuum and increase my understanding of the wider world. In many ways I reflect now that I was probably not on my own in this quest for a new identity. I know of many people who left radical left wing organisations and struggled to create new understandings and directions for themselves. In the Black movement I know of many who could not make a satisfactory transition and who committed suicide, had nervous breakdowns, got into religion and a whole range of ways of adapting. Many of these felt like defeat and I did not want to be defeated.

It was at this point that I trace the beginning of what was to become an inquiry into building an identity for myself that was fashioned out of my own needs and desires and not the models, interpretations and interests of others. I wanted to make a contribution but I did not want to be a part of organisational forms that were oppressive, anti-democratic and incapable of giving birth to more human ways of being. I raised the question "how can we build organisations that can actually achieve the outcomes that they seek whilst treating the individuals inside them, and that they work for, with respect and dignity"? The formulation of my question has evolved but its etymology is evident in the question "How can we work together to build a better future for us all in ways that value all individuals in the journey as well as in the promised destination?"

When I was 32, I enrolled in a postgraduate diploma in management course by Self Managed Learning at North East London Polytechnic. I felt that I could use the experience

to study organisational forms and possibilities in my quest to find ways in which I could contribute to significant change without denying my individuality and identity. Whilst on the course I learned about a whole range of self-development approaches and about how organisations worked according to theoretical models and from approaches embedded in practice. I still had the lenses of a radical and disconnected position in relation to society at large and, though I engaged in the theories and with working with others back at work I did so from a perspective that largely devalued what I was doing. This was ‘only’ work. It was not the ‘real’ struggle. I still valued people by the (judgemental) standards of the radical organisations that I had left.

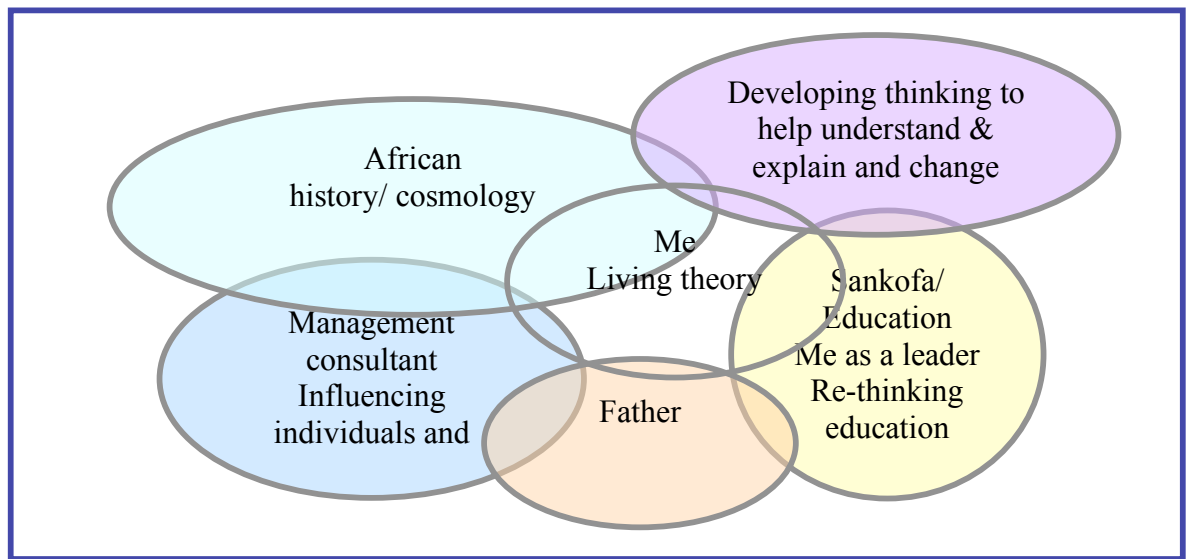
One significant implication of this was that even though I’d been making critiques of organisations (often seeing them as part of ‘the state’ and therefore tools of oppression) I’d never seen myself as part of them or seen those of my own experiences (and relationships) not distorted and denied by my ideological positions as of real value. Consequently my critique was ideological, intellectual, abstract and disconnected from the embodied realities of others as well as my own.

The presentational structure of the thesis.

The inquiry into my embodied practice that follows map some of the key features of how that position changed. I offer stories to the reader as data that provide evidence of the evolution of my living theory that I believe has helped me become the influence in the world with individuals and organisations that I sought to be when I first left those radical organisations all those years ago. There are stories that describe how my greater connection with denied parts of my self enabled me to engage more holistically, honestly and authentically with the world around me in ways that are relational, inclusional and personally and collectively liberational.

The stories are grouped around me as a father, me as somebody seeking to make a contribution to the education of Black children and their families and me as a management consultant. In these narrative groupings I trace how I have clarified my embodied values of humanity. This clarification and the communication of my understandings form living epistemological standards of judgement.

I have put some of the elements together in the figure below. One of the things this does is to show this overlapping and possibly even interdependence. Though the figure is clearly inadequate in that any diagram loses much meaning as a representation of embodied knowledge, hopefully it also shows that there are no really clear lines of separation between the areas of my inquiring. If it were feasibly possible I’d show the elements shifting in size, relationship and position to reflect the ways that I have given greater attention to one at a particular point in time.



I have worked with a number of critical friends throughout this period of inquiry. I include an interchange with Paulus Murray (See Appendix 1 Section One). We both address questions to do with ‘race’ colour’ ethnicity, hybridity and colonialism in our different inquiries. I explain my involvement, in correspondence with him, with African liberation movements in the 1970’s and how the humanity of some of the freedom fighters I worked with led to my growing realisation that the road *is* the journey. That is, the way you achieve a state is what creates that state. I have consequently made decisions that have become habit/skill/practice that has led me to work with positive intent. I hope to have shown that it is experiences like these that explain why I focus on strategies that are about decolonisation (re-emergence, reidentification, the creation of liberated identities) rather than what sometimes seems an almost diversionary concern with notions like anti racism or ‘anti’ something or someone else.

I use examples like this to demonstrate how I have been an influence on my own learning and how this is evolving into practice recognisable by those around me. My self-study aims to provide corroboration of the process of my transformation on my internal state and developing practice that seeks to be as congruent as possible with the person I seek to be more consistently

I start off with looking at my engagement with African history and cosmology and how my decolonising study of these areas has supported my decolonising of my own psyche, habits and propositional framings. I speak of the power of inquiring into reconnecting with Africa and Africans in ways that enhance my sense of identity, humanity, humility and power. I also show how I have come to an understanding of African cosmology that I can both infuse into my decolonising educative practice, in my Ubuntu way of being and from that into my range of tactical and strategic understandings.

