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Caribbean Society – toward a culturally sensitive Philosophy of Education in the 21st Century

by

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Preface

Since this was a Lecture delivered at The Mico University College, Kingston, Jamaica, some caveats are necessary. So, I will begin by trying to absolve myself from responsibility for whatever weaknesses this evening's dialogue may suffer from.

First, when I was approached to do a lecture, my impression was that the discussion was to be facilitated by me (not strictly a lecture in the formal sense), so that we may set the ball rolling in dialoguing on a matter close to the heart and head of us all – finding the necessary roadmaps for advancing the common welfare of our people through meaningful education of Africa's progeny globally. So, I did not think I was to come here and give one of those hairy fairy lectures, with little meaningful/useful/relevant content but high-sounding diction, at the end of which everyone will clap, but which would be relegated immediately to the garbage heap of intellectual forgetfulness. Hence, you will forgive me if my engaging approach does not do justice to whatever high expectations you may have of me (or what the group which invited me may have for inflicting me on you as a captive student audience. In any case, just over two weeks is too short a time, in a season of joy for all and sundry so-minded individuals globally and yet stressful university examinations

period for students, for me to go on that intellectual fishing errand, to come up with a “lecture” which will befuddle your intellect, while making me sound pretentiously erudite.

Second, being a little bit confused with the title of the discussion, I thought I could take some liberty with the title, modifying it to what my ordinary mind will be able to make sense of. Hence, I tweak the title a bit in two respects:

- a) “Caribbean Diaspora: the heuristic for a Philosophy of Education in the twenty-first century” is what the topic says, but I find the phrase “Caribbean Diaspora” in the title odd for a number of reasons. In the first instance, how could I be discussing about Caribbean *Diaspora* and Philosophy of Education when I hardly know enough of Jamaica where I live and the Caribbean region itself? Second, I had a suspicion that what was intended is that I engage in some “speculation” about “Caribbean Society”, with a view to emplacing, through our joint search, a meaningful “Philosophy of Education” that will conduce to a humane, developed, self-sustaining and peaceful Caribbean society in the twenty-first century.

For this reason, I reformulate my topic to read what I can manage: “Caribbean Society – toward a culturally sensitive Philosophy of Education in the 21st Century”. This, I believe, will give me the kind of latitude to take us all on some meaningful retrospective, introspective and prospective reflection on philosophy and education as tools for meeting the intellectual, cultural and developmental needs of the Caribbean Society in this century and beyond.

You may notice that I have jettisoned “heuristic” in the original title I was given. The reason is that the word “heuristic” (loosely construed as rule of the thumb, educated or informed guess, intuitive guesses, common sense, procedure, method,

story, model or metaphor) is loaded with some baggage I am not prepared to unpack here, because of time constraint, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, because of how it will limit “Philosophy of Education” to narrow methodological sense. Not that “heuristic” could not be deployed meaningfully to understand Philosophy of Education, but such deployment would have to be attenuated by various conceptual clarifications, which is not possible within the context of our discussion.

- b) Even this title is still heavy. Hence, I clarify my intention in this discussion. Not being a thoroughbred Caribbean, I find it difficult to suppose that I could be the one to formulate for the Caribbean either a “Philosophy of Education” properly speaking, or even see myself as the one to provide the road map for the formulation of such a Philosophy of Education; especially bearing in mind the diversity of the Caribbean and the historical complexity of her peoples and cultures.

For these reasons, my intention is to stimulate our minds toward a joint examination of our educational heritage, to see what is right, what may be wrong, and where proactively we may all begin to direct our search for the true development of the mind and body that conduces to an orderly, progressive and culturally humane society that we all desire. It is in these contexts that I would want you all to join me in this dialogue.

Having claimed immunity from all possible errors of omission and commission, real and imaginary, I will now proceed to the task on hand – attempting to see if one can determine a “Philosophy of Education suitable for the Caribbean in the 21st Century” and beyond. My discussion will be in three sections. In section 1, I look at education and society. In section 2, I look at Caribbean society, using my very limited understanding, and the need for a culturally, socially, economically, technologically sensitive and

comprehensively humanizing educational system. In Section 3, I examine the place of philosophy and philosophy of education in the dynamics of international system within which the Caribbean society must exist, survive and thrive. I conclude my discussion with some remarks about implications of the ideas we have raised, and how these must bear on our reflections, behaviour and attitude to reality and existence.

