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Requisite Values for the Political and Economic Development of Africa

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Abstract

The points of departure in this essay are: (a) Gunner Adler-Karlsson's statement of 1967 that much of today's ideological debate in terms of socialism versus capitalism is not only outdated but outright dangerous, and (b) Richard Sklar's view that restrictive political conceptions based on "the great competition" between capitalism and socialism represent a major barrier to a developmental breakthrough, particularly in Africa.

The present study creates a conceptual synthesis out of capitalism and socialism, designated as "Dignitalism", that points up the spiritual values stressing the humanization and dignification of a citizenry that make for development everywhere. From the development experiences of a social democratic system (Sweden), a "corporate-socialist" entity (Japan), and an 18th century African mercantilist empire (Asante), the essay distills the value denominators of Dignitalism and establishes the the more a system exhibits Dignitalism at the expense of its conceptual negation, "Profligasm", the more assured its rate and intensity of development.

The essay is divided into four sections. The first sets forth the main idea of Dignitalism as a synthesizing alternative to both capitalism and socialism. The second derives the elements of dignitalism from observation of Sweden, Japan, and the Asante empire. The third section presents a case study of the loss of dignitalism in modern Ghana, the successor state of the Asante Empire. The fourth section provides conceptual conclusions.

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Gunner Adler-Karlsson wrote in 1967: "It is my conviction that much of the present ideological debate in terms of socialism versus capitalism is not only outdated but even outright dangerous. . ."¹ What is of prime importance in any developmental design, he continued, "is the distribution in society of the economic and political functions which are hidden beneath formal ownership."² In a more recent work, Richard Sklar noted that, narrowly construed, "the great competition" between capitalism and socialism becomes a "major barrier" to a break-through, both in theory and practice, toward African development.³ The unprecedented magnitude and severity of social problems in Africa, he continued, require that development theorists "question the validity of restrictive political conceptions."⁴ What is needed, he added, are "synthesizing ideas that could supersede the great capitalist-socialist competition" -- a unified theory that could "release developmental energies that are scarcely imagined by those who practice the art of economic development today."⁵

This essay attempts to provide the conceptual synthesis needed for political-economic development in Africa. Because a much richer picture of developmental processes emerges from an integrated understanding of political and economic variables, the study enlists the framework of political economy. The analytical accent, then, is on the intersection of the political basis of economic actions and of the economic basis of political actions.

We designate the transcendent conception "Dignitalism." From its standpoint, whether or not a system is ordered along a "mercantilist" or "capitalist" or "socialist" line is not as important as whether or not it is preponderantly oriented toward values which are conducive to increased productivity, the raising of living standards, and the dignity of all members of society, and, to borrow Brett's characterization, "the emergence of indigenous institutions whose relations with the outside world...are characterized by equality rather than by dependence or subordination."⁶

To underscore the need to go beyond the circumscribed conceptions of capitalism and socialism, we need only remind ourselves of the limitations of each. It is not for nothing that capitalism is unalterably identified with social injustice.⁷ In the USA, the wealthiest nation on the earth and the leading capitalist country, as many as 37 million people had no private or public health insurance in 1986.⁸ In what Tom Wicker called "the persistence of so much poverty amid so much wealth. . .," 32.4 million Americans lived below the poverty line in 1986,⁹ convulsed by a "silent epidemic of hunger."¹⁰ Homelessness has reached outrageous and scandalous proportions, touching some 3 million people in 1988,¹¹ many of whom froze to death in the winter.¹² There are more than 23 million functionally illiterate people in the country,¹³ and the poor tend to pay more taxes than the rich. Thus the poorest one-tenth of the population paid 20 percent more of their earnings in federal taxes in 1987 than they did in 1977, while the richest paid 20 percent less in 1987 than they did in 1977.¹⁴

Capitalism's endemic problem of social injustice looms even larger in the economically less developed countries with capitalist economies. According to the World Bank, in 1980 an estimated 780 million people in these countries--between 35 and 40 percent of their total population--lived in "absolute poverty," a condition of life "so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy and disease as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency."¹⁵

But while a socialist system is better equipped to cater to development's ingredient of "equalization, in the distribution of the social product,"¹⁶ socialism scores poorly with respect to another key ingredient of development --high productivity. In Sklar's words, "Socialism sputters and stalls in practice for want of a realistic theory of incentive. . ."¹⁷ As he elaborates,

Before Marx, Robert Owen grappled with the problem in a socialist community by means of education and manipulation of psychic rewards by paternalistic managers. In this century, revolutionary socialists from Trotsky and Stalin to Mao Tse-tung, Castro and Sekou Touré have tried to compensate for the weakness of socialist incentives for both workers and managers by resorting to combinations of moral suasion and coercion--poor substitutes for personal motivation.¹⁸

The lack of adequate instrumental incentives help to explain the tendency, more often than not, for public or collectivist enterprises in socialist countries to operate unproductively. Thus, for instance, China's 13,000 industrial enterprises operated at a loss of \$2.8 billion in 1981 "because of waste, poor planning and incompetent management," according to a report of China's Ministry of Finance to the National People's Congress in December, 1981.¹⁹ Obviously low productivity translates into a shortage of capital--"the driving force of economic development."²⁰

The push for reforms in the U.S.S.R. and elsewhere in Eastern Europe in the Gorbachev era is as much a response to the need to rectify this deficiency of socialism as it is an opportunistic reaction to the changes in the international environment occasioned by the virtual ending of the Cold War which, on the part of the Communist countries, particularly the U.S.S.R., had been deemed to necessitate policies of closure, overcentralization and pronounced defensive militarization.²¹ What, emphatically, the East European reforms do not portend is the irrelevance of all socialist principles. As Hernando de Soto incisively observed in the heat of these reforms,

In the United States there has been much talk about increasing credits, investment and aid to Eastern Europe at the expense of money destined for Latin America. The aim is to help emerging capitalism. . . where socialism has failed. But from a cynical Latin perspective, this South-to-East shift constitutes a transfer of resources from where capitalism has failed to where socialism has failed.