I then flow into examining my practice as a father as I seek to work in liberated ways with my son and inquire into how I can both improve my practice as a father and into what I can learn from my son. I seek to trace a journey that led me to found the Sankofa Learning Centre but which started off with a desire to provide my son with an education that honoured who he is.

I then describe the process of bringing Sankofa into life through working collaboratively with others. I trace my rethinking my strategies and thoughts and show how I have arrived at more explicitly decolonizing strategies for change as I have understood experientially stepping outside of colonial conceptions and barriers to authentic identification of the issues and endogenous strategies for meeting them.

I explore the difficulties I had conceiving of myself as a leader with others. Critically I show how I became distracted from my values in the process of working with others as I sought to “do leadership differently” (Sinclair, 1998a) and the processes I engaged in that led me back to them.

I share the critical incidents that sparked an awareness of the ways in which my/our own perceptions have been colonised and how this distorts the way we 'see' and feel about our children and the pedagogic and organisational models we draw upon. As I become aware of the extent to which I was significantly contradicting my values and the steps I took to developing my own pedagogic practice of an inspiring, inclusional embodied loving alonsidness with the pupils.

As I embody my learning I work differently, more assertively with others in the Centre. I experience a greater sense of peace with my practice that I associate with working in ways that feel closer to my embodied values.

I share a powerful learning experience working with boys and their fathers and identifying patterns of interaction that create barriers and increase separation, making decisions about maintaining connection over imposition of traditional models of fathering - even if they are "from the Caribbean".

I show how using video I was able to recognize the value that Sankofa has been to parents and children and as an icon to the Black community of decolonising possibility despite not achieving all that I wanted it to.

I show how I synthesise the lessons that I have learned and apply them to ways of communicating that go well beyond the learning centre and I experience myself being an effective decolonising influence of a variety of social formations.

I continue by sharing narratives of my seeking to develop my ability to improve my decolonising practise as a management consultant. In this I am seeking to show how, through the nature of my engagement with others, I have re-found purpose and clarity of identity and embodied practice through the educational influence I have been. I trace how, through working with a desire to improve the position of people of African origin in an (increasingly apparent) inclusionary perspective, I came to understand my quest as one concerned with being an educational influence in the creation of visions, stories and dreams of a future that goes beyond trying to remove, as in the 'de' in 'decolonising'. My practice, emerging from my Ubuntu way of being has focussed on recognition of the positive factors, features and forces that have the ability to create new realities generating optimism and a belief in the achievement of different ways of being characterised by greater equity, justice and the flowering of the human spirit. This assisted me in distinguishing my practice from what I believe to be the limitations of the current

discourse about 'race', 'equality of opportunity' and 'diversity' and make a contribution to thinking about how we move forward as a society that is an original synthesis.

I place my inquiry within the context of my ontological, cosmological and political embodied values and explain the epistemological contribution of my inquiry, emerging through the methodological choices that I have made. As I reflect upon my practice I see, often though the use of video, the importance of my Ubuntu way of being. I begin to understand how it is through the embodied spirit of Ubuntu that I am making my greatest contribution to my learning and to influencing the learning of others and of social formations. My contributions, though often articulated in theoretical form, come out of my way of being and not the other way around. Though I speak with others about my decolonising practice what they tell me they experience is something that is personally affirming of them. They tell me that I have a life—affirming practice that inspires people towards greater connection and the realisation of the dreams for themselves that they had buried. I eventually accepted this and am clear that what I now believe is that as human beings though many of our dreams are different; many of them are the same. Through my practice I am seeking, through recognition, praise, enabling and supporting people to believe in the realisability of those of their dreams that speak to our common aspirations as human beings we have the ability to make them a reality.

In the conclusion I seek to explain the collective value of this inquiring into my practice and its significance, and implications. I evaluate my practice-based inquiry according to expanded criteria of the Academy and my own decolonising standards in order to demonstrate the validity and rigour of my journey.

I now go on to explore my engagement with African history and cosmology. This is significant in my life because it provided the means through which I was able to eventually recognise, value and live more fully my Ubuntu way of being and integrate that into my practice in ways that are effectively and demonstrably epistemologically significant. The narratives that follow either provide historical or contextual information or are designed to explicate my process of knowledge generation. The table on the next page hopefully summarises the process of my inquiry in visual form.

The process of my inquiry

The process	Then												Now				
Colonised mentality	Yellow																
African history and cosmology leading to Reframed 'decolonised' notion of self. Action to make a contribution to decolonising processes	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green			
Engaged inquiry/activism from oppositional, dichotomous perspective	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange												
Engaging with others in seeking ways of being an influence		Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
Becoming aware of myself being led by my body to inclusional engagement with the 'other'				Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink									
Accepting this engagement & through it transforming my understanding and embodied being and through this evolving my thinking						Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink
Realising that I am living with & embodying African cosmology with Ubuntu and moving away e.g. from dichotomizing Newtonian strategies towards Ubuntu inclusional holistic ones										Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Through this developing my understanding and strategies, my forms of explication, my embodied living theories											Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown
Testing this holistic practice out in the real world and discovering more about the impact of my way of being and through that making claims to knowledge											Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green

Influence Of An African Cosmology With Ubuntu

In this section I seek to show the influence of African cosmology on my constitutivity and the significance of my engagement with African history and cosmology to my living inquiry.

In engaging in a study of African history and cosmology I was doing so in response to a question that I was only able to articulate after I had started to search for the answer. The question was constantly reforming and is still doing so now. In essence it is *“how can I reconnect with my African identity in ways that are a decolonising educational influence on myself, on others and on social formations”?*

This thesis documents how I worked to increase my effectiveness in a number of areas. It traces how I became aware that it was through engaging with others in an embodied, relational and inclusional approach that I was able to move away from dichotomous polarities and discover ways of being an effective influence through the nature of my experiential relationship with that which I wish to change. The evolution of my thought and practise in this area and the consequent discoveries I made are largely founded on my understanding of African history and cosmology as integral to my decolonising project.

In this section I want to provide some data as to how my embodied decolonising presence has evolved and been influenced by my engagement with African history and cosmology. There are four main phases in this

1. Seeking and finding information to discount historical lies and replace them with a reclaimed view of my~our history. I have called this the ‘inspiration motivation’ and it is about seeking knowledge to inspire myself and others. Most of my inquiry here has been through texts.
2. Seeking explanations for ‘our’ ways of being in the world that were positive and affirming of who we were. Through this search discovering African cosmology as the deep thought system that lies beneath and dialectically intertwined with African cultures. Through this understanding of African cosmology answering questions of deep ontological importance to me and developing thinking that I could share with others as part of co-creating a decolonised state in which African peoples – and their ways of being – could flourish alongside the rest of humanity. This started off as a text inquiry but soon became an inquiry into how I could work with these ideas, as they became known to me in the various spheres I was living and working in.
3. Experiential discovery by working with other Africans, being in Africa and engaging in an inquiring fashion with their~my~our humanity in ways that effectively decolonised the behaviours, beliefs, lies and perceptions of Africans that I was influenced by and that kept us apart.
4. Finding myself working in inclusional ways with White ‘others’ and, as a consequence realising the importance of doing so. This opened me up to new possibilities that enabled me to be more of the influence on the learning of others. It was in effect, me moving from a cognitive appreciation of African cosmology to finding myself living it in significant ways in my practice.

