

## Editorial: Raison D'etre

The African Association of Political Science (AAPS) is launching this journal in pursuit of its mission of furthering the development of Africa in the fullest sense. As social scientists, we study the human being and society, trying to ascertain what they are, how they have come to be what they are and what they can be. So it comes about that the social science knowledge of society is the summation of the existential realities of social life and its developmental possibilities. One implication of this is that the social scientist has an enormous responsibility, for his or her work defines in an important way, the possibilities of progress.

This journal will, we hope, combat those pitfalls of consciousness and the objective factors which have, in the past, hampered the fulfillment of this responsibility. For one thing, we want to confront the whole question of our own relevance as social scientists to the social and material progress of Africa. For the most part, the social science we learned and practise today appears to have rather limited relevance for the progress of Africa. Nevertheless we have continued to peddle it for a variety of reasons which include laziness, self-interest or fascination with esoteric irrelevances.

The African Journal of Political Economy (AJOPE) underlines the need for the scientific enterprise and commitment to meet and merge. We believe that as a social science community, we cannot contribute much to the development of Africa unless we identify completely with the problems and struggles of our people.

We worry that the orientations of social science practice in Africa are fixated on the metropolitan countries. More often than not, our professional standing as social scientists in our countries and in Africa depends largely on our standing in the metropole. Because the rewards of 'international' professional standing seem so irresistible to so many of us, the locus of our interests has moved inevitably to the metropole. Thus we strive to publish in metropolitan journals, to adopt the academic fashions of the metropole to the marginalisation of the concerns of our people.

But these are only symptoms of the elemental realities of our social existence. We are still struggling out of colonialism, still heavily dominated and dependent. We are now formally independent politically, to be sure, and that has made some difference. For one thing, our domination is now mediated in rather complex ways. Nonetheless it is not substantially reduced. We are yet to consolidate the gains of our anti-colonial struggles and to concretise and advance our self-determination. With few exceptions, the general picture in Africa is one of a continent which has settled into breeding corrupt, inefficient and violent oligarchies who militarise politics and society in the cause of disenfranchising the masses. This applies also to the vast majority of the countries which have opted for the socialist path. A wide range of factors including insufficient attention to historical specifications, lack of creativity, adverse economic conditions and insufficient commitment to the energising value of democracy has engendered a degenerate socialism. The economic picture is just as gloomy if not worse. In over two decades of independence, Africa has achieved very little in the way of economic growth, and less still, of development. The masses are threatened with ever more material deprivation and ever more misery. Our development strategies have failed so dismally that nearly all our economies are at varying stages of collapse and recolonisation.

Not surprisingly, the sphere of knowledge expresses our dependence and subordination. There has been very little endogenous development of the social sciences. Our social science largely reproduces the dependence of our economy and polity as we content ourselves with consuming what we do not produce.

The African Journal of Political Economy (AJOPE) is clear that unless we strive for endogenous development of science and knowledge we cannot fully emancipate ourselves. Why this development must be endogenous should be clear for it is not a question of parochialism or nationalism. The point is that even though the principles of science are universal, its growth points, applications and the particular problems which it solves are contingent on the historical circumstances of the society in which the science is produced. So, it may very well be that scientific advances made in one part of the world may have little or no relevance to the needs of another part. This is especially so for the social sciences which deal with social life, a sphere in which uniqueness is so common-place that the transnational application of knowledge is all the more hazardous.

It is very clear to us that if we do not take the endogenous development of knowledge and science seriously we can neither achieve full self-determination nor compete effectively in the international system. Because science and knowledge are such decisive power resources no people especial-

ly the weak and disadvantaged can afford to neglect their production in a world which is never free from hostility and always competitive.

As a community of African scholars we have established this journal as a means of speaking for ourselves and taking responsibility for our own development. That is not to say that we are retreating into ourselves or denying the legitimate interests of others in our concerns. Our particularity is precisely the way in which we can engage the universal with any concreteness and to any effect. We are sure that all those who really care for the advance of knowledge and human self-realization will consider this project a collective enterprise and help it to fruition.

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Harare  
August, 1986.