Most Latin countries have had private property and. . . (liberal) institutions for nearly 170 years. This in addition to the tens of billions of dollars in foreign aid and hundreds of billions of dollars in loans have not raised the per capita gross domestic product over \$2,000 a year. Meanwhile. . . socialism, which is proclaimed to have failed, offered Eastern Europeans \$5,000 a year.²²

The point we seek to make here is that an effective mode of production--an efficient economic organization "in its widest sense"--is nowhere and never "articulated in a single and pure form" of socialism or capitalism.²³ As Heilbroner notes, in every capitalist economy "the normal operation of the market system would be unsustainable without the socializing, protecting and stimulating state activities that further the regime of capital."²⁴ Thus the capitalist success stories of such rapidly industrializing countries as Brazil, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan were all made possible by state intervention "by way of subsidies, protection, guaranteed markets, and other forms of 'price distortion' in order to create an abundance of profitable investment opportunities."²⁵

For its part, in socialist economies, the need to inject "a market environment" to stimulate individual and group initiative is now axiomatic.²⁶ Thus the Swedish system of "socialized market economy" has sought to influence market conditions but without abolishing the market. Socialized industry in Sweden is customarily not organized as a monopoly; instead, competition among firms and free entry into markets prevail. As well, the socialized economy is not insulated against foreign competition but organized on the

basis of free trade.²⁷ In the realm of agricultural collectivization, in the People's Republic of China as elsewhere, a private sector composed mainly of private plots has become a "necessary adjunct to the socialist economy."²⁸ In a similar vein, as Alan Riding noted, in connection with the re-election of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party in November 1989 for a third straight term, "by breaking with the dogma of bank nationalizations and (excessive) state intervention, democratic socialism demonstrated that it could adjust to the needs of modern market economies while maintaining a commitment to social equality."²⁹

Sklar well sums up the equation of developmental merits and deficiencies of capitalism and socialism by positing that socialism "needs capital and lacks a theory of incentive," while capitalism "needs the state and lacks a theory of public and collective responsibility."³⁰ Dignitalism cancels out the lacks on both sides by positing a developmental union of the positive elements in the opposites of socialism and capitalism. Its key economic elements are: a pragmatic approach to the questions of private ownership and governmental interference; socially responsible uses of the ownership of the means of production, public or private; an intense commitment to high productivity and rapid growth; frugality; and equitable distribution of the national product among all the citizenry. On the political side, Dignitalism insists, above all, on an institutional framework that allows, to all citizens equally, a free and unfettered debate of national issues geared to attaining consensus on values, goals, and instrumentalities. On the normative dimension Dignitalism emphasizes social corporatism--the ethic of collective well being, of group interdependence--at the expense of individualism, of independent individuality.

Dignitalism's underlying values are essentially spiritual because they are concerned, above all, with the humanization and dignification of society's members. Needless to say, humanized and dignified individuals tend to contribute more substantially to the development effort than those who are not. As Tilton has noted, to invest in health care and education enhance "not only people's enjoyment of life but also their productivity," even as a strong system of social security and an egalitarian distribution of income and influence "encourage people to undertake and to accept rapid social change."³¹ The opposite of this model is what we might call "Profligasm," a political-economic system within which vital productive and dignificatory functions are crippled by any number of negative practices and tendencies, numbered among which is social injustice and a frantic, contra-developmental, infantile pursuit of crass materialism on the part of the national elite.

We maintain that there are values common to political systems, regardless of their economic ethos, that make for development and that these values are spiritual. There are Mercantilist, Capitalist and Socialist polities embedded in Dignitalism, even as there are Mercantilist, Capitalist and Socialist systems plagued by Profligasm. Overall, the more a system exhibits Dignitalism and shuns Profligasm, the higher its developmental potentialities and actualities.

We now proceed to derive the common denominators of Dignitalism from observations on Sweden and Japan of the modern era, and the Asante Empire of the 18th century. We will follow this with a case study of the loss of Dignitalism in modern Ghana, the successor state of the Asante Empire. Thereafter, in a final section, we will attempt some conceptual conclusions.

The Significance of Swedish Institutions to Dignitalism

Our focus here is on the *Samhallet*-- the unique collective society created by Sweden's own brand of socialism. The Social Democratic Party which undertook the creation of the system in 1932 from the first reasoned that, because of the tendency toward excessive bureaucratization inside state enterprises, it was doubtful that the state was suited to administer economic firms --that "unless socialization led to an increase in output it lacked

immediate relevance."³² From this, the party decided to "concentrate on welfare-statist social policy, industrial democracy, and solidaristic wage bargaining rather than the traditionalist socialist nostrum of public ownership."³³

Thus it would develop .that in thirty-five years 90 percent of the means of production would be owned by private industry and individuals; 4 percent would belong to the movement of consumers' and producers' cooperatives--movements which "in essence, are private organizations too, operating very much on the lines of private industry"; and only 6 percent, consisting mainly of the public utilities--the railway system, the postal services, the network of telephone and telegram services, and part of the production of electricity--would be formally socialized.³⁴