I have engaged in this aspect of my inquiry through a variety of methods that include reading, discussing with colleagues, seeking to be an effective influence in my professional and personal spheres, opening up my awareness through deep contemplation and inclusional engagement, and relational observation. I have been involved in cycles of inquiry, as I have tested out ways of being, reflected upon my engagement, sought to learn from it and reengaged with action again.

I take as evidence of my influence on my learning and of that of others the ways in which my engagement in African history is reflected in: -

- My self-pride, demonstrated in my embodied engagement with others in ways that are generative of positive possibility
- My aesthetic appreciation of myself and African standards of beauty and behaviour
- The degree and nature of my connection with other people of African origin in ways that build unity, rebuild tears, alienation and fragmentation caused by colonialism and its great sin of slavery
- My ability to live with optimism and life-affirming energy as I seek to transform degenerative personal and collective processes
- The personal strategies that I use and the forms of explication that build connection and possibility that positively impacts on the life chances of people of African origin and of humanity generally
- The sense of peace and membership of a wider humanity that I have arrived at as a result of my inquiry
- The answers that I now have to some foundational questions particularly
 - What evidence do I have that Africans have contributed to human civilisation?
 - If Africa had great civilisations how come it is so poor now?
 - Can African cosmology contribute to our decolonisation and re-emergence as a people in the contexts we operate in today?
 - Is there a God that I need to acknowledge?
- The contributions I am making to the people that I work with that are informed by this decolonised foregrounding of the excluded dimensions of African humanity

I outline why and how I have engaged in this study; what I have learned and the impact it has had on my identity and practice. I seek to explain how my ontological sense of self has shifted. This has impacted my epistemological understanding and position which has in turn resulted in my inquiry being about a decolonising practice that is both focussed on improving my ability to be an effective influence in the realms of my practice but also to make a wider contribution to the forms of knowledge that are considered as valuable and valid generally and specifically in the Academy

The first phase

I wanted to study African history because I wanted to decolonise myself from the ideas of inferiority that I have been raised with, schooled with and had reinforced from many sources in society. I wanted to find substantiation and information for a different view of myself. Cesaire speaks of the impact that colonialism has had on the identities of people like myself.

I am talking of millions of men who have been skilfully injected with fear, inferiority, complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement. Aime Cesaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme*. Quoted in *Black Skin White Masks* by Frantz Fanon. (Fanon, 1967. p. 9)

This account that I wrote a few years ago in my reflective log might help enrich understanding of my motivation:

I remember an incident that occurred when I was about ten years old. I was in the Catholic Church that we attended as a family every Sunday. The priests were all White and, so my memory recalls, all Irish. The priest's faces were all pink; they had faces that always seemed flushed with something I interpreted as holiness. They were kind people who looked down on me with goodness, benevolence and kindness. I remember one of these generic Fathers looking at me. His arms were embracing his body and probably a bible was wrapped up in that holy totality that was his physicality. He seemed so right, so kind, so knowing. In my young eyes he embodied all that was 'proper' and transcendental in a human being. His beatific gaze seduced me and subverted whatever pride I had in myself.

I looked back at him. My seven member strong Black family, living in one room in poverty in Brixton, South London, trying desperately to fit into this society, could not compare. We were messy while he was neat and organised. My father was a carpenter. He rode his bicycle many miles to work everyday. He wore overalls and wore the tears and stains they bore with personal and professional pride. His skin was dark, pure African Black. His hair was tightly curled 'pepper-grain nigger hair' that he combed regularly and neatly. He took pride in his work, his professional ability and his determination to provide for his family. Today I see him as a hero. Then, in my eyes, he could not compare with the priest who was dressed so neatly and scrubbed so pink and clean. Though we tried, and my mother was almost fanatical about cleanliness, we never looked the same as them. I felt inferior. My brothers (and I) were untidy 'scuffs'. We tried to look good but our parents could never afford the type of clothes that the White middle class or 'laddish' working class boys wore. Our shirts hung out of our trousers within minutes of having been placed there. Our socks rebelled and rolled down, our hair did not stay in place. There were no Black barber shops in those days (as far as I can remember). The White barbers that we went to did not know how to cut and often messed our hair up. Rather than this being an indication of their inability, just showed us up as being more different, a problem. My mental process found my manifest identity problematic. I wanted to fit in and to be seen as just like one of these 'proper' people.

To return to the incident in church: a new member of church had joined the congregation. After the service we were all sitting down in rows, on benches I think, the priest suggested that he sat down next to 'us'. I looked up and saw a Black man walking towards me. Worse, he was indicating that this man should sit next to me. I reacted terribly. I said that I did not want him sitting next to me. People tried to quiet my protests but I refused volubly. I did not know why, but I just did not want him sitting by me. I did not want his proximity further confirming my inadequate 'otherness'. Eventually he was placed elsewhere. My father was shocked and disappointed. (He did not see any connection between my behaviour and his frequent assertions that White people were superior to Black people and could be trusted more). I was tearful and confused. My parents tried to talk with me about it but what I heard was their accents. Their voices were different from that of the priests and the (nice) teachers at school. Their grammar was all wrong. Though I never stopped

loving them, I was often disappointed and embarrassed by their inadequacy in the skills of projection and survival in this country. How could they understand us in this world they had brought us to? How could people who spoke like that understand feelings that I wanted to express but did not have the language to even express to myself?

This Black man, wanting to sit next to me, because 'they' saw him as one of 'us', was public confirmation that I was one of these not so good people. I was not proud of myself. I saw myself as inferior to White people and I saw association with this collective inferiority (other Black people) as an obvious confirmation of my own inferiority that I wanted to escape. I saw myself as ugly in relation to White beauty. I did not have aesthetic (or political) standards that complemented my reality. I later came to understand my condition as 'internalised racism' and its cause as colonialism. It felt good to know that I was not alone in this degenerative condition and to be able to locate a cause outside of my individual psychological makeup.

