**The Ghanaian Leader, Philosopher, Politician, and Nationalist Kwame Nkrumah espouses in this reading a philosophical view he calls “philosophical consciencism.” This view provides a theoretical basis for a socialist ideology, which aims to use the synthesis of the African colonial experience, Islamic and Euro-Christian influence, and their traditional world views to create a society that will lead to the harmonious growth and development of its people.**

The thrust of his argument is that any political or ethical principle must have a foundation in a metaphysical system. A philosophical idea must be shaped by social and material conditions, in a similar manner that the social condition of human beings must also be shaped by their philosophical ideas. He discusses how this is illustrated in the ideas of some Western philosophers such as Thales, Aristotle, and J. S. Mill, whose ideas were not simply abstract, but were intellectual weapons for a social purpose. He argues that if philosophy is seen as an abstract system of thought, then it will be difficult to make it relevant to substantive human conditions. His idea of consciencism was an attempt to articulate how philosophical ideas can be substantively made relevant to and adapted to the African situation. He argues in this regard that metaphysical materialism, as a philosophical idea, is essential for the substantive actualization of the moral principles of socialist egalitarianism in any democratic political system.

Egalitarianism, as a principle regarding which conduct is socially acceptable, says that everyone must be given equal treatment and accorded equal value, dignity, and respect. This principle is given credence by materialism, in that it emphasizes the idea that all people are essentially the same material thing, which implies that they ought to be treated equally. Nkrumah suggests that in order for Africans to achieve this socialist egalitarian moral ideal, they must appreciate and understand the materialistic way in which traditional Africans understood the world and reality. This idea of materialism will help Africans to justify their traditional cultural view of society, which involves a communalistic humanism. This is an ethical principle that seeks to create a society in which human beings are regarded as having...
innate dignity, integrity, and value. The respect for human beings and mutual concern for one another are regarded as the fundamental principles of action in society. This principle is objective and derives from the equal nature of humans; it is therefore generalizable. He argues that this ethical idea of conscientism is comparable to Immanuel Kant’s ethical principle of treating human beings as an end, and not merely as a means. Because the principle of humanism considers everyone equal in dignity and value, it is against the exploitation of people.

Nkrumah argues the traditional African society included arrangements and moral attitudes toward human beings that were socially manifested as a kind of socialism. He argues that the philosophical idea of conscientism is a political theory that seeks to include social and political practice in order to ensure that the principles of ethics have the substantive effect of helping people to live a better life in society. It seeks to connect knowledge and action. The idea of conscientism is particularly significant because African societies are changing as a result of colonialism. The traditional communities are becoming complex states with complex and technical political arrangements. The issue of how to sustain the traditional cultural views of communalistic humanism has become pertinent. He thought that ethical principles, which have a bearing on political ideas and practice, are not permanent; they also undergo historical evolution with the society. Hence, Nkrumah argues that the African political system must include elements of Islamic ideas as well as Euro-Christian ideas that have had influence on Africans due to colonialism. This influence has led to a crisis of African conscience, which is confronted by three different ideas in present-day African society. Nkrumah suggests that in order for African states to sustain these traditional views about society, they must adopt socialist institutions. It is only by accepting such socialist institutions—because they are mutually supportive—that Africans can maintain their traditional views about human beings and society.

Nkrumah argues against the adoption of capitalist institutions because they will create a stratified society and a class structure—the ruling or capitalist class and the working class—that will lead to the exploitation of the working class by the other. This will negate the traditional view of communal humanism, which had no class and considered everyone equal; it will be impossible for African states to achieve the moral goal of egalitarianism in a capitalist structure. He argues that if Africans do not adopt socialist institutions to bring about egalitarianism, there will be two opposing ideologies in
society—an ideology for the oppressed and an ideology for the oppressors—which cannot peacefully coexist. It will be difficult for people to live together in harmony, and this will vitiate development, because the forces of production will lead to class struggle and the alienation of the working class. He argues that we must have a system that allows individuals to develop; this will in turn lead to the development of society. Only socialism can do this. He argues that capitalism is morally bad, unjust, and alien, and cannot be reconciled with the moral principles of African society; hence it cannot lead to development. Socialism will instead bring about restitution in African societies that have been ravaged by the evil of colonialism; it will prevent exploitative habits, serve the interest of everyone, help to reclaim people’s psychology by erasing “colonial mentality” defend the independence of states and maintain security.