But while the party eschewed nationalization or state assumption of ownership, it nevertheless emphasized "the sovereignty of society's interest over private interest. . ."³⁵ The party recognized that profit and social utility were not the same; it argued that private enterprise "must accustom itself to the idea that the resources over which it disposes are in reality 'public means '"; and consequently it moved to formulate "appropriate guidelines for firms in order to achieve the best social results. . ."³⁶ One of these relates to the "near confiscatory nature of Sweden's tax structure," through which the system has fostered "social" rather than "anti-social" uses of ownership. The taxes amount to some of the world's highest, with even small businessmen paying around 85 percent of their profits into state coffers.³⁷ As Adler Karlsson elaborates:

The taxation system has. . . been used as a means of indirect socialization. One of the most important functions of an owner of capital is to receive and to dispose of the profits of this capital. This function has been severely circumscribed not only by the wage negotiating process (in which the workers' organization is strongly represented) but also by the Swedish taxation system. The personal income tax has been highly progressive, thus contributing to the creation of a better equality in income after taxes. The taxes on income and profits have, moreover, been so devised that it has been profitable for the private owners to reinvest them in the business. In this way, the taxation system has stimulated the owners of industry to expand, and thus to provide more employment and better productivity.³⁸

The commitment to sustained development and social justice, which is unyielding, is linked to frugality. As a Stockholm University Jurist, Gustaf Lindencrona has observed, "As long as you use your money to raise productivity, the government won't do anything against it. But if people want to consume their money, the government will keep them from doing it."³⁹ While therefore it is still possible for a private owner of an industry in Sweden to create a fortune, "an almost necessary condition is that this fortune be created in a way that is highly useful socially, supplying jobs and manufacturing good products."⁴⁰

Overall, among the industrialized countries, Sweden's economic growth has been remarkable, being rated in one study as second only to that of Japan.⁴¹ It exports about a third of its gross national product, and the private sector produces in "highly modern plants, and the number of industrial robots per capita stands far ahead of the nearest competition."⁴² From all this, it comes as no surprise that the country has about "the highest average per capita income in Europe."⁴³

In international comparisons of income distributions, Sweden "ranks as one of the most egalitarian, if not the most egalitarian, both before taxes and transfers and (even more so) after taxes and transfers."⁴⁴ That equality has translated into efficiency is exemplified by the effects of equality between the sexes in the country on development:

"There can be little doubt that opening employment opportunities to women has had a highly beneficial impact on the Swedish economy; indeed, it appears to have been a necessary policy to avoid a serious labor shortage in the absence of massive immigration. Sweden has the world's highest level of female participants in the nondomestic labor force and a relatively equal distribution of incomes between men and women."⁴⁵

Linked to the value of equality in the Swedish model is the value of social security:

"In Sweden people know that there is a safety net and that society will help in several different ways if they are hit by unemployment. There is help for relocation for other jobs, there are retraining programs, and there is unemployment allowance system which is more generous than in many other countries. . . this way, the system attains 'security in change' which makes readjustment and structural change much easier and much more acceptable."⁴⁶

An equally remarkable factor in the Swedish equation is voluntarism--the extent to which private entrepreneurs have accepted the principle of a severe curtailment in their discretion in using their wealth. There is no question that, of their own accord, those who generate wealth in the society have submitted to the ideological postulate that the welfare of the Swedish state and of all its people is more important than the accumulation of wealth for private vain-glorious, unbridled use. There is also no question that all shades of political coloration in the country embrace the values embedded in *Samhället*. Thus, when the Social Democrats, the creators of the collective society, lost elections in September 1976 to the conservative bloc--the Center, Moderate and Liberal Parties--largely over a charge that "the government's ambitious program for construction of nuclear power plants was callously endangering Sweden's environment and population,"⁴⁷ the new Prime Minister, Center Party Chairman Thorbjorn Falldin, hastened to assure Swedes that he had no intention of "repealing any of the social benefits" of the system, adding that, on the contrary, he intended to "try to better them."⁴⁸

In effect, Sweden is a country of consensus solutions. And this has been made possible by its elaborate welfare system, based as it is "on an economy characterized by a distinctly egalitarian wage structure, high internal demand and low unemployment. . .," all of which have contributed importantly to maintaining "social consensus."⁴⁹

Swedes enjoy cradle-to-grave benefits unmatched in any other society outside of Scandinavia and the Communist world. Swedes enjoy free public education through college, four weeks annual vacation and, as we have noted, comprehensive re-training programs if they want to switch careers. Legislation provides for the government's payment of expenses

"for misfortunes and economically heavy, but temporarily necessary, burdens. . . Expenses for sickness are paid by the government. . . Public wards in hospitals are free, as are journeys to hospitals. Dental treatment is free. All schools are free, and school meals are free. . . When you marry you can get a favorable loan from the government. . . If you are unemployed, you are guaranteed a certain income, and when you become old a fair retirement pension. And if you have succeeded in squandering all your mone when you die, you will surely be buried free of charge."⁵⁰

Sweden, in a word, "is a country whose very name has become a synonym for a paradise. . . No slums disfigure their cities, their air and water are largely pollution-free, and they have ever more leisure to indulge a collective passion for being. . . out of nature. Neither ill-health, unemployment, nor old age pose the terror of financial hardship."⁵¹