This account reflects my sense of individual and collective inferiority expressed through my wanting to fit in with the standards of the 'superior' other. It also is an example of the kind of impact that colonised mentalities has on close relationships and some of the reasons for Black disunity. It reveals something of the extent to which negative thinking about people of African origin had already penetrated my psyche. My intention is that it provides evidence of a psychological state that I needed to move away from. At the time of the incident I did not have counter knowledge to replace these thoughts with. I had very rarely heard anything positive about Black people. As I got older I met people who said different, almost deliciously subversive, things about us and our history that stimulated my imagination. I engaged in reading about Black people and our history because I wanted to find out more. One of the first writers that I turned to was the psychologist Frantz Fanon.

For Fanon the psychological damage of colonialism is inextricably linked to a range of other factors and engaging in decolonising activity would mean working in a wider sphere than the purely individual medical model. He refers to this as 'dis-alienation'. Through reference to Fanon's work I am able to locate my individual trauma and concern within wider collective descriptions and recognitions of a need to take action to address the psychic damage wrought by the colonial encounter. I am intending that they help place my individual need to re-engage and redefine my identity as a Black man of African origin within a wider context of collective concerns. I also intend that they help explain why I have chosen to work, inquire into and reclaim, in embodied form, 'my' history and cosmology as, in my terms, part of an individual and collective process of decolonisation. As Hannah Arendt says: "Without a people or group there is no power" (Arendt, 1970, p 44).

My inquiry has been about replacing what Friere calls 'cultural invasion' with ideas that can be engaged with in the praxis and generate more positive outcomes for 'us' or, *i-we*.

".....the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, and ignoring the potential of the latter, they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression.

..... it is essential that those who are invaded come to see their reality with the outlook of the invaders rather than their own; for the more they mimic the invaders, the more stable the position of the latter becomes.

The oppressed 'I' must break with this near adhesion to the oppressor 'Thou', drawing away from the latter in order to see him more objectively, at which point he critically recognises himself to be in contradiction with the oppressor. In so doing, he 'considers' as a dehumanising reality the structure in which he is being oppressed. This qualitative change in the perception of the world can only be achieved in the praxis". (Freire, 1970. p150)

Part of my motivation was to develop a reclaimed understanding of 'our' history that could assist me/us with our "need to decolonise our minds and imaginations" (Hooks, 1994a) as part of the process of physical as well as psychic de-colonisation and re-emergence. In order to move forward I worked with a belief that my oppressed 'I' must draw upon other sources of inspiration and information to that provided by the dominant culture. The unmediated acceptance of 'truths' from that dominant culture helps to maintain the state of oppression. I 'drew away from the oppressor' and spent many of my early adult years working in Black organisations.

A pivotal moment for me was coming across Malcolm X's book on Afro-American History (Malcolm X, 1964, 1990). It fundamentally redirected my thinking and for the first time I was able to see things that I could be proud about my historical sense of being African. I used the basic principles outlined in that small text for years to argue and refute any who challenged African historical contributions. It gave me a sense of pride that academic texts had failed to. It gave me a sense of belonging and connection beyond the family and society that I knew and loved.

The focus of my gaze on African history was as a source of inspiration and refutation of the argument that Black people did not contribute to the growth of human civilisation and were civilised by Europeans.

In 2000 I returned to a study of African history. It had an even deeper impact upon me than when I first explored it. I was able to find robust, well researched refutation of myths about Africa failing to contribute to the development of human civilisation. For example

I re-engaged with the work of Cheikh Anta Diop. He spelled out the message that Egyptians were Black Africans even more clearly:

"The Greek writer, Herodotus, may be mistaken," Cheikh Anta Diop tells us, "when he reports the customs of a people. But one must grant that he was at least capable of recognizing the skin color of the inhabitants of countries he visited." His descriptions of the Egyptians were the descriptions of a Black people. At this point the reader needs to be reminded of the fact that at the time of Herodotus's visit to Egypt and other parts of Africa (between 480 and 425 B.C.) Egypt's Golden Age was over. Egypt had suffered from several invasions, mainly the Kushite invasions, coming from within Africa, and starting in 751 B.C., and the Assyrians' invasions from Western Asia (called the Middle East), starting in 671 B.C. If Egypt, after years of invasions by other people and nations was a distinct Black African nation

at the time of Herodotus, shouldn't we at least assume that it was more so before these invasions occurred? (Clarke, 1974b, pp 74 - 76)

Diop's work is rooted in a desire to fight oppression of all sorts and is not constrained by some of the more simplistic Black nationalist thinking – which in many ways reproduces Eurocentric patriarchal behaviour and social organisation. He explains in his work on matriarchy and matrilineage (Diop, 1989a) that women in pre-colonial Africa were the people from whom inheritance flowed. In these societies the role of woman was not subservient to men. He identifies this matriarchy as a unifying principle amongst sub-Saharan African peoples that attests to an aspect of their commonality. Diop believed that by tracing common historical and cultural roots he could contribute to strategy and practice that encouraged a love of self and common action against colonialism. Importantly, this work could be considered feminist in its foregrounding of women's role in the evolution of African societies and identifying the ways that colonialism had included a breaking of that female power as critical to their colonial project.

'They came before Columbus' by Ivan Van Sertima (Van Sertima, 2003), speaks of Africans travelling the Atlantic and leaving huge Black carvings of African heads that exist till today (the Olmec carvings). He also writes of the African origins of early Asian civilisation and speak of the African contribution to the settlement and development of South Indian cities. Finch (Finch III, 1996) writes of:

“... abundant statuary dating back to Olmec times shows both Nubian and Semitic - hence Phoenician - phenotypes. The intimate partnership existing between Phoenician trading cities and the Nilotic kingdoms is known for a certainty; so they, in collaboration with their Egypto-Nubian neighbours, must have undertaken transatlantic voyages to America in the millennium before Christ: abundant evidence in the Meso American Olmec civilisation points to such contact. “

And in West Africa he writes of the 'baffling' scientific achievements and knowledge of the Dogon people:

Incredibly, at least seven hundred years before Steven Hawking had developed and articulated his “big-bang” theory; the Dogon people had articulated an almost identical account for the origin of the universe. They had an understanding of the atom that corresponds to their concept 'po'.