Education – some remarks

Aristotle is supposed to have been of the view that it is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it. This is a good point to gain an insight into the nature of education. It seems to suggest that being educated is not simply being fed with facts, contrary to what our society does today and what formal “education” as accepted by formerly colonized Africans on the mother continent or forcibly enslaved Africans in the Diaspora. And hence, I have often wondered what makes for an “educated” person.

In most cases, my wonderment has nothing to do with failure to understand how most societies and policy makers in different societies understand what “being educated” entails; it is more with the failure of such an understanding to truly reflect in the outcome of the process of being educated who is an “educated” person, or, may be, in a less confused way, what “should” constitute who an “educated” person should be in some minimal way. For, our societies confusedly suppose that to be educated is to have attained some diplomate, certification, or some other such secondary or tertiary qualification, beyond the elementary school, within the formal system narrowly contrived to impart specific knowledge and skills. This means, that in this narrow sense, it is easy to conjecture that you could either be “very” educated in this way – that is, have attained the PhD (the highest

terminal formally attainable qualification) in some field of knowledge – or you could be terribly “uneducated” – that is, have no formal school exposure beyond the elementary level. By this understanding, it is only the formal medium that determines who is educated.

In my view this is a very narrow way of understanding education and being educated. In so many respects it fails to appreciate the very many aspects, properties, origins, natures and implications of what education entails. When this minimalist notion of education is embraced in any society (especially in post-plantation and post-colonial societies), it could (but it has, and it would), no doubt, lead to very dangerous consequences for such societies and the humans who live in such societies. This is part of the perils which our societies in the Caribbean and the Africana world have embraced, only to wonder why our societies are now in such dysfunctional state, with extreme poverty existing side by side with disdainful wealth and waste, and incomprehensible ignorance and pathological antisocial attitudes existing with so much external and exhibitionist religiosity!

I am going to do a first person analysis of what I understand by being educated. And this is going to be, and should be regarded merely as a very functional, personal and introspective effort, based on observations of events in some Caribbean societies. It should be regarded as my evaluation of the total lack of attention, on the part of our leadership, intellectuals and political directorates, to the development of clear policies, goals and vision of society, which education, as a system, a method and a tool, would help society to realise. For, I am embarrassed by the total disdain that is exhibited in the Caribbean society for critical thinking, which manifests in various ills, with the expectation that society’s problems would receive some divine solutions, while we simply recline and enjoy ourselves in some obscure pockets of peace and quiet, sun and beach.

I am also shocked by how we have now embraced the idea that all it takes our children to be educated is for them to go to school for a number of hours a day, five days a week, and six to eight months a year! We have divested our responsibility for helping our children become human beings to some surrogate institution filled with nitwits who themselves are products of stunted and myopic social systems. And we want to measure our effort by the amount of money we have invested in the “educational” system that is failing because we have not put in any serious thought into either the content or the values that are being peddled in the system.

But in any case, a people averse to serious reflective thinking will only continue to pursue the same failing policies while expecting success as outcomes! Does that sound like the definition of insanity? Bear with me, and let us examine this predicament together.

The dysfunctionality of our societies has not made us wonder what we are doing wrong, yet the danger is imminent and present, as our society faces implosion before our very eyes! The way in which crime and violence has spiralled out of control in Jamaica is only too graphic as evidence of our collective failure. But, this is not the end of the matter, as those we claim to educate, we educate wrongly, while the vast segments of our youth have little access to this even poor semblance of education that we peddle.

The human being in infancy is about the weakest of animals that ever lived on earth. Neither can it survive on its own after conception, nor can it survive by its own wit after birth (by whatever means). We may compare a chicken egg to a human egg. Once fertilized and dropped by the hen, the egg needs only minimal heat to mature and hatch. Once hatched, it can survive on its own, barring the accident of some predatory brute like a bumbling human trampling it, ants eating it up or snakes feeding on it, or some other such

natural/unnatural disaster. In the case of the human egg, it has to literally be lugged around the place in-situ for a whole nine months – give or take two weeks plus or minus – after which it is still dependent for another couple of decades before it can survive on its own. Even then, material provision of nourishment is not enough; the fragility of a psyche tied to the apron strings of other human, either adults or peers and juniors, ensure that the human infant is dependent for live. Because of this, one observes the peculiarity of the human being, even though endowed with so much physical, mental and sociological potentialities, it must be connected to be fulfilled. This is the reason why D. C. Phillips's (2008) conjectures are on point that clearly for one thing, it is obvious that children are born illiterate and innumerate, and ignorant of the norms and cultural achievements of the community or society into which they have been thrust; but with the help of professional teachers and the dedicated amateurs in their families and immediate environs (and with the aid, too, of educational resources made available through the mass media and nowadays the internet), within a few years the children can read, write, calculate, and act (at least often) in some culturally-appropriate ways.