An overall good characterization of the Swedish approach to development is that it has maintained the goals of socialism, "but chosen the means to realize them in a more sophisticated way than by socializing all the means of production."⁵² Its underlying logic is that it is not necessary to undertake wholesale socialization in society in order to achieve socialist goals--that "it may be sufficient, or even economically better, only to socialize some of the functions of ownership. . ."⁵³

The Significance of Japan to Digitalism

In 1981 capitalist Japan was ranked "the world's toughest competitor,"⁵⁴ the worldwide leader of the "robot revolution" and "high-tech" products generally;⁵⁵ the nation that achieved "the best overall record of any major industrial nation."⁵⁶ Nine years later, in 1990, the Japanese economy was rated "murderously competitive in export markets around the world"--an "unstoppable economic machine" that fuels a binge of capital investments "unmatched by any other industrial nation in the post-war period."⁵⁷ Significantly, scholars of Japan's business and economic triumphs attribute much of its success to a frugal cultural character that is "as old as Japan itself."⁵⁸

Nothing has given more momentum to the Japanese economic juggernaut than the propensity of its citizens, no matter how wealthy or modest their means, to save their money. Their deposits have given the nation's industry the capital it has needed to keep Japanese plants modern and productive.⁵⁹ James Abegglen, of the Boston Consulting Group affirms the point: "The thing that has enabled Japan to get to the top and stay there is savings. Savings of all kinds--government, corporate, personal."⁶⁰

Aside from the ethic of frugality, there is also what Masaru Yoshitomi, the chief economist of Japan's Economic Planning Agency, has aptly labelled as Japan's "corporate socialism."⁶¹ The essence of this phenomenon, as Steve Lohr explains it, "In Japan, companies are not run mainly for the enrichment of the shareholders. Here, companies provide a wide range of social services, including housing or financial help with mortgage payments, recreational facilities--even wedding halls in which employees are married. Furthermore, the wage gap between management and workers is much smaller in Japanese companies than in other nations. This is one reason Japan has the most equitable distribution of income of the industrialized nations."⁶²

Not surprisingly, there is very little opposition between management and workers in capitalist Japan. A long tradition of mutual obligation between employers and employees exists whereby employers exchange total devotion to employees for the employees' total dedication to the company. The cause of harmony has also been helped by egalitarian practices at the work place. As Noburu Yoshii of Sony Corporation explains the point: "We do not call our employees workers or laborers, but associates instead. One reason everyone at Sony wears the same blue-gray jacket is that we are saying Sony is a working company, a blue-collar company all the way from the top to the bottom."⁶³ The net result of the easy working relationship between management and labor is that Japan has "fewer strikes and less labor unrest than any other major industrial power."⁶⁴

The "broad social role" assumed by Japanese corporations also helped keep Japanese unemployment rate at a strikingly low 2.1 percent in the economic environment of the early 1980s in which most of the world's major economies were in recession. In 1990, the unemployment rate remained at the same low of 2.1 percent--a percentage which most economists consider "full employment."⁶⁵ In fact, the point is made authoritatively that, "by the standards of most industrial countries," Japan "has no unemployment."⁶⁶ In this regard, it is revealing that a person looking for a part-time job in Japan in 1989 received, on average, nearly four offers.⁶⁷

It is a characteristic of Japan's "corporate socialism" that, even during recessions--such as the one occasioned in the 1970s by the two "oil shocks" which left the country with several structurally depressed industries, including oil refining, petro-chemicals and aluminum smelting--hundreds of thousands of unneeded workers are kept on company payrolls.⁶⁸ In the words of Akio Morita chairman of Sony: "In Japan, once we hire people, we cannot lay them off."⁶⁹

It needs to be noted that Japan's "corporate socialism" is itself an epiphenomenon emanating from the principle of the corporate conception of Japanese society wherein individuals "are seen to benefit only through the elevation of the group as a whole."⁷⁰ From this view, "a person is an extension of his immediate family members, his company, his community and his nation as a whole. All are bound together in an encompassing common purpose."⁷¹ This is the "social atmosphere" to which all parties respond.⁷²

The point deserves emphasis. The Japanese are socialized to think first of being part of a group. "We" always comes before "I": "One is never fully independent; one must always be conscious of others."⁷³ This is very much the case in the workplace where Japanese employees are hired as a group or "class," once a year, "much like students entering a school," and where, even though their activities may differ, "they work together, eat together, and many will live together in a company dormitory."⁷⁴ The ability "to get along with others is therefore a very important criterion for being hired.

"A group player is obviously appreciated more than a solo star, and team spirit more than individual ambition. Whereas the American may seek to emphasize his independence and originality, the Japanese will do the reverse. As the old Japanese saying goes, the nail that sticks out gets banged down. A personality type that in the United States might seem merely bluff or forceful but still normal is defined in Japan as neurotic state. Cooperativeness, reasonableness, and understanding of others are the virtues most admired, not personal drive, forcefulness, and individual self-assertion."