The *po* is this same singularity, this cosmic seed whose bursting caused the universe to form. We have already seen the Dogon refer to the *po* as ~he "image of the origin of matter." They further say,

Due to its (the *po*'s) smallness, it is the image of the beginning of all things.
"All the things that Amma created begin like the little (seed of) *po*."
(Griaule and Dieterlen 1986, 131)

Moreover, the *Big Bang*, which the Dogon think of as the Big Burst, is explicitly attested by them:

The bursting of the *po* and the whirling of the spiral in the other direction made (Amma's seat) pivot. (Finch III, 1996)

Grisso (Grisso, 1998), identifies the ways in which the continuity of heritage that flowed with the movements of people out of Egypt and Nubia, South and West is still manifest in the cosmologies, the deep belief systems, of most African societies. He shows, for example, the contemporary similarities of the core concepts of the Kamitec cosmology and that of Yoruba religion and the Bonaabakulu Abasekhemu, of the Zulu peoples, a religious society that traces its origins to Ancient Egypt. In so doing he is demonstrating a common historical tradition amongst sub-Saharan African peoples. It is from this that present day approaches such as Ubuntu emerge and coalesce. This is very important for me because it locates Ubuntu as an African approach to being and not a specifically Southern African one. Knowledge of this common history gives added credibility to a search for African unity and approaches to the situations that confront us as it can aid a focus on similarities and commonalities of identities and interests in the face of external and internal opposition to authentic African renewal.

Importantly there are European writers as well as African ones committed to correcting some of the damaging distortions of 'traditional' (read colonial) approaches to African history. Basil Davidson a White Englishman is one example of this. His book 'Black Mother' (Davidson, 1961), was another instrumental text for me. Also significant is the work of Martin Bernal. In his book, *The Black Athena* (Bernal, 1987), he attempted to rewrite two thousand years of European intellectual history. His hugely controversial work set out to expose Eurocentric denial of what he called the 'Afroasiatic roots of European civilisation'. Such was the animosity generated by the *Black Athena* that in 1996 a book *Black Athena revisited* (Lefkowitz and Rogers, 1996) was written which set out to critique and disprove his work as did people like Berlinerblau (Berlinerblau, 1999). This fierce debate resulted in other publications, *Black Athena: Ten Years After* (van Binsbergen, 2003) and 'Black Athena writes back: Martin Bernal responds to his critics' (Bernal and Moore, 2001) in these texts Bernal and others critique, defend and extend his claims on the histories of the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa.

Bernal's represents a growing tradition amongst writers, not of African origin, to embrace alternative notions about African histories and bring them into the Academy. van Binsbergen's introduction to Bernal's 2003 text (van Binsbergen, 2003) explains the importance of this. I found that much of what I wanted to be true had hard, documented, and substantiated 'evidence'. I discovered a wealth of stories about the past that humbled, amazed, confused and truly inspired me.

This is the first of the 4 phases of my engagement "Seeking and finding information to discount historical lies and replace them with a reclaimed view of my~our history." I hope to have shown why and how I have been able to embed within myself a confident sense of myself as a part of humanity that has a long and positive history.

On African cosmology: the ‘living strategy’ purpose

The second phase

In this phase I share something about how I have explored the deeper belief systems and instincts that flow beneath and within the historical achievements I have mentioned, African cosmology. It was important for me to study cosmology because I found, through working with this sense of a great history with other Black people that it only took my practice so far. The history inspired me but did not give me practical ways forward that did not reproduce the existing colonial paradigms. I believed that there were underlying principles that connected African thinking and peoples and I set out to find out if this were true and if it were, what these principles were and how could they be of use to me.

My own life experience had given me an intuitive understanding of what it was I was looking for. I remembered things that I had seen my parents, my wider family and other people of African origin do and I believed that some of the behaviour patterns we displayed were living remainders of our African ways of being in the world. They were our history and culture existing as embodied knowledge. I then thought that if I could increase my understanding of these things it would assist my personal decolonising and I could use what I learned in my work with other Black people. I would be able to say, “Look. Here is the value of what we do, of who we are! These ways of being in the world can be of tremendous benefit to us finding strategies that are authentic to us and help transform our situation”.

I was surprised at just how much has been documented about how the Egyptians lived their lives and conducted things like their personal relationships. I was proud to discover the depth and sophistication of the recorded thought that had helped create and been created by Ancient Egyptian civilisation in the thousands of years prior to the conquests from Asia and then Rome.

I came across patterns of being that matched or complemented my understanding of African cosmology. Cosmology influences how you live your life on a daily basis, what you laugh at, how and when you dance, your approaches to problems in your life and the world, etc. It goes beyond an understanding in an academic way of a set of linguistic guidelines or explanations. The only way to understand certain things is to engage with them experientially. When I was in Africa I wanted to learn new things and I wanted to experience being in Africa, with Africans and just experiencing myself with and through other people in the African climate and context. I was alive and “living my life as inquiry” as I did so.

Linda James Myers’ in her article entitled “Expanding the Psychology of Knowledge Optimally: The Importance of Worldview Revisited.” (Myers, 1991) describes the Afrocentric worldview as the following:

The Afrocentric ontology assumes reality is both spiritual and material at once (spiritual/material, extrasensory as can be known through five senses) with highest value on positive interpersonal relationships between women/men (axiology); self knowledge is assumed to be the basis of all knowledge (epistemology), and one knows through symbolic imagery and rhythm. The logic of this conceptual system is diunital (union of opposites) and the process of

ontology (all sets are interrelated through human and spiritual networks). The consequent basis for identity/self worth is intrinsic in being. The conceptual system is structured to yield the achievement of everlasting peace and happiness, and if one values this aim, it is optimal. (Myers, 1991)

I was able to find evidence from within the data that exists about early African thinking in Egypt – (from which African societies evolved as peoples moved first up from Nubia into Egypt and then South and West from Egypt to populate the rest of the continent) of another way of understanding God. An example of this is the understanding of ‘God’, a central concept in most religions. In ancient Egyptian writing there is some ambiguity as to the nature of the distinction between a God and a person. Lambert (Lambert, 1995) speaks of the sophistication of thought contained in the ancient Egyptian texts and considers whether the Egyptians, at least for a stage in their evolution as a society, considered certain people to achieve ‘God’ status because, among other reasons, of their symbolic value to the society. In a sense a God could be considered as something akin to a symbol in our present terms and so what we think of as metaphysical – above and outside the physical world – is understood differently.

There is not a clear separation between matter and non-matter, spiritual and non-spiritual. There is no clear separation between God and humanity. In fact, their thought seems to suggest a variety of interconnected and interdependent states of being rather than rigid distinctions as in the Euro-Christian separation between God and humanity. I draw from this explanations that I can hold more comfortably than I can those that suggest a universal conscious mind determining and ordering our existence and able to be influenced through prayer.

I know that there are many other explanations that I could have taken from the texts (and others have!). However I have chosen that which fits most comfortably with my embodied instincts and rational mind. As a result of my reading and other engagement I can now say quite assertively that I believe that when I die my present consciousness will end, as it is an embodied consciousness located, directed, discovered, mediated through my body. Will there be existence when I die? I don’t know because it depends upon how you define existence. If the body is changing form and no longer able to sustain my ‘life’ then I guess the question is will I remember my present life when my heart and brain stop functioning? I doubt whether I will be able to. There might be some continuing form of consciousness, but I cannot conceptualise what that might be without a body. The point is that it is no longer a source of worry for me.