As you read Nkrumah, consider and reflect on the following questions: What does Nkrumah mean by “philosophical consciencism”? What are its defining features? In what way does communalistic humanism involve elements of socialism? How does materialism provide a basis for justifying egalitarianism? What is Nkrumah’s argument against the adoption of capitalism in Africa? What is the nature of the relationship between philosophy and social conditions?

The ten years which I spent in the United States of America represents a crucial period in the development of my philosophical conscience. It was at the Universities of Lincoln and Pennsylvania that this conscience was first awakened. I was introduced to the great philosophical systems of the past to which the Western universities have given their blessing, arranging and classifying them with the delicate care lavished on museum pieces.... But these titans were expounded in such a way that a student from a colony could easily find his breast agitated by conflicting attitudes.... By the time, however, that they [the great philosophical systems] come to be accepted in the universities for exposition, they have lost the vital power which they had at their first statement, they have shed their dynamism and polemic reference. This is a result of the academic treatment which they are given. The academic treatment is the result of an attitude to philosophical

systems as though there was nothing to them but statements standing in logical relation to one another. . . .

The critical study of the philosophies of the past should lead to the study of modern theories, for these latter, born of the fire of contemporary struggles, are militant and alive. . . . During my stay in America the conviction was firmly created in me that a great deal in their [Marx and Engels] thought could assist us in the fight against colonialism. I learnt to see philosophical systems in the context of the social milieu which produced them. I therefore learnt to look for social contention in philosophical systems. I am not saying, however, that this is the only way to look at philosophy. . . . It is possible, for instance, to look upon philosophy as a series of abstract systems, When philosophy is so seen, even moral philosophers, with regrettable coyness, say that their preoccupation has nothing to do with life. They say that their concern is not to name moral principles or to improve anybody’s character, but narrowly to elucidate the meaning of terms used in ethical discourse, and to determine the status of moral principles and rules, as regards the obligation which they impose upon us.

. . .

But the interaction between the alteration of social circumstances and the content of consciousness is not one-sided, for circumstances can be changed by revolution and revolutions are brought about by men, by men who think as men of action and act as men of thought. It is true that revolutionaries are produced by historical circumstances—at the same time, they are not chaff before the wind of change, but have a solid ideological basis. . . .

Not only is it significant that Thales should have chosen water as the fundamental substance, but the fact that he maintained at all that everything was derived from one and the same substance was of great importance. For, by maintaining this, he was implying the fundamental identity of man as well, man according to him being not half natural, half supernatural, but wholly natural. That is to say, on the social plane, his metaphysical principle amounted to an assertion of the fundamentalist equality and brotherhood of men. Nevertheless his philosophy only supported a revolution which was in a sense bourgeois. The assertion of the fundamental equality and brotherhood of man does not automatically issue in socialism, for it does not amount to the assertion of social equality. Indeed, Thales’ specification of a form of matter as basic naturally places a premium on water, and in the social plane, remains
compatible with a class structure. His philosophy therefore only supported a sort of *bourgeois* democratic revolution, and not a socialist one.

On the only recorded opportunity which Thales had of translating his metaphysics into politics, he firmly urged unity on the balkanized Ionian states. This was hardly surprising as he had asserted the unity of nature. The Ionians paid scant heed to him and they were duly undone.

The point which I am anxious to make is not merely that the earliest philosophies carried implications of a political and social nature, and so were warmly connected with the actualities of life; I am suggesting that these philosophies were reflections of social currents, that they arose from social exigencies. Thus, Thales’ philosophy needed, if it was to destroy the allegedly heaven-sanctioned aristocratic society, to assert the irrelevance of a pantheon, and this he did in his attempt to bring all explanation of nature within the ambit of nature itself. A revolutionary, as opposed to a reformist, attenuation of clerical influence called not for an amelioration here and there of social inequalities, the smoothing of this sharp corner and the trimming of that eminence, but for a total rejection of the idea of social inequality. That, in metaphysics, which implies this rejection of social inequality is precisely that which is common to all monists, those who assert the unity of nature and of different kinds of things as only different manifestations of the same thing . . . .