Group identification and the solidarity it generates lies at the heart of Japanese business prowess and national strength:

When confronted by overwhelming Western economic and military power in the middle of the nineteenth century, no Japanese sought to make common cause with outsiders against their fellow Japanese for their own personal gain. Many of the leaders of other developing countries facing crises and disasters such as the Japanese experienced have built up huge personal fortunes abroad at the expense of their countrymen, but there is no case of a Japanese acting this way. Profits, whether ill gotten or legitimate, are not squirreled away in some safe haven or lavished on conspicuous consumption abroad but are reinvested in Japan or in some nationally beneficial enterprise elsewhere. The firm group identification of the Japanese has on the one side proved comforting to the individual and on the other hand has strengthened all groups, including the nation as a whole.⁷⁷

Tied to this capitalist "familyhood" is the consensual approach to decision-making in the system, whereby, "in a real sense nearly everyone has at least some voice in running society. No matter what the group--from the smallest upstart enterprise to the largest multibillion-dollar multinational--nothing gets done until the people involved agree. The Japanese call this *nesawashi* (root building). Just as a gardener carefully wraps all the roots of a tree together before he attempts to transplant it, Japanese leaders bring all members of society together before an important decision is made."⁷⁸ In a word, the Japanese feel that decisions "should not be left up to an one person but should be arrived at by consultations and committee work."⁷⁹

The key Japanese value is harmony, which they seek to achieve by a subtle process of mutual understanding, almost by intuition, rather than by a sharp analysis of conflicting views or by clear-cut decisions, whether made by oneman dictates or majority votes. . . Consensus is the goal-a general agreement as to the sense of the meeting, to which no one continues to hold strong objections. One-man decrees, regardless of that man's authority, are resented, and even close majority decisions by vote leave the Japanese unsatisfied.⁸⁰

A 1988 study ranked Japan with Sweden and Australia "as the three industrialized democracies with the least spread in income between the rich and the poor."⁸¹ The emphasis on corporate socialism, on egalitarian practices at the work place, on narrowing the wage gap between management and workers, and on collective well-being, have made Japan "a very egalitarian society,"⁸² in which "consciousness of any sort of class distinction is relatively weak. . ."⁸³ On top of this, "sharply progressive income taxes and extremely stiff inheritance taxes make the accumulation and transmission of wealth far more limited" than in such countries as the United States.⁸⁴ The end result is that ". . . only a tiny fraction of the population has failed to find a respectable place in society. There are no vast blighted urban areas nor is there any shamefully large underclass, as in the United States."⁸⁵

The great role that investment in research--made possible by the habitual savings of the government, corporations and individuals--plays in the system also deserves notice. With the creation of industrial robots deemed "the biggest challenge" that industrial societies faced in the 1980s,⁸⁶ the Japanese government led the way in mobilization by providing some \$150 million over seven years. The giants of Japanese industry quickly followed suit. Thus Hitachi alone in 1981 "created a battle force of 500 researchers" to help invent "a sensing system that mimics the human ability to receive and decipher visual images."⁸⁷ The result is that to 1990 Japan found itself "with more industrial robots working in its plants than any other country."⁸⁸

More than that, moving "far beyond the familiar, awesomely efficient Japanese auto and consumer-electronic-factories," the automation revolution has moved into unlikely areas, such as the construction business where the Ohbayashi Corporation, for instance, has developed a highly automated building-construction system. It uses robots to paint, plaster and install window panes. So versatile are the construction robots that industry analysts say they may eventually reduce the amount of labor needed on construction sites by 90 percent and slash building times in half.⁸⁹

Japan's success in its push for maximal development has been tremendously helped by these eminently Dignitalist elements of its system, to which must be added the institutional incentive to achievement embodied in its designation of its most gifted living talents as "national treasures" who are showered with suitable honors and perks.⁹⁰ The overall well-being of the citizenry is indicated by the fact that the average life expectancy in Japan is nearly 80 years--"already the highest in the world."⁹¹

The Role of Asante Culture in Dignitalism

The touchstone of the Asante value system, Wilks writes, was the "notion of good government, *amammupa*." It was "basic to all Asante political thinking, and every Asantehene upon election was enjoined to provide it."⁹²

At a level of broad generality, all politically responsible Asante were seemingly in agreement in regarding good government as involving, centrally, the generation of wealth. The Asante view of the position of the individual within society as trustee of the legacy of the ancestors on behalf of the generations yet unborn, carried the implication that the good

citizen was the one who worked to bequeath more to his successors than he had acquired from his predecessors.⁹³

The economy, particularly in the period extending from the late 1830s through the early 1880s, was mercantilistic in the sense that, "*inter alia* the state was seen as the major participant in the commercial sector of the economy, and its agents were afforded protection--through exemption from taxation and other such devices--from the competition offered by private entrepreneurs."⁹⁴ This way, a Company of State Traders was spawned whose operations then made possible the "constant stream of Ashanti traders. . . daily wending their way to the coast and back."⁹⁵ "There can be little doubt," Wilks elaborates, that throughout much of the nineteenth century "a very considerable part" of the Asante national product was derived from the operations of this state company.⁹⁶

Existing alongside this public sector as a residual category was a private sector subordinate, and indeed accessory to, the public economic realm. The actors in this sector, operating as "mercantile agents," emerged as "a class of financiers, utilizing loan capital provided by the Treasury but also their own resources, to generate profits both for the government and for themselves."⁹⁷ To ensure the circulation of money from the Ring and the people as a way of stimulating private entrepreneurship, the Ring held the national *Adai* festival every forty days at which he spent large sums of money "making presents to all classes of people. . ."⁹⁸ who then took their allocations "to the coast for goods which they took into the interior and made thereby fabulous profits . . ."⁹⁹ Significantly, the recipients were

"not supposed to use the money for their own self-indulgence, but they were expected, like the stewards in the parable, to trade with the money of their master, so that he who had received seven peregwans might add seven peregwans thereto, and render a due account when called upon to do so. . . In this way the state naturally encouraged thrift."¹⁰⁰