Through arriving at this clarity of thought I am better able to hold on to my ontological sense when confronted with African-centred ‘experts’ in this area and who carry strong religious beliefs that they claim came to be integral to Egyptian/African thought. What my engagement with the texts and my integration and interpretation of them has done is increased my confidence in the veracity and validity of the principles and understandings that I have outlined, that describe ways of being and knowing that goes deeper than lived culture and religions. Therefore in terms of the questions that I wanted answering from an engagement with African cosmology I have found what I wanted.

Living and Learning my values in Africa

The third phase.

I have advanced elsewhere (Charles, 1994d) that African cosmology goes deeper than rituals, religions, dress, language and other cultural manifestations. Africans differ in all of these but there are certain commonalities that transcend these differences. One needs to look deeper than what are the 'normal' indicators of culture to find them.

I inquired by 'just' establishing appreciative relationships with African peoples in Africa and elsewhere. I have loved the sense of recognition and membership I have felt. I am clear that I am no longer a part of any particular tribe or country in Africa at the same time as I recognise that I am recognised as belonging to the peoples of the continent *by* the peoples of the continent. It is almost as if we have a notion of 'Africaness' or "Blackness" existing alongside and organically interrelated with individual, familial, tribal, national and other memberships that is inclusive of all these differences. It is this unifying recognition that I think holds great hope for African peoples when it transcends the tribal, regional and national differences so powerfully conditioned by colonial will, consequence and accident.

Over the last 8 years I have been to Zimbabwe (twice), Kenya (thrice). South Africa, Nigeria (twice), Gambia, Cameroon, Senegal and Sierra Leone. Let me begin by speaking about a journey to Nigeria to work with managers there. I was proud to be there. I felt that in some ways that I was coming home, but home to a family that had probably forgotten me, might not recognise me as one of them or might not want to acknowledge me.

I want to describe the process of the creation of two drawings as part of the process of describing how I inquired. The first drawing is of a chief, a participant on the course that I was running. From the moment I met him I liked him. I liked his pride, confidence and sparkling humour. He was both obviously wise and mischievous. When he first saw me I thought I saw a smile in his eyes. I knew that the company had never brought a Black man to do this work before. It is likely that we were both checking each other out. I wanted to connect with him and find out more. I had never knowingly met a chief before. When I introduced myself to the group I was to be facilitating, I included in my opening statements how happy and proud I was to be working in the land of my ancestors.

Later, in a group discussion, the participants asked us questions about ourselves. Chief made a comment that I thought was really affirming. He advised us as a group of facilitators where we could and could not go easily in the area. He then said something like. "Well, Eden could go, because this is his home, but you" He gestured to my White colleagues and shook his head. I did not want them to feel bad, but I was so pleased that he was publicly describing this as my home. I had similar experiences in other parts of Africa. As the three-week trip went on I had more and more conversations with managers on a one to one basis and we shared tales of commonality and difference. After a while, it was not an issue about whether I was one of them or not. I was plainly English, Caribbean *and* African and they welcomed me in ways that they did not my White colleagues - despite being tremendously friendly and inclusive to all of us.

One day I found myself drawing Chief Okolo. As I drew, I felt the humour and humanity of the man and reflected on our interactions. Earlier in the day he had told me about the function of a chief and told me about the fact that he was an elected chief responsible for managing relationships with other villages, communities and government for his village. He spoke of the meritocracy and democratic tradition of chiefs in his part of Africa. I loved it as he spoke and the fact that he valued me enough to explain these things to me.



Chief Okolo

I made notes as I drew and afterwards in my log. Here is some of what I wrote:

I am seeing his face, his stubble, and his hat. He wears it with his European clothes and his African ones. He always seems to be dressed in it. He carries that dimension of his culture with him. His face, there is something about it. It's familiar; it's the kind of face that I have been raised with. Even if he had not recognised me I would have recognised him. He could have been my uncle. I love the warmth, humour and pride of the man; the way that he holds position and is still so humble and also not somebody to mess about with. I celebrate that. It makes me feel proud.

As I draw him I am connecting with a knowing inside of me. I know that I belong. Maybe not to this particular country, or tribe, but to something that I share with this man that is deeper than that which can be described linguistically. We exist together with cultural and colour connections *and* in our relation to the 'other'. We

are also held by a shared aspiration for each other. In the embrace of our eyes' contact and in my gaze as I draw his face as he engages in a group task there is a feeling of Ubuntu. I acknowledge this to myself as I draw and this locates me firmly within a reality that I wish to occupy. In that moment I have transcended the colonising divisions placed between African peoples scattered and fractured around the globe in an embodied way.

The act of my drawing in this way is, I would argue, a political, aesthetic and epistemologically decolonising act. I am not reproducing (Euclidean) boundary limits around a disconnected object. I am discovering stuff within a dynamic coalescence of form, with which I share space, aspiration, light, movement, history and much else. In so doing I am transgressing traditional privileged modes of knowing and contributing others.



I drew other people. It was like a love affair. I just loved seeing their beauty. I drew this woman as she too engaged in a group task. Her hair was plaited in ways that peoples of African origin all over the world do. As I drew, I felt that feeling of membership, pride *of* and *for* the other and of Ubuntu. There is a way in which drawing a person transforms the nature and quality of my perception and experiencing of them. I 'see' more dimensions than I do normally. I also can become part of their existence in the world. I find it hard to explain, but there are ways in which I invest so much in looking at them that I become a part of them and they become a part of me. In the process on drawing I was inquiring into my own location in the world; the 'who I am' that is interconnected with who other people of African origin are. The connections and recognitions that I felt in my body was disproving and dissolving some of the barriers colonialism created between African peoples. In that sense it was a decolonising activity. It was also an act of affirmation and celebration

Another example of how being in Africa helped me to better understand and come to terms with myself was one day when I insisted to participants in Sierra Leone that they should

feel free to give their feedback in Creole and it did not matter whether I could understand it or not. What mattered was their quality of communication with each other. As they talked I reflected on the ways in which Creole was a language. It was more than something that they spoke because they could not speak proper English. It was more than 'broken' English. It was a language in its own right. The ways my family spoke their Creole was also a language and somehow, this reflection of this creation of language that we had developed in Africa and in the Caribbean, widened my sense of membership and filled me with a sense of the type of strength that you get through numbers. It strengthened my valuing of Creole and how I felt about speaking it.