According to Aristotle, the state is not a mere aggregate of men, but a union of individuals bent on a common goal through cooperative action. It has for its purpose the pursuit of the highest good. Men, he however said, are not the same, and do not perform the same functions in the pursuit of this common goal. At the same time, no man can by his single exertions bring about the highest good. The state is therefore founded upon an interdependence of men pursuing the same ultimate goal.

Aristotle was prevented from fully appreciating egalitarianism by his superstitious reverence for facts. The interdependence of the members of society implies the illegitimacy of the pursuit of sectional interests above the common good, or the achievement of the latter as a mere by-product of the pursuit of the former. He has however been often misunderstood when he stresses that there are differences among men. Egalitarianism cannot mean the absence of difference. It does not require this. It recognizes and accepts differences among men, but allows them to make a difference only at the functional level. Beyond that the differences are not allowed to make a difference, certainly not at the level of the intrinsic worth of the individual.
I also suggest that in the social field Aristotle tried to arrest the dialectic of society, for in his treatment of the democratic society as the perfect form of society he was attempting to lay down a terminal to social evolution, and so to thwart dialectic.

And yet his own position represents a stage in the unfolding of social dialectic. The egalitarianism which early Greek philosophy introduced could be formulated in terms of individualism. And Aristotle’s democratic ideal with its insistence on an equal individualism was after all a particular way of spelling out that egalitarianism which the earlier Greek philosophers pitted against the sacerdotal-aristocratic oligarchy. To the extent that individualism accepts as axiomatic the initial equal value of the individual, egalitarianism can be formulated in terms of it. But, evidently, individualism alone cannot determine the form of social organization. For individualism may lead to capitalism or it may lead to socialism.

If one takes for the sake of an example the economic doctrines of John Stuart Mill, one must confess that he based them on a passionate individualism. Indeed, so passionate was his defense of individualism that he required governments to exercise the minimum of regulation on citizens. He advocated free economic activity. But true as it is that in Mill’s doctrine every citizen had the right to free economic activity, in the context of an already technical society this meant little. In the technical society, this would inevitably breed an economic disproportion, and it would head society straight towards capitalism.

If however, one considers individualism not as giving to men an equal right to dominate and exploit one another, but as imposing upon us all the duty to support one another and make the happiness of others a condition for the happiness of oneself, then individualism so conceived and practiced heads society towards socialism.

It is precisely because individualism does not determine the form of social organization that both the capitalistic and the socialistic traditions in Europe can trace their origins to the earliest Greek philosophers . . . .

The humanism to which the Renaissance gave rise served as the link between the emancipation of thought from religious shackles and the strengthening of capitalism. For it raised from the economic sphere the unfeeling competition and pursuit of supremacy which characterize capitalism, and transposed them to a philosophical conception in which each man,
armed with his natural and inalienable rights, is pitted against every other man. This transposition became a tour de force in the political philosophy of John Locke. It is this political philosophy which largely inspired the American Constitution.

SOCIETY AND IDEOLOGY

Social milieu affects the content of philosophy, and the content of philosophy seeks to affect social milieu, either by confirming it or by opposing it. In either case, philosophy implies something of the nature of an ideology.

On the motto page of my book *Towards Colonial Freedom* I make the following quotation from Mazzini:

> Every true revolution is a programme; and derived from a new, general positive and organic principle. The first thing necessary is to accept that principle. Its development must then be confined to men who are believers in it, and emancipated from every tie or connection with any principle of the opposite nature.

Here Mazzini asserts the connection between a revolution and an ideology. When the revolution has been successful, the ideology comes to characterize the society. It is the ideology which gives a countenance to the ensuing social milieu. Mazzini further states the principle to be general, positive and organic. The statement, elucidation and theoretical defense of such a principle will collectively form a philosophy. Hence philosophy admits of being an instrument of ideology.