In a word, the future eligibility of the agents for additional capitalization depended entirely on their successful stewardship.¹⁰¹ Overall, the notion of a "class of private entrepreneurs" inclined "to attach more weight to the profit motive than to considerations of national security" was as alien as it was totally discountenanced in Asante.¹⁰² This point is not contradicted by the fact that it was not only possible within the system for the individual to acquire wealth but that "for him to do so was universally commended."¹⁰³ In this regard, "one of the greatest marks of distinction to which a citizen might aspire" was that of making, once in a life, "a public display of the wealth which he had accumulated."¹⁰⁴ The fact of the matter, however, is that--and this is the crucial qualifier--the *asikafo* (persons of wealth) were "highly respected, so long as it was known in the community that they obtained their riches by honest means and hard work" and to the extent that they could be relied upon by the system "for pecuniary assistance. . ."¹⁰⁵ It is on this account that "the wealth with reference to which an individual might be recognized as *sikani* (a person of opulence) had in the nature of the case to be self-acquired and not inherited, and. . . therefore at the unrestricted disposal of the owner during his lifetime."¹⁰⁶

The state encouraged the amassing of new fortune by individual entrepreneurs for the benefit of the state and the society by awarding the *asikafo* the privilege of having an elephant's tail--the symbol of wealth--carried before them by *ahoprafo*, elephant's tail bearers.¹⁰⁷ This was part of that system of honors described in 1883 by *The African Times* as the "Ashanti peerage system. . . which shows that the power of that Kingdom is not based entirely upon a blind reverence for bodily strength and martial prowess."¹⁰⁸ The system of honors for those who contributed outstandingly and selflessly to the common weal found additional expression in another national institution, the annual *Odwira*, at which the King "distributed honours and court decorations."¹⁰⁹ By this, the Asante

emphatically acknowledged "the advantage of encouraging every virtue, the direction of which is to advance the interest of the country, by enlisting amongst the nobility any person who distinguishes himself in the patriotic display of every such virtue."¹¹⁰

The systemic commitment toward locating "the sphere of capital accumulation at the level of the Exchequer and not of the individual entrepreneur"¹¹¹ came out in the form of a number of institutionalized constraints. Thus, for instance, although, as we have noted, there was a recognizable class of *asikafo* in Asante, "there were nevertheless strong restraints upon the emergence of a distinctly *asikafo* class consciousness and interest: upon, that is, the growth of a bourgeoisie. . ." ¹¹² Among the various instruments of government which inhibited any such development was that of the *awunyad* (death duties)--a tax system whereby, in theory, as T. E. Bowdich remarked, the King is heir to the gold of every subject, from the highest to the lowest.¹¹³ In all, "the impossibility of fortunes being transmitted intact from generation to generation" did much to prevent the consolidation of a bourgeois interest.¹¹⁴

Another key constraining device of the mercantile system was the interdiction placed on any transfer of gold into external accounts. Thus, "a case was reported in 1881, of an Asante trader who sought to deposit 170 oz. of gold, to the value of about L600, with a firm of Cape Coast merchants. When the facts became known in Kumasi, the trader was placed on trial, condemned to death, and executed."¹¹⁵ There is also the case of Kwasi Gyani in 1862:

Originally accused of secreting gold nuggets which should have been surrendered to the Treasury, Kwasi Gyani with a number of his followers sought refuge in the Gold Coast Protectorate. . . To the Asante government. . . the matter of his extradition from the Protectorate was of such importance that, in case of British refusal, war was seen as a reasonable alternative.¹¹⁶

A further constraining device operated to the effect that, as a rule, a government official "guilty of speculation or the like" was promptly stripped of all property.¹¹⁷

The Dignitist essence of the Asante economic system, coupled with its democratic political institutions and processes,¹¹⁸ its well-ordered and equitable judicial system, and its uncorrupt civil administration,¹¹⁹ all added up to a largely spiritual entity. The general acceptance by the Asante of this polity and its administration is borne out, for instance, by the fact that a significant number of *asikafo* took to "the grand gesture of voluntarily willing their estates to the nation, or, of making an endowment to an office."¹²⁰ Such an acceptance of a system which placed the welfare of the nation-state above individual self-indulgence, as Wilks has observed, "undoubtedly reflected the growing realization on the part of the majority of the politically sensitive Asante, that the magnitude of the threat presented by the British to the continuing of independence of Asante would only be compensated for by the rapid development of the nation's resources in order to narrow the gap between the broad economic capabilities of the two countries. Few appear to have thought the development of a national bourgeoisie to be, in the circumstances, the appropriate instrument for that purpose."¹²¹ Meanwhile, the fruits of Asante Dignitism became a subject of acknowledgment and acclaim. Thus a foreigner observed, upon a visit in 1849, "a great degree of energy in the Ashanti nation," prompting the auspicious forecast that "God has great ends in view in raising up such a powerful nation in the interior of Africa."¹²²

Contemporary African "Profligasm": The Case of Ghana

It is seldom that a political system exhibits Dignitism or Profligasm in its pure form. Nonetheless, such rare cases do exist. The political system which British colonialism created and designated as the Gold Coast in a portion of the territory that used to be the As

ante Empire, which became known as Ghana following its formal decolonization, and which has subsumed empire-stripped Asante, has become the quintessence of Profligasm.