Here is an edited extract from my log written on the last day before I left Sierra Leone,

Today was the last day of the workshop. ... As I write up my notes I reflect upon the fact that today in a room filled with many large people, singing and dancing around and making a lot of noise, there was not even the slightest hint of aggression. There was no competition or posturing, just an exuberant expression that was not in the least naïve.

I contrast that with watching people dance in Europe in clubs and discos I often feel that there is a kind of mating ritual strutting of masculine power that can give an uncomfortable edge to my enjoyment. It's as if there is no language for popular dance that is about artistry, expression, riding rhythms that is not tinged with violence or self-conscious defensiveness.

Today is my last full day in the country. We were taken for a tour around the many projects that Plan runs in the countryside. I was really impressed by the number of schools. As we toured the beautiful tropical forests though I was aware of a building anger and frustration inside of me. The country had been devastated by the war. Villages had been wrecked, people moved from the land were only now returning. Huge psychological scars must have been etched into their being.

What I saw was poverty. The villages were probably viable social systems, and maybe even economic and cultural ones, but there was disease. In all of the projects we visited there were signs up telling people about the importance of hygiene. Information and Statistics were given to us about the incidence of diarrhoea and other worse ailments caused by not washing hands and improper or inadequate sanitation.

We went to one of the offices and I asked to use the toilet. The driver was told to take us to the head office not too far away. When we got there I was shown to a dingy toilet. What struck me was that the sink to wash hands in was not operational. I thought about the contradiction. If these people giving advice to others did not have these facilities themselves were they not passing diseases on to others as well? I had been working with them, shaking their hands and eating food with them. Did they not wash their hands when they went to the toilet? I believe that they did actually, but I was angered by the fact that they did not have the facilities to do so when they were actually working with communities. Something felt very wrong.

People in Sierra Leone thanked us for the course. I wanted them to know that most of the cause for them needing the aid had come from the machinations of people from the very same countries that were providing this aid. I had a terrible sense of powerlessness or futility. As soon as these people had managed to rebuild they would probably be the victims of some other calamity which they would blame themselves or nature for. I wanted Black people all over the world to see this (what was taking place in Africa) as part of *our* destruction and seek ways of contributing to its amelioration. How dare we think that we were so much better off living in the West? Were we not just prostitutes bought off with privileges in a European country to absolve the guilt of these countries while they continued the plunder and murder of our people?

I am sharing my hurt and anger. I am also explaining the views I have on the causes of African poverty. I understand these as being predominantly a continuation of colonialism in changing form. I am also sharing my sense of frustration at the ways that the hard work that we were doing could be so easily undermined by foreign intervention. In doing so I am experiencing this as something done to 'us' not 'just' to people across the world. Being there, mixing with them, eating and drinking with them, hearing their stories, experiencing aspects of their wider humanity brought me closer to the pain that they experienced as human beings. What I do not share is the 'secret' conversations that we had on our own sometimes when individuals outlined an understanding of the causes of their plight in very similar terms to my own. We had a shared understanding that bonded us beyond the love I experienced for the sheer beauty of so many I worked and relaxed with. The log continues:

I have just come back from a meal and dance with the people we ran the workshop for. It was good fun, Again, when they got into talking Creole I could not understand most of what they were saying, but it was great nonetheless. They had a disco there. It was great. The music they played felt so familiar – but better. I was asked to open the dance floor. By that time I had had about 3 beers and was in the mood. The music was my kind of music, whatever that means, and I was moving in the groove. I felt confident and I was enjoying it. As I danced somebody asked me how come I have just come to Cameroon and yet know their dance? I wanted to tell them that this is a move that Africans have exported all over the world and is one of the ways that we keep connected to something deep and core. What I knew at the same time is that the man's comment was evidence of the living connections that had not been completely severed between the African descendants of slaves and those that lived in Africa. We had found ways of carrying who we were with us and I felt a strange feeling of connection through the dancing. I danced on and it was a celebration of coming home.

In the paragraph above I am sharing discovering connection in different ways. This time it is in dance. Through the dance we are obviously culturally linked. I am celebrating the experience of connection. I think this is evidence of myself, in touch with my ontological self with an ease, confidence, skill and love that exists in marked contrast to the boy who did not want another Black person to sit next to him in church.



In the picture above I am showing some of the people on a workshop that I ran in the Cameroon. For me as I look at the picture I see a mango tree, just like the ones in the Caribbean, I see people in African and European clothes who are engaged in intensive reflective course work. I love the beauty of African clothes and I find something to celebrate in the picture to do with the fact that ‘we’ have managed to preserve aspects of our culture despite pressures to do otherwise. I also experience connectivity in the light and air between and joining people there that moves me emotionally.

A member of the group said of me that when I speak everybody listens. I wrote down my memory of the conversation as soon as I got back to my room.

“The course comes alive when you start to speak”

Why? What is it that I do”?

“You care. You show you care. It is in your body, you move, you try hard, yet you laugh and embrace us. You know what you are talking about but your wisdom is not dry. It is full of life”

Some months later, one of my colleagues told me that the group had sent a message of thanks for the workshop that we had run. They had particularly wanted to say thank you for sending them somebody whose descendants had come from this part of Africa. I fought back tears as I got the message and wondered why it had taken my colleague so long to pass the message on.

When I worked in Africa I did not want to be seen as somebody working for the coloniser carrying out their will. I invited people to help us co-evolve strategies and ways of being that were authentic to them that could have a significant effect. I state my Africaness explicitly and that I see their progress as my progress. I use the word ‘we’, to describe us. This probably plays some part in the connection that emerges. I believe people also experience my embodied being as valuing of them.

Being in Africa, making good friends had a huge impact on me. I developed a stronger sense of my embodied connection with Africa and with the African in me. I learned what I wanted to from this phase and much more. I feel my life has been deeply enriched by these experiences and I carry that sense of membership, pride and advocacy in my embodied being.

The fourth phase.

In other parts of this thesis I explain how I have come to understand the importance of congruent, inclusional embodiment of the values I wish to hold myself accountable to if I am to be an effective educational influence on the learning of others.

Some of the conversations and interactions that I have had with people I work with and with my 'critical friends' have provided an opportunity for me to engage in dialogue with these thoughts. They provide evidence that I do embody and articulate values that engage, value and influence the learning of others in ways that embody the Ubuntu of African cosmology and are experienced as valuing of the other and, through that, opening up new possibilities. Below is an extract from an email dialogue with one of my fellow students at Bath University, Marie Huxtable, that provides corroboration and evidence of that influence as I integrate and embody African cosmology in my communicable presence with others with whom I want to be a humanising, decolonising influence on their learning. I preface each of Marie's contributions with 'MARIE RESPONDS' and put her contributions in italic.