Thus, there is no doubt that some of the youth learn these skills with more facility than others, and so education also serves as a social-sorting mechanism and undoubtedly has enormous impact on the economic fate of the individual. Put more abstractly, at best society's formal education equips individuals with the skills and substantive knowledge that allows them to define and to pursue their own goals, and also allows them to participate in the life of their community as full-fledged, autonomous citizens. But what is not clear is that left without the cultural and historical tethers, which refine and define identities of peoples, the education so received create monsters rather than human beings.

We would therefore notice that Phillips did not mention in the above is that humans are about the most resistant of animals to learning, adaptation and appreciation of dangers to existence, survival and flourishing. In fact, humans are resistant to using experience inductively garnered as guide to future behaviour, hence they keep repeating the same mistakes over and over, until they finally compromise their own existence and die. Note that it is not all humans that are able to learn from the experience of others, given the suffering that having to learn from their own personal experiences would pose. Just as all things that have weight greater than air and are unsupported obey the law of gravity, many humans are inclined more to wanting to remain ignorant (believing they can defy the laws of survival of the fittest), than taking simple measures to improve their own understanding of reality as a means of improving the quality of their existence. For this reason, ignorance is bliss, and humans would rather abdicated responsibility for thinking to other who are called teachers, leaders, clergies, politicians, journalists, etc., who themselves are often less endowed intellectually than the people to preside over, than take responsibility for their own survival!

It is no accident then that a typical human begins education from the point of conception. The foetus is endowed with some genes and is subsequently nursed on diets of valuable tissue-forming nutrition necessary for intellectual development and, through various forms of sensitization it is provided with varieties of emotions and intuitions and “knowledge” that prepare the infant for life – this is the main reason why pregnant women and their spouses are encouraged to speak with the babies in the womb, not just to rely on wholesome diets or avoidance of dangerous substances which may cultivate negative addictions in the infant for life. At birth the process must continue on an even more

relentless pace. This involves ensuring that the infant's orientations, associations of ideas, appreciations of stimulus are appropriate to each occasion. It also means that the input-output mechanism are equilibrated from the tender stage of conception, such that existence is mediated by this "educational" process (as it is not in the formal setting of some educational institution), which largely involve programming and measuring of responses, rewarding correct ones and indicating where one was wrong when one was wrong by withholding reward or by meeting out corrective disincentives and punishment where deigned fit.

This probably is why Jean Jacques Rousseau supposed that plants are shaped by cultivation and humans by education. Humans are born weak, we need strength; we are born totally without being provisioned, we need aid; we are born stupid, we need judgment. Everything we do not have at our birth and which we need when we are grown is given us by education and society or community of other human beings.

In order for society to expect any worth from its young, it must invest everything possible in shaping the young to appreciate the values that are worthy of preservation in society. This is why some would suggest that a rounded education is more desirable than one that only teachings skills for doing things, obeying orders, satisfying urges and perfecting the greedy predilection, without teaching reflective capacity in the human person.

As it were, things have phenomenally changed over time. Babies were born with eyes shut tightly some decades ago when electricity was not as pervasive in all societies to turn night into day, but they are born now with their eyes wide open with many children having logged in thousands of hours of television and computer viewing. Added to that,

their capacity to learn is quickened by the variety of circumstances and factors which conspire to ensure early maturity. Having logged in thousands of hours of soap opera, violent action movies and oversexed movies in the womb, the erotic element is quicker to mature, and the trigger reflex is heightened. These are what we see manifested in the spate of violence in our schools, the spate of school bus sex orgies on our streets, and the on-line lewdness that has become common fare in today's society, compared with just a generation ago when there were no electricity supplies to many towns and villages, only one television in a radius of 50 miles, one channel radios mounted on the front porch of homes and one television station which closed at 9.00 pm only to reopen at 6.00 am the following day.

These are developments that are irreversible, but what has happened is that we seem to have been using tools designed for different circumstances to solve problems spurred by totally new situations. We will make this point more evident soon, but we wish to state from the onset then that the role of education is to help us meet the challenges of existence as they arise.