Indeed it can be said that in every society there is to be found an ideology. In every society, there is at least one militant segment which is the dominant segment of that society. In communalistic societies, this segment coincides with the whole. This dominant segment has its fundamental principles, its beliefs about the nature of man, and the type of society which must be created for mail. Its fundamental principles help in designing and controlling the type of organization which the dominant segment uses. And the same principles give rise to a network of purposes, which fix what compromises are possible or not possible. . . . [T]he dominant ideology is that which in the light of circumstances decides what forms institutions shall take, and in what channels the common effort is to be directed.

Just as there can be competing ideologies in the same society, so there can be opposing ideologies between different societies. However, while societies with different social systems can coexist, their ideologies cannot. There is such a thing as peaceful coexistence between states with different
social systems; but as long as oppressive classes exist, there can be no such thing as peaceful coexistence between opposing ideologies.

A morality is a network of principles and rules for the guidance and appraisal of conduct. Just as a morality guides and seeks to connect the actions of millions of persons, so an ideology aims at uniting the actions of millions towards specific and definite goals, notwithstanding that an ideology can be largely implicit. I have said an ideology seeks to bring a specific order into the total life of its society. To achieve this, it needs to employ a number of instruments. The ideology of a society displays itself in political theory, social theory and moral theory, and uses these as instruments.

[T]he notion of a society implies organized obligation. Every society stresses its permissible ranges of conduct, and evolves instruments whereby it seeks to obtain conformity to such a range. It evolves these instruments because the unity out of diversity which a society represents is hardly automatic, calling as it does for means whereby unity might be secured, and, when secured, maintained. Though, in a formal sense, these means are means of “coercion,” in intent they are means of cohesion. They become means of cohesion by underlining common values, which themselves generate common interests, and hence common attitudes and common reactions. It is this community, this identity in the range of principles and values, in the range of interest, attitudes, and so of reactions, which lies at the bottom of social order. “Coercion” could unfortunately be rather painful, but it is signally effective in ensuring that individual behavior does not become dangerously irresponsible. The individual is not an anarchic unit. He lives in orderly surroundings, and the achieving of these orderly surroundings calls for methods both explicit and subtle.

Philosophy, too, is one of the subtle instruments of ideology and social cohesion. Philosophy performs this function in two ways. It performs it as a general theoretical statement to which a specific social-political theory is parallel. Philosophy also performs this ideological function when it takes shape as political philosophy or as ethics. Through political philosophy, it lays down certain ideals for our pursuit and fortification, and it becomes an instrument of unity by laying down the same ideals for all the members of a given society.

As ethics, philosophy proposes to throw light upon the nature of moral principles and moral judgments; it also seeks to expose the source of the validity of ethical principles, and so of moral obligation. In ethics, we have an instrument of great fascination which runs parallel to statutory instru-
ments without itself being statutory. Moral laws were never passed; there are no policemen or courts to ensure adherence to them . . .

The need for subtle means of social cohesion lies in the fact that there is a large portion of life which is outside direct central intervention. In order that this portion of life should be filled with order, non-statutory methods are required. These non-statutory methods, by and large, are the subtle means of social cohesion. But different societies lay different emphases on these subtle means even if the range of conformity which they seek is the same. The emphasis which a particular society lays on a given means depends on the experience, social-economic circumstances and the philosophical foundation of that society . . .

African society has one segment which comprises our traditional way of life; it has a second segment which is filled by the presence of the Islamic tradition in Africa; it has a final segment which represents the infiltration of the Christian tradition and culture of Western Europe into Africa, using colonialism and neocolonialism as its primary vehicles. These different segments are animated by competing ideologies. But since society implies a certain dynamic unity, there needs to emerge an ideology which, genuinely catering for the needs of all, will take the place of the competing ideologies, and so reflect the dynamic unity of society, and be the guide to society’s continual progress.

The traditional face of Africa includes an attitude towards man which can only be described, in its social manifestation, as being socialist. This arises from the fact that man is regarded in Africa as primarily a spiritual being, a being endowed originally with a certain inward dignity, integrity and value. It stands refreshingly opposed to the Christian idea of the original sin and degradation of man . . .

Our society is not the old society, but a new society enlarged by Islamic and Euro-Christian influences. A new emergent ideology is therefore required, an ideology which can solidify in a philosophical statement, but at the same time an ideology which will not abandon the original humanist principles of Africa.