Today I am writing about the inclusional nature of African cosmology. I am exploring how, inclusionality as described by Alan Rayner is an integral aspect of African cosmology, which I found myself embodying as it transformed my propositional and ideological explanations for my actions, into the living explanations that comprise my living theory. This includes the standards I wish my work to be validated by, and my original claims to knowledge.

I am looking at how, through understanding the White 'other', as a differentiated part of a whole that I am part of, I am both able to hold on to a powerful decolonising intent and a recognition of our common humanity. What this means for me, is that I have been able to enter into relationships in such a way as to understand more of what moves the 'other'. Through doing so I am able to both celebrate them as they are and connect with their higher human aspirations. This facilitates a guilt free connection in which my ability to influence their learning (and therefore their actions in the world), in ways that are decolonising, is greatly enhanced. This happens in a relationship in which there is a relationally dynamic flow, with learning and influence coming from all aspects of the relationships in ways that is contributory to the growth of all engaged in it. MARIE RESPONDS: *It is what I felt the first time you came to the group although I didn't understand what it was that had moved me. This is what I have heard you articulate and been excited by especially the last couple of times you have come to Monday. This feels similar to (what) Louw writes about below:*

This brings me to a third overlap between the Ubuntu way of life and a decolonising assessment of the other. As said, the common scale which will allow an effective decolonising evaluation of the other, will only emerge

through dialogue or “mutual exposure”. Such exposure epitomizes the conduct prescribed by Ubuntu. Ubuntu inspires us to expose ourselves to others, to encounter the difference of their humanness so as to inform and enrich our own (cf. Sidane, 1994:8-9). Thus understood, umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu translates as: “To be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others in its infinite variety of content and form” (Van der Merwe, 1996:1; cf. also Ramose, 1999:193). This translation of Ubuntu attests to a respect for particularity, individuality and historicity, without which decolonisation cannot be. (Louw, 2006)

I am moved in this direction by my engagement and study of Black politics which, is simultaneously a study of politics generally. MARIE RESPONDS: *This ability to hold a wide and sharp focus together seems to be characteristic of quite a bit of what I have learnt from you.* In this study I have identified consistent patterns through which huge efforts take place and some things change, **but the deeper patterns of structural inequality remains the same.** I want to find ways that are truly transformational and move away from approaches that engage the oppressed in mirroring and therefore reproducing the other in the process of seeking change. MARIE RESPONDS: *I have reread these three sentences a few time because I really like the way this sounds to me.* I am hoping that the practice and thinking I am evolving, carries hope for us, to be able to move away from our polarising dynamic stability, to a deeper engagement in which we share our motivating vulnerabilities and our higher human aspirations and join in evolving patterns of being that reflect a truer, more just and sustainable “neighbourhood” (to use Alan Rayner’s meaning of the term). Without this redistributive quality and the establishment of patterns of interaction based on actual and not just philosophical equality of definition, access and treatment then all the decolonising of the individual is of little meaning because it is not sustainable without it! (Charles and Huxtable, 2006)

As I re-read and reflect on this exchange I see evidence here of my being able to articulate critical aspects of my living theory, e.g. “guiltless recognition”. In this exchange with a White colleague who responds in ways that I think contribute to our mutual growth within a dynamic inclusional relationship characterised by a valuing of each other and a desire to extend humanising principles of understanding and action in the wider world.

For further evidence see a draft paper by Jack Whitehead “Distinguishing World Leading Educational Standards of Judgement Through Living Inclusionality With Ubuntu”. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ap06AxMQbkg>) He includes and contemplates a video recording of me speaking with Alan Rayner. He writes:

As I watch the video-clip I see both Alan and Eden relating with inclusionality. By this I mean that both are communicating with a relationally dynamic awareness of the space they are included within. They feel to me to be aware and sensitive to each other's boundaries while connecting through the warmth, humour and energy of their humanity in ways that are both reflexive and co-creative. I experience this warmth, humour and energy as Eden responds to Alan's concern about the interview through a shared desire to communicate more widely the idea and implications of inclusionality. Without the video and with just the transcript below

to communicate, most of the expressions of warmth, humour and energy are missing.

I am pleased by the degree to which Jack has been able to ‘see’, experience and articulate accurately what my intent was in engaging with Alan. It both tells me something about Jack’s perceptiveness and about the ways in which I am congruently embodying my African cosmology. It reflects the extent to which I have managed to integrate a reclaimed, decolonised understanding of African history and cosmology into my life and practice and as an epistemological standard of judgement.

I have achieved much of my clarity through reading, reflection, action and dialogue. One of the most challenging dialogues that I have had has been with my critical friend Paulus Murray. In the appendix (Appendix 1 Section 1: Dialogue with Paulus) I share a response I wrote to him which captures much of what I was prodded into clarifying for myself as a result of a challenge that he made to me. I think it is a rich delineation of the ways that I am seeking to work with African history and cosmology in my personal and professional practice. I offer it as evidence of how I have managed to develop from my embodied learning, living theory that provides explanations that are life affirming and action that is decolonising. I think it is also a good example of how I have modified my concerns, ideas and practices in the light of my evaluations. Paulus’ criticisms of me made me think. As a result of that thinking I reconnected with my understandings of colonialism as an explanatory conditioning factor in the life of people of African origin. Explaining it to Paulus helped me reflect and re-embody this in my practice and in the explanations I had that underpinned that practice.

In this section I have explained my educational influences in my learning through describing the influence of the texts on African history on my ontological and cultural sense of who I am. I have shown how I have managed to work with the texts in ways that have enabled me to clarify, evolve and articulate my understanding of spirituality with an embodied congruence from a position of peace. I have shown how I have: -

- shown that the conclusions I have come to are reasonably fair and accurate
- shown the potential significance of my research
- shown the implications of my research
- evaluated the evidence-based account of my learning
- modified my concerns, ideas and practices in the light of my evaluations

I now move on to share narratives of three discrete but interrelated areas of my life, to show how I have arrived at the three major knowledge claims that I am claiming. The narratives are used to illustrate the process of how my Ubuntu way of being which, emerging out of my values and through the application of those values to my living an inquiring life, has led me to particular inclusional ways of working with others. It has also led to me evolving embodied communicative form of the educational influence that I want my values to be.

The way in which this thesis is structured may give the impression that the events in the areas of my life I am considering happen sequentially or separately. The rather messy illustration below is an attempt to show that these areas in my life have flowed over time in

messy interconnection and interdependence. The light green line shows the cycles of action and reflection. The pink line represents the thread of African cosmology that flows throughout the work and is a critical factor in the direction that this study has taken. The dark green line is my exploration of me as a father; the orange line is of me as an educational activist; the dark blue line my inquiry into me as a management consultant.

Cycles of action and reflection