So, for me, human life is about solving problems. That is, the whole of what we call "existence" is about facing challenges and overcoming odds, difficulties, obstacles, and situations. This is what, at least, in a minimalist fashion, adult life is about. And what all forms of education, in the family, in various social organizations, in society, at the workplace – including religion, schools, clubs, etc. – are about; that is, mainly preparing human beings, at various stages of life, to be able to cope with the challenges of existence, and to solve problems related to these challenges in such a way that conduce to survival and thriving as an earth bound animal with a tenure span that is relatively fleeting before, of necessity, we leave the earth to others.

To this end, it seems critical that we see why Einstein thinks that education for fitting humans to roles on factory-lines is the worst kind of disaster that has befallen human society. For him, this is the crippling of human individuals which is to be regarded as the worst evil of capitalism. In his view, our whole contemporary educational system suffers from this evil: an exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for a future career. In his view, the only way to redress this malaise is to fashion an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals. The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his/her own innate abilities, should attempt to develop in her/him a sense of responsibility for fellow humans, in the place of the glorification of power and material success as is prevalent in our present society.

Accepting the supposition that human life is about solving problems, one could see that there is a direct correlation between the ways in which humans educate their young and the levels of competence of humans in society to deal with problems of existence. The first critical component of success or failure relate to appreciating the existence of problems. It is only fair that only recognized challenges receive the proper annotation of effort to resolve. If one cannot appreciate an issue as a challenge, then to expect solution or even effort to solve the problem that has not been appreciated would be impossible. If and when one has appreciated that a problem existed, the next stage is to figure out what is the nature of the problem, what kind of problem it is, what are the ramifications or dimensions of the problem. This effort, however, includes understanding the origin, source, or cause of the problem. That is, when one has appreciated the existence of a problem, it is important to now analyse the problem to gain, as we said just now, a proper

personal or group understanding of the problem, why it is a problem, where it is coming from, and what causative factors are responsible for the problem.

If one is able to gain a foothold in the investigation indicated above, then it would not be very difficult to see what the solutions to the problem may be like. In this regard, it would become easy to diagnose the situation, envisage why it is the way it is, and ponder what appropriate measures would resolve the problem. If, in any step in the above, there is a block, then there would have to be a necessary retracing of steps, to see what was omitted in the search for proper understanding and analysis of the different components of the problem.

And it does not matter how much formal education one has, or in what type of society one lives, or whatever technological advancement one's society may have attained, clearly it can be conjectured that all humans must go through virtually the same process in living life. I would even conjecture that all living things must perform these basic operations in order to survive successfully and excel. If there is a break-down along the path to the understanding, appreciation and determination of solution to problem, then one is faced with great existential challenges, which may be a product of poor preparation for life or a result of limitations to the effort that one brings to bear on the existential challenges. Either way, the result may be failure, mediocrity or mendicancy.

In my judgment, education is both a process and a system. In the first sense, it is the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding, through study, training, teaching, instruction, observation, experience and apprenticeship. In this regard, to educate, then, is to teach someone, group or society, over a (long) period of time about all aspects of reality relevant to their existence and survival, so that the person, group or society acquires not

only knowledge, but also clear understanding, of issues relating to all aspects of reality relevant to their existence and survival, including the specific contents, ideas, materials, skills and attitudes that facilitate the survival. This is the sense in which to be educated is to have, to display, and to be able to show knowledge, understanding, culture, taste and attitudes that are self- and other-affirming in society. It is the sense in which humans (and probably other animals with the capacity to learn things) use their experience and the experience of others to benefit their existence in the universe.

In the second sense, education is the totality of the system, methodologies, structural institutions, instructional facilities and personnel that combine together to ensure, enhance and eventuate the educational goals of society. In this sense it would be important to not only appreciate the existence of levels and layers of educational attainment, but also to consider carefully the numerous details of curricular, measurement, certification and development processes through which the educational system must pass, in order for the end product to meet the first test that we observed in the definition above.