This study in Profligasm brings out the monumentally underdeveloping impact of the European contact with Africa through the destruction of erstwhile development-sustaining values. Long before the colonization of Asante, its commercial involvement with the Europeans inaugurated slave-raiding, at whose dictates "elites often betrayed other elites and sold commoners as slaves. By the 1800s, when the slave trade was declared to be at an end in Africa, few aspects of traditional social structure remained untouched by the economic assault."¹²³ The evidence bears out that, once capitalistic imperialism eventually broke through the resistance of the Africans in that land,¹²⁴ established its undisputed sway, "de-authorized" the African leadership,¹²⁵ and introduced an expansive monetary economy, whatever remained of the traditional values of the African society quickly gave way to material display as the first and paramount index of the socially significant.

The repercussions of the cocoa economy alone, introduced in the latter stages of the nineteenth century, proved to be severe:

The growing influence which Ashanti. . . had on the economy of the Gold Coast during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was to be transformed by capitalist and colonial penetration during the nineteenth century, to culminate in the growth of an Ashanti-based cocoa industry after 1900. This early period is significant for 'the intensity with which most strata in the interior--royalty, elite and commoners--were jolted by the economic transformations which accompanied increased European contact.'¹²⁶

In an emergent value climate wherein even "ordinary folk began to judge their well-being by the extent to which they could afford. . . imported items,"¹²⁷ the *obirempon*,¹²⁸ the *asikafo*, as well as the prospering peasants hid their wealth, rather than seek public recognition by declaring such wealth.¹²⁹ Gold, which had been mainly under royal control, now became a point of contention as "both the elite and the common folk tried to obtain. . . (it) so that they could buy British and American goods."¹³⁰ Again, whereas land tenure had been lineage--and usufruct-based, with labor drawn from within the *abusua* (the extended family unit), rather than from paid workers, the spread of the cocoa industry "stimulated interest in private, as opposed to corporate, ownership of land."¹³¹ The privatization and commercialization of the productive forces and relations now placed those lineage members without cocoa farms decisively at risk.¹³²

Whereas traditional law clearly recognized matrilineal *abusua* property, and the obligation to transfer these to matrilineal relatives, some persons were now beginning to own private cocoa farms to which the economic claims of lineage members might be precluded.¹³³

At the root of the upheaval and chaos was the challenge the colonial order posed to the very cohesion of the Asante political community by assailing the principle of lineage representation "that structured political relations at the local, regional and national levels."¹³⁴ For instance,

"the expectations placed on chiefs changed as a result of cocoa wealth, and it also had implications for the ways in which the royal lineages selected new candidates for chieftaincy. Whereas earlier the royal family would try to achieve unanimity by selecting popular and capable stool occupants, now wealthy persons openly competed for stools, often utilizing bribes to royal electors in order to be selected. Inevitably, this lowered prestige for the chieftaincy itself, and increased stool debts as a result of extravagant electioneering."¹³⁵

Toward the close of the colonial period, a good number of the new breed of consumers graduated from the acquisition of mundane merchandise into the realm of high-powered, expensive, exotic goods, the essence of which became the Mercedes-Benz automobile, and the acquisition of palatial mansions. To have acquired a Mercedes, in particular, was to have acquired the most valued possession in life, and therefore to have joined the elite rank of the most prestigious and worthy of the land--the most deserving of respect, the ultimate object of deference. The culture which this rabid and mindless materialism has spawned has come to pervade and pathologise everything. Of course, in economically developed societies, too, the elite almost invariably acquire Mercedes-Benzenes, BMWs, and palatial homes. But obviously there is a crucial difference between achieving economic development and other virtues of Dignitalism first before indulging in such luxuries, and pursuing such luxuries at the expense of development itself.

With the attainment of independence in 1957, the urge to materialism became compulsive. The ruling Convention People's Party (CPP), now in control of the national treasury, moved promptly to indulge its elite in high consumption. Import licenses were readily issued to every government and party functionary--from the Minister, through the Regional Commissioner, the District Commissioner, the Lay Magistrate, to the Principal Secretary--to enable them to acquire the Mercedes. It was unthinkable that any official would be subjected to the indignity of a lack of ownership of it. Operating firmly within the extant value perimeters, the CPP leadership appear to have assumed from the moment of its assumption of power that there was no other way of demonstrating that they were the substance of society other than by acquiring and sporting the best and the most expensive of imports.

That conspicuous consumption of imported luxuries became the primary basis of social prestige in Ghanaian society said a lot about the inferiorizing effects of colonialism. Clearly, a certain psychological paralysis was at work --one which thrived on the notion that it was idle for Africans to entertain any ideas about development in terms of indigenous industrial creativity. The only worthwhile vocation left, in such an inventive wilderness, was for one to strive to consume at higher and higher levels what one's racial "betters" produced. Coming from the Nkrumah regime which professed Pan-Africanism, and indeed practiced it in its foreign policies, this penchant for material self-aggrandizement in the domestic front was doubly disappointing and tragic.

As a redemptive ideology, Pan-Africanism responds to the ahistorical but nonetheless current stigmatization of Africans as congenitally defective technologically by proclaiming the necessity on the part of Africans to lay the political, economic and cultural foundations for a re-creative and re-dignificatory culture and civilization. Organizing the loot of the national treasury in order to propel the animus of consumption of luxurious imports, constituted a serious infringement on Pan-Africanism.