Such a philosophical statement will be born out of the crisis of the African conscience confronted with the three strands of present African society. Such a philosophical statement I propose to name philosophical conscientism, for it will give the theoretical basis for an ideology whose aim shall be to contain the African experience of Islamic and Euro-Christian presence as well as the experience of the traditional African society, and, by
gestation, employ them for the harmonious growth and development of that society.

Every society is placed in nature. And it seeks to influence nature, to impose such transformations upon nature, as will develop the environment of the society for its better fulfillment. The changed environment, in bringing about a better fulfillment of the society, thereby alters the society. Society placed in nature is therefore caught in the correlation of transformation with development. This correlation represents the toil of man both as a social being and as an individual. This kind of correlation has achieved expression in various social-political theories. For a social-political theory has a section which determines the way in which social forces are to be deployed in order to increase the transformation of society . . . .

In capitalism, which is only a social-political theory in which the important aspects of slavery and feudalism are refined, a stratified society is required for its proper functioning, a society is required in which the working class is oppressed by the ruling class; for, under capitalism, that portion of society whose labours transform nature and produce goods is not the portion of society which enjoys the fruits of this transformation and productivity. Nor is it the whole of society which is so enhanced.

This might indeed be termed a contradiction. It is a social contradiction in so far as it is contrary to genuine principles of social equity and social justice. It is also an economic contradiction in so far as it is contrary to a harmonious and unlimited economic development . . . .

Whereas capitalism is a development by refinement from slavery and feudalism, socialism does not contain the fundamental ingredient of capitalism, the principle of exploitation. Socialism stands for the negation of that very principle wherein capitalism has its being, lives, and thrives, that principle which links capitalism with slavery and feudalism.

If one seeks the social-political ancestor of socialism, one must go to communalism. Socialism has characteristics in common with communalism, just as capitalism is linked with feudalism and slavery. In socialism, the principles underlying communalism are given expression in modern circumstances. Thus, whereas communalism in an untechnical society can be laissez faire, in a technical society where sophisticated means of production are at hand, if the underlying principles of communalism are not given centralized and correlated expression, class cleavages arise, which are the result of economic disparities, and accompanying political inequalities. Socialism, therefore, can be and is the defense of the principles of communalism in a
modern setting. Socialism is a form of social organization which, guided by
the principles underlying communism, adopts procedures and measures
made necessary by demographic and technological developments.

These considerations throw great light on the bearing of revolution and
reform on socialism. The passage from the ancestral line of slavery via feu-
dalism and capitalism to socialism can only lie through revolution: it cannot
lie through reform. For in reform, fundamental principles are held constant
and the details of their expression modified. In the words of Marx, it leaves
the pillars of the building intact. Indeed, sometimes, reform itself may be ini-
tiated by the necessities of preserving identical fundamental principles.
Reform is a tactic of self-preservation.

Revolution is thus an indispensable avenue to socialism, where the
antecedent social-political structure is animated by principles which are a
negation of those of socialism, as in a capitalist structure (and therefore also
in a colonialist structure, for a colonialist structure is essentially ancillary to
capitalism) . . . .

But because the spirit of communalism still exists to some extent in
societies with a communist past, socialism and communism are not in the
strict sense of the word “revolutionary” creeds. They may be described as
restatements in contemporary idiom of the principles underlying commu-
nalism. On the other hand, in societies with no history of communalism, the
creeds of socialism and communism are fully revolutionary, and the passage
to socialism must be guided by the principles of scientific socialism . . . .

The nature and cause of the conflict between the ruling class and the
exploited class is influenced by the development of productive forces . . . .
The basis of a socialist revolution is created when the class struggle within a
given society has resulted in mass consent and mass desire for positive
action to change or transform that society . . . .

The two real social-political alternatives facing society are either that
one section should produce, and another section fatten thereon, or that all
sections should produce and all sections should be fulfilled by the value cre-
ated by labour.

In the same way, there are two real philosophical alternatives. These
alternatives coincide with idealism and materialism. . . . [I]dealism [is] con-
nected with a tiered society, how through its mode of explaining nature and
social phenomena by reference to spirit, idealism favoured a class structure
of a horizontal sort, in which one class sat upon the neck of another.
Materialism, on the other hand, is connected with a humanist organization, how through its being monistic, and its referring all natural process to matter and its laws, it inspires an egalitarian organization of society. The unity and fundamental identity of nature suggests the unity and fundamental identity of man in society. Idealism favours an oligarchy, materialism favours an egalitarianism.