But, based on the above, this is where we could see education beginning from before the cradle and ending at the grave (probably long after the grave); and it is where we are able to distinguish between formal, informal and non-formal education, such that we are able to identify some as early childhood, childhood, elementary, secondary, higher, tertiary, and continuing education, within the formal system. While in the informal system, Western society does not adequately appreciate the position of family (especially the mother and the father), relatives, community and society in the education of humans; thereby creating a disconnection between the formal and the informal systems of education, instead of coordinating both to enhance the overall product of the process and system. And, it is clear

that a society that fails to appreciate the informal educational processes and system will be found hard-pressed to understand the nature of the non-formal and its contribution to the development of the wholesome human being who must be a member of civilized community of humans. The consequences of this is what is driving the various horror shows that is American (USA) life; it is manifesting in the election of characters like George Bush and Donald Trump and the regular spates of mass murders that take place in USA, just to mention two effects of dysfunctional social engineering process which education mediates in a developed country.

Philosophy of Education:

Being a combination of two key concepts, one moderating the other, any understanding of “philosophy of education” must attend to the relationship between the two intellectual, systemic and practical disciplines described by the phrase. Our task here is not to provide an ideological definition of “philosophy of education”, but to show practically what it is about, how important it is, and some of the dangers of its neglect by any society. For this reason we would say that “philosophy of education” is the application of philosophical methods to the understanding of the theory, the content and practice of education. This relate to the critical formulation of questions on such topics as the nature of learning, the purpose of education, such as whether the chief goal of educators should be imparting knowledge, developing intellectual independence, or instilling moral or political values; the meaning, nature and origins of education-related concepts, including the concept of education and evolution of education itself in various societies of the world and over different times and epochs in such societies; and therefore, even more critically

speaking, understanding the sources and structures of proclaiming the legitimacy of educational authority.

Given the above, it is quite understandable why societies that take education seriously, both as a process and as a system, invest resources in providing reflective consideration of education. For, how does one understand a society embracing the educational systems, content, processes and outcomes of another society unreflectively, regardless of differences in culture, history, traditions, circumstance of existence and orientations of notions of success, failure, well-being and visions of reality unless such a society is setting itself up for perdition? How does one understand a society that allows for the training of educators, leaders, and trainers who are not imbued with the reflexive capacity to wonder about what they are doing, standing back to ponder the meaning of it all, the goals of it all and the processes that is effected to realize the aims of education? How does one relate to Universities and Colleges which grant all kinds of degrees, diplomas and certificates in education to persons who are not exposed to the second order effort of critical thinking, about themselves, about the persons they are supposed to facilitate to learn, about the society within which education must occur, about the resources provided for learning, about the outcomes expected by individuals and society as end result of education, about life, death, after-life, values that are aesthetical, ethical, social, political, cultural, religious, etc? Would it then be strange to find such societies floundering from one peril to another, especially where there is a total absence of the first stages of child-rearing that is critical to the humanization of the beastly human infant? Would it then be beyond our reflective comprehension to see why there is so much corruption, criminality, greed, violence, disrespect, crass egoism, arrant ignorance and despicable apathy from the

highest to the lowest members of such a society? Could it be that this is exactly what is happening to the Caribbean and global Africa? We would do well to pulse for a second to ponder these matters, while we then look at the Caribbean society.

Caribbean Background

Our background for our discussion this evening will be our beautiful Jamaica, land we love. We could say, from our experience, to varying degrees that whatever observations we make regarding Jamaica can be said to be applicable to other Caribbean societies and probably to global Africa.

According to the editors of *Education in the West Indies*,

Newly developing countries such as those in the West Indies have, in most cases, inherited from their colonial era parts of educational systems rather than wholes. Generally such countries have inherited primary schools (in varying degrees of adequacy for their populations), some secondary schools (often not in sufficient quantity to provide secondary education other than for an elite), and sometimes a training institution for primary-school teachers (1996, p. 2).

Clearly, the nature, structure, content, system, processes, goals and the ultimate ends of the inherited educational system and tradition was colonial, tailored toward developing dependent persons who would never challenge the erstwhile slave owners and colonial overlords. Merely propagating what was inherited on the paradigms bequeathed was therefore only going to continue to foster the dependence. The works on education in the Caribbean which I have read have all failed to tackle the philosophically critical questions of what system, process, type of education would be appropriate for the peoples of the Caribbean in particular and, by extension, for global Africa in general.