The question is not whether there has been discernible progress under capitalism, but rather whether what progress is admitted can be said to be adequate. Here we discern one of capitalism’s deadly sins. Under this social-political system, man’s materialist approach to nature loses its bearings. It sheds its humanist stimulus under the impulse of the profit motive.

The evil of capitalism consists in its alienation of the fruit of labour from those who with the toil of their body and the sweat of their brow produce this fruit. This aspect of capitalism makes it irreconcilable with those basic principles which animate the traditional African society. Capitalism is unjust; in our newly independent countries it is not only too complicated to be workable, it is also alien.

Under socialism, however, the study and mastery of nature has a humanist impulse, and is directed not towards a profiteering accomplishment, but the affording of ever-increasing satisfaction for the material and spiritual needs of the greatest number. Ideas of transformation and development, in so far as they relate to the purposes of society as a whole and not to an oligarch purpose, are properly speaking appropriate to socialism.

In sum, the restitution of Africa’s humanist and egalitarian principles of society requires socialism. It is materialism that ensures the only effective transformation of nature, and socialism that derives the highest development from this transformation.

Consciencism

Practice without thought is blind; thought without practice is empty. The three segments of African society—the traditional, the Western, and the Islamic, co-exist uneasily; the principles animating them are often in conflict with one another. What is called for as a first step is a body of connected thought which will determine the general nature of our action in unifying the society which we have inherited, this unification to take account, at all times of the elevated ideals underlying the traditional African society. This requires two aims: first, the restitution of the egalitarianism of human soci-
ety, and second the logistic mobilization of all our resources towards the attainment of that restitution.

The philosophy that must stand behind this social revolution is that which I have once referred to as philosophical consciencism; consciencism is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality. The African personality is itself defined by the cluster of humanist principles which underlie (the traditional African society. Philosophical consciencism is that philosophical standpoint which, taking its start from the present content of the African conscience, indicates the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience.

Its basis is in materialism. The minimum assertion of materialism is the absolute and independent existence of matter. Matter, however, is also a plenum of forces which are in antithesis to one another. The philosophical point of saying this is that matter is thus endowed with powers of self-motion... Both the phenomenon of radiation and the wave mechanics of quantum theory indubitably presuppose that body has original powers of self-motion even in that sense which requires something other than change of property. If matter perpetrates a spontaneous emission, then to the extent that there is an emission of particles there is motion; to the extent that this emission is spontaneous, there is self-motion... The initial assertions of what I put forward as philosophical consciencism are therefore twofold. First, there is the assertion of the absolute and independent existence of matter; second, there is the assertion of the capacity of matter for spontaneous self-motion. To the extent of these two initial assertions, philosophical consciencism is deeply materialist...

Philosophical consciencism claims the reality of categorial conversion... It is this reality of categorial conversion which prompts philosophical consciencism to assert not the sole reality of matter, but its primary reality. If higher categories are only surrogates of quantitative processes of matter, they are still not empty apparitions, but are quite real...

If philosophical consciencism initially affirms the absolute and independent existence of matter, and holds matter to be endowed with its pristine objective laws, then philosophical consciencism builds itself by becoming a reflection of the objectivity, in conceptual terms, of the unfolding of matter. When a philosophy so restricts itself to the reflection of the objective unfolding of matter, it also establishes a direct connection between knowledge and
But if philosophical consciencism connects knowledge with action, it is still necessary to inquire whether it conceives this connection as a purely mechanistic one, or whether it makes it susceptible of ethical influence and comment.

It is evident at least that philosophical consciencism cannot issue in a closed set of ethical rules, a set of rules which must apply in any society and at any time. Philosophical consciencism is incapable of this because it is itself based upon a view of matter, as caught in the grip of an inexorable dialectical evolution.

To the extent that materialism issues in egalitarianism on the social plane, it issues in ethics. Egalitarianism is not only political but also ethical; for it implies a certain range of human conduct which is alone acceptable to it. At the same time, because it conceives matter as a plenum of tensions giving rise to dialectical change, it cannot freeze its ethical rules with changelessness. It would be wrong, however, to seek to infer from this that the ethical principles which philosophical consciencism sanctions are at any one time gratuitous and devoid of objective grounding; for even when rules change, they can still be informed, still be governed by the same basic principles in the light of changing social conditions.

It is necessary to understand correctly the relationship between rules and principles. This relationship is similar to that between ideals and institutions and also to that between statutes and by-laws. Statutes, of course, state general principles, they do not make explicit those procedures by means of which they may be carried out and fulfilled. By-laws are an application of such principles. It is obvious that when the conditions in which by-laws operate alter seriously, it could be necessary to amend the by-laws in order that the same statute should continue to be fulfilled.

It is in the same way that principles are related to rules even when they are ethical. The idea that ethical rules can change, and indeed need to change, is one which a little reflection can confirm.

Evidently, even when two societies share the same ethical principles, they may differ in the rules which make the principles effective. Asses were of such overwhelming importance in Israel that God found it necessary to regulate human relations by an ethical rule mentioning them specifically. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s ass. If God deigned to give us a similar rule today, he would no doubt forbid us to covet our neighbor’s motor-car, hardly his ass. Here God would be giving a new ethical rule designed at giv-
ing effect to an unchanging ethical principle, but taking full account of modern times.

According to philosophical consciencism, ethical rules are not permanent but depend on the stage reached in the historical evolution of a society. The cardinal ethical principle of philosophical consciencism is to treat each man as an end in himself and not merely as a means. This is fundamental to all socialist or humanist conceptions of man. It is true that Immanuel Kant also identified this as a cardinal principle of ethics, but whereas he regarded it as an immediate command of reason, we derive it from a materialist viewpoint.

This derivation can be made by way of that egalitarianism which, we have seen, is the social reflection of materialism. Egalitarianism is based on the monistic thesis of materialism. Matter is one even in its different manifestations. It is the basic unity of matter, despite its varying manifestations, which gives rise to egalitarianism. Basically, man is one, for all men have the same basis and arise from the same evolution according to materialism. This is the objective ground of egalitarianism.

If ethical principles are founded on egalitarianism, they must be objective. If ethical principles arise from an egalitarian idea of the nature of man, they must be generalizable, for according to such an idea man is basically one in the sense defined. It is to this nondifferential generalization that expression is given in the command to treat each man as an end in himself, and not merely as a means. That is, philosophical consciencism, though it has the same cardinal principle of ethics as Kant, differs from Kant in founding ethics on a philosophical idea of the nature of man.

The traditional African standpoint, of course, accepts the absolute and independent idea of matter. If one takes the philosophy of the African, one finds that in it the absolute and independent existence of matter is accepted. Further, matter is not just dead weight, but alive with forces in tension. Indeed, for the African, everything that exists, exists as a complex of forces in tension. In holding force in tension to be essential to whatever exists, he is, like Thales and like philosophical consciencists, endowing matter with an original power of self-motion.

When a plurality of men exist in society, and it is accepted that each man needs to be treated as an end in himself, not merely as a means, there transpires a transition from ethics to politics. Politics become actual, for institutions need to be created to regulate the behavior and actions of the plurality of men in society in such a way as to conserve the fundamental ethical
principle of the initial worthiness of cacti individual. Philosophical conscientism consequently adumbrates a political theory and a social-political practice which together seek to ensure that the cardinal principles of ethics are effective.

The social-political practice is directed at preventing the emergence or the solidifying of classes . . . . By reason of its egalitarian tenet, philosophical conscientism seeks to promote individual development, but in such a way that the conditions for the development of all become the conditions for the development of each; that is, in such a way that the individual development does not introduce such diversities as to destroy the egalitarian basis. The social-political practice also seeks to co-ordinate social forces in such a way as to mobilize them logistically for the maximum development of society along true egalitarian lines. For this, planned development is essential . . . .

Positive action will represent the sum of those forces seeking social justice in terms of the destruction of oligarchic exploitation and oppression. Negative action will correspondingly represent the sum of those forces tending to prolong colonial subjugation and exploitation. Positive action is revolutionary and negative action is reactionary . . . .