It may be my ignorance, and am willing to concede this, but having taught philosophy of education at some of the institutions in Jamaica, and having second-examined philosophy of education courses at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus over the years, I am yet to see any concerted effort to develop a critical reflection on the educational system in Jamaica or the West Indies. In fact, the ideas that are taught are simply those which you would find at Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, London, Yale, Harvard, Princeton or other; thereby presuming that the existential circumstances of our humanity are identical with or similar to those of our enslavers and colonizers. The drastic nature of our predicament is not factored into either the system, structure, practice of determination of the educational paradigms and content that we propagate; yet we presume that educating ourselves on the terms of our oppressors will lead to our liberation, emancipation and eventual equality as humans.

It may be asked, why should it be any different? Are Caribbean people less intelligent or are they incapable of dealing with the same material? Are Caribbean people not human beings in the same sense as Europeans, Americans, etc? Looking at it through these questions will only be missing the point. This is because, each society has to devise educational systems, content and practices that fits its cultures, linguistic traditions, historio-genesis, projections into the future, etc. Adopting, without adapting or questioning, the received educational system of oppressors, especially those bequeathed by oppressors, is not an option for an oppressed people; otherwise the process of their own subjugation will be facilitated by themselves. Marcus Garvey, Franz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Errol Miller, Rex Nettleford, Orlando Patterson, Claude Ake and numerous others have poignantly remonstrated on this. So, it is not by accident that official and unofficial

Jamaica, for example, is a society (this is including the Caribbean and African peoples generally) full of people that does not trust the intellect of its own people and would prefer to defer to the half-baked ideas of neophytes from the metropolises.

We can use some examples to instantiate our point here. The University of the West Indies, the premier University in the Caribbean, does not see reason why there should be a department of philosophy or a fulsome Philosophy of Education Programme in its Faculty of Education. The disaster that is UWI education has been evident in the poor reflective capacity of its products, as is evident in the leadership that abound in the University itself, and in the poor leadership that its product have given to Jamaica and the region – a leadership that prides itself on impoverishing the people, rather than lifting them from peonage to self-sufficiency. Examples of lack of trust can be found in the employment of foreigners to head BOJ, Jamaica Constabulary Force, JFF Coaching Staff, etc. Such lapses as we see in policy formulation and implementation has led to placing a multi-purpose stadium in a community which demographically, if all of the inhabitants of the community were to assemble in the stadium they will not fill it, which speaks to the crass failure of our educational system to prepare the policy makers to futuristically predict the non-viability of such a white elephant.

The Universities and Colleges that have sprung up in Jamaica have no Philosophy Departments and Philosophy of Education or Philosophy of any discipline in their programmes. The poverty of leadership of these institutions is replicated in the products which now infest the society at large with intellectual incapacity and reflection gap that speaks to high heavens.

The failure of leadership in governance is reflected in the repetition of failed efforts. In the 1990s, Jamaica went through the trauma of the collapse of the financial sector; literally ebullient black entrepreneurial group in Jamaica was brought down to its knees and bankrupted by retroactive punitive taxation for success in profit making ventures for their shareholders. The failed policies of tax and spend, currency mop-up, and inflationary tricks that led to the debt burden in the late 80s and early 90s are now being repeated in the new century, when all other countries are dealing away with such policies. Jamaica has continued to believe that the best way is to contract your way out of poverty, contrary to the informed view that the best way is to grow your way out of poverty. Even when the twin destructive agents of oppression, IMF and World Bank, have come to an acknowledgement that one size does not fit all, mendicant societies are pressured into following the same failed orthodoxies, thereby leading to a combustible social and cultural landscape that is witnessed in Jamaica, where it is one of the fewest countries with such high murder rates that are not at either a civil war or under external invasion. The same applies to Nigeria, where years of neglect and expropriation has created such flagrant insurgencies as is found in North East and South South of the country in the form of Boko Haram and Delta Avengers!

The reflective challenge exhibited by the leaders of thought in informing the public and informing themselves properly is displayed in the oldest media house editorial in Jamaica. Take for example the view of *The Gleaner* Newspaper that,

We believe it is prudent for the Jamaican government to begin to skew that subsidy in favour of science, engineering and technology disciplines, whose skills

are tenable across a broader range of economic activities than, say, a graduate in literature or philosophy (Gleaner, Tuesday, December 9, 2008 Editorial).

Finally, the rampant and runaway corruption, crime and violence and culture of hear no evil, see no evil and speak no evil, is a product of an educational system that has totally failed. Societies that take pride in the so-called Christian heritage is only too Christian, because the first person to speak the truth about the identity of Jesus the Christ to the authorities, looking for him was cursed for eternity along with his progeny (probably explaining why there are very few Judas in the world); hence, true Christians brought up on Plantation mentality do not snitch. And it speaks to the need to have thinkers doing not only the development of the Curriculum, but also the teaching of the content of the educational system in reflective ways.

I remember clearly that when I first arrived in Jamaica, I was going around the colleges of education in Kingston to sell the idea of Philosophy for Children, and the cold shoulder I received everywhere was incredible. Why should the children be thinking? Who needs black children and people to be thinkers? Why empower poor people to have control over their fates? Why stop the pork-barrel politics by creating persons who will no longer be dependent on the politician or area leader? Why not continue with the currygoat and rum politics?

Philosophy of Education in the Caribbean and global Africa

From what we have sketched, it would be clear that there is need for Philosophy in the schools, and Philosophy of Education and other intellectual disciplines in tertiary institutions in the Caribbean and in global Africa in a robust, culturally sensitive way. In French societies, children in high schools are exposed to philosophy from early. This

speaks volumes about the French culture and way of life. Whatever we may think about the French, before Sarkozy, it cannot be that they lack intellect and culture. They were outstanding in their opposition to the Bush invasion of Iraq under false pretences in 2003.

But it is important that I am not celebrating French modern slavery or colonialism in Africa, which determines that all French territories continue to make French Central Bank the banker of last resort, thereby ensuring that the French government determines how much these territories can spend of their monies and on what and when. The fault is not that of France, it is that of the French territories which could not collectively abrogate the strangulating policies of modern day colonialism.

Why UWI and other Universities are resistant to the development of Philosophy is remarkable. Could it be an allergy to reflective thinking? Could it be a hatred for thinkers? Could it be a kind of *Gleanerian* virus of ignorance spread in the system Caribbean-wide? Why would the University Council of Jamaica allow Universities who would not be allowed to operate elsewhere without proper teaching of Philosophy and Philosophy of Education to come to Jamaica to short-change our students as brief-case universities with a cash and carry diploma mill system (which probably would not be accepted for work in their countries of origin)? With a history of excommunication of Walter Rodney, who attempted to stimulate thought in Jamaica while he was a lecturer at UWI, it is not strange to have the collusion of leadership to continue to deprive the youth of reflective tools.

Strangely most of the people who have contributed most to human society have been philosophers who were either scientists, educators, humanist, artists, etc. Against this background, it is clear to me that we will continue to fail as a people, for as long as we

continue to deny our people the tools to appreciate themselves and their places or lack thereof in the world.

In the final analysis, while the pay-off of Philosophy and Philosophy of Education (and other disciplinary engagements with philosophy), in terms of direct contribution to Per Capital Income of countries and Gross Domestic Product, may not be immediately calculable in dollars and cents. The absence of these two in our curricular has not been difficult to calculate – runaway corruption, scandalous crime and violence in a society of less than ten million people across the Caribbean, terrible interpersonal skills, extremes of disrespect to the poor, children and women, hatred of intellectual pursuits, arrant consumption of items of luxury that cannot be afforded, total destruction of the space for the refined arts, and the promotion of violence through the ineffectual legal and judicial structures, complicity of the leadership in the subjugation of the masses and the rank crass behaviour of leadership in the hallowed chambers of parliament; these are clear evidence of the absence of these two disciplines in the various strata of our educational system.

The existence of band-wagon-ism in all fora of life in the Caribbean is evidence of the need for Philosophy in all aspects of our life. And it must be acknowledged that it is not only the absence of Departments of Philosophy and programmes in Philosophy of Education that is lamentable. It is an across-the-board omission in our educational and socio-cultural systems. How do you graduate students in History who have never entertained questions raised in Philosophy of History? How do you account for graduating students in business who have never had discussion of philosophical issues in business ethics? Or for that matter medical doctors who are not familiar with medical ethics, geographers and architects who know little about environmental ethics, or journalists who

have no idea about media ethics or politicians who know nothing about the history and culture and philosophies of societies, including their own?

I leave you with these matters, so that whenever the opportunities present themselves we can ask our “leaders” and yourselves, who are probably only dealers in power-grabbing and in the manipulation to attain power for selfish reasons. Should we not be thinking about an appropriate Philosophy of Education and Philosophy generally, given our historical circumstances? Where are the views of Marcus Garvey in our education? How many of us are aware of the philosophies that underwrote the cultures of our ancestors and their civilizations in Africa which took civilization to other parts of the world? Or, should we care at all to ponder such matters?

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