In order that true independence should be won, it is necessary that positive action should come to overwhelm negative action. Admittedly, a semblance of true independence is possible without this specific relation. When this happens, we say that neo-colonialism has set in, for neo-colonialism is a guise adopted by negative action in order to give the impression that it has been overcome by positive action. Neo-colonialism is negative action playing possum.

In order to forestall this, it is necessary for positive action to be backed by a mass party, and qualitatively to improve this mass so that by education and an increase in its degree of consciousness, its aptitude for positive action becomes heightened. We can therefore say that in a colonial territory, positive action must be backed by a mass party, complete with its instruments of education. This was why the Convention People’s Party of Ghana [the party founded by Nkrumah] developed from an early stage its education wing, workers’ wing, farmers’ wing, youth wing, women’s wing, etc. In this way, the people received constant political education, their self-awareness was increased and such a self-image was formed as ruthlessly excluded colonialism in all its guises . . . .

A people’s parliamentary democracy with a one-party system is better able to express and satisfy the common aspirations of a nation as a whole,
than a multiple-party parliamentary system, which is in fact only a ruse for perpetuating, and covers up, the inherent struggle between the “haves” and the “have-nots” . . . .

[N]atural evolution is always wasteful. It takes place at the cost of massive loss of life and at the cost of extreme anguish. Evolution speeded by scientific knowledge is prompter, and represents an economy of material. In the same way, the catalysis which political action introduces into social evolution represents all economy of time, life and talent . . . .

Positive action must, furthermore, seek an alignment of all the forces of progress and, by marshaling them, confront the negative forces. It must at the same time anticipate and contain its own inner contradictions, for, though positive action unites those forces of a situation which are, in regard to a specific purpose, progressive, many of these forces will contain tendencies which are in other respects reactionary.

Hence, when positive action resorts to an alignment of forces, it creates in itself seams at which this alignment might fall apart. It is essential that positive action should in its dialectical evolution anticipate this seminal disintegration and discover a way of containing the future schismatic tendencies, a way of nipping fragmentation in the bud as colonialism begins to reel and totter under the frontal onslaught of positive action.

But, even with colonialism worsted, positive action cannot relent, for it is at about this time that the schismatic tendencies referred to ripen. Besides, political independence, though worth while in itself, is still only a means to the fuller redemption and realization of a people. When independence has been gained, positive action requires a new orientation away from the sheer destruction of colonialism and towards national reconstruction.

It is indeed in this address to national reconstruction that positive action faces its gravest dangers. The cajollement, the wheedlings, the seductions and the Trojan horses of neo-colonialism must be stoutly resisted, for neo-colonialism is a latterday harpy, a monster which entices its victims with sweet music.

In order to be able to carry out this resistance to neo-colonialism at every point, positive action requires to be armed with an ideology, an ideology which, vitalizing it and operating through a mass party shall equip it with a regenerative concept of the world and life, forge for it a strong continuing link with our past and offer to it an assured bond with our future . . . .

In order dim this ideology should be comprehensive, in order that it should light up every aspect of the life of our people, in order that it should
affect the total interest of our society, establishing a continuity with our past, it must be socialist in form and in content and be embraced by a mass party.

And yet, socialism in Africa today tends to lose its objective content in favour of a distracting terminology and in favour of a general confusion. Discussion centres more on the various conceivable types of socialism than upon the need for socialist development. More is surely required than a mere reaction against a policy of domination . . . .

The socialism of a liberated territory is subject to a number of principles if independence is not to be alienated from the people. When socialism is true to its purpose, it seeks a connection with the egalitarian and humanist past of the people before their social evolution was ravaged by colonialism; it seeks from the results of colonialism those elements (like new methods of industrial production and economic organization) which call be adapted to serve the interest of the people; it seeks to contain and prevent the spread of those anomalies and domineering interests created by the capitalist habit of colonialism; it reclaims the psychology of the people, erasing the “colonial mentality” from it; and it resolutely defends the independence and security of the people. In short, socialism recognizes dialectic, the possibility of creation from forces which are opposed to one another; it recognizes the creativity of struggle, and indeed, the necessity of the operation of forces to any change. It also embraces materialism and translates this into social terms of equality.