That the personal mode of living of the CPP's founder and leader, Kwame Nkrumah, "was not particularly indulgent" -- that "he was almost certainly less self-seeking than a large number of other leaders in Africa. . ." ¹³⁶ was of little account, insofar as he suffered his colleagues, for whatever reasons, to flaunt a core ideological principle as freely as they did. The final verdict is that the CPP government, whatever it did in the foreign policy arena, did at home abandon the developmental requisite of an expressively committed leadership in favor of an instrumentally motivated one. ¹³⁷ If we recall that Ghana from the first became deeply involved in the Congo crisis in the service of Pan-Africanism and needed all the domestic consolidation via mass mobilization it could muster, ¹³⁸ the failure of leadership and its demobilizing effects was a tragedy of massive proportions. It is to be remembered that Franz Fanon wrote his celebrated tirades against the "intellectual laziness and spiritual penury" of the African "national middle class" ¹³⁹ during his tenure in Ghana as

the Ambassador of the Algerian Provisional Government. His censorious remarks about a leadership "not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labor. . . bereft of ideas, because it lived to itself and cuts itself off from the people. . ." ¹⁴⁰ were written "undoubtedly with the experience of Ghana in mind." ¹⁴¹

It is from this perspective that George Padmore's agony, during his stay in Ghana as Nkrumah's Advisor on African Affairs, is to be understood. The eminent Pan-Africanist, who admired the way overseas Jews supported "the austere Zionist state," ¹⁴² was aggrieved, scandalized and demoralized by the choking value framework of the CPP "luminaries" with whom he had to work. "The ostentation and arrogance which early characterized many of these leaders," Hooker writes, "was doubly distasteful to Padmore, who ridiculed their smalltime pomp and objected to their definition of socialism." ¹⁴³

It is significant that a manuscript Padmore was engaged in writing while in Ghana for the benefit of the CPP youth on the applications of socialism to the African scene said, among other things:

"Ghana is rich in capital which consists of her natural resources plus her labour power. Yet we cannot escape a period of austerity in order to harness this capital for constructing our socialist pattern of society. But how to attain this austerity? We must forego these things which are not essential. . ." ¹⁴⁴

There was friction galore between such puritanical developmental views and the empty flamboyance of the CPP elite, and it contributed to Padmore's being "usually ill since moving to Accra. . ." ¹⁴⁵ He died in September 1959, sick, disappointed, uncomfortable and unhappy. ¹⁴⁶

Not even the trade union movement could be spared the malaise wrought by the virus of ostentation. The leadership of the new labor structure emanating from the Industrial Relations Act of 1958 freely proceeded to indulge itself in "misuse, wastage and some gross abuse of union funds." ¹⁴⁷ As soon as the initial installment of government funds was paid to the Ghana Trades Union Congress, new and greatly increased salary scales were implemented for the TUC's top six officers. ¹⁴⁸ Not surprisingly, when 22 Ghanaian unionists, led by the Secretary General of the TUC, John Tettegah, visited Lagos for a 1958 conference, "almost every one of the visitors," according to Ananaba, "came in a brand new car, and showed no restraint in advertising the wealth. . . of the new unionism in Ghana." ¹⁴⁹ So much for the leadership of an avant-garde movement geared to egalitarian transformation in Ghana.

By 1961, then, Ghana had become widely known as a country in which asceticism "was not an easily acceptable philosophy, given that material display was the principal mark of success." ¹⁵⁰ In April of that year, Nkrumah was compelled to deliver a "Dawn Broadcast" to the nation in which he castigated the self-interestedness of many in the CPP "who by virtue of their functions and positions are tending to form a separate new ruling class of self-seekers and careerists." Since this was "working to alienate the support of the masses and to bring the National Assembly into isolation," he announced measures to compel government officials to declare their assets and sever their links to private business. Such measures to counter the excessive amassing of wealth and its ostentatious exhibition were imperative, he emphasized, on account of the demands being made on the masses to make sacrifices for developmental goals. ¹⁵¹ Even so, Nkrumah demonstrated his unwillingness to get to the bottom of the matter when his "clean-up" failed to go beyond an injunction that party and government officials be content with no more than two automobiles and two mansions, and when he allowed even this hardly austere discipline to go unheeded until the strike of the Sekondi-Takoradi workers in June of that year (called to

protest corruption in high places and the inequality of sacrifice in the system) forced Nkrumah into a tactical and temporary expropriation of a few among the corrupt exhibitionists.¹⁵²

In the end, Nkrumah would make his now celebrated lament which was to prove inconsequential and belated, even if remarkable in sheer diagnostic accuracy: "Too many of us seem to think that the mere acquisition of wealth, irrespective of how it is acquired, is the supreme goal in life. Those who strive to lead decent lives relying on their honest work are reviled and scoffed at."¹⁵³

Post-Nkrumah Ghanaian Politics

At least in Nkrumah's day, as we have noted, the instrumental conception of power was tempered, in foreign policy, with a concern for consummatory values expressed in a vigorous commitment to the total decolonization and unification of Africa. As Apter has observed, Nkrumah's capacity to combine expressive and instrumental values was apparent in the manner in which he used the left and right wings of his party. While the right wing, by far the largest part, catered to those who saw in nationalist politics "opportunities for personal advancement, reward and prestige positions," the left wing concerned itself with ideological and Pan-Africanist efforts.¹⁵⁴ In the post-1966 era, with Pan-Africanism virtually overthrown from the policy agenda, instrumentalism unmediated by any spiritual values established dominion over the land.

Since it is difficult, even under the best of circumstances, to combine both spiritual and material values in underdeveloped conditions, successive regimes in Ghana have elected to inherit only the instrumental aspect of the CPP's value structure. Thus Owusu observed of the National Liberation Council (NLC), the military successors of the Nkrumah regime, that they showed themselves only concerned about the material well-being of the middle classes, caring little about others or anything else.¹⁵⁵ And Apter was to note of Busia's Progress Party government which succeeded the NLC in 1969 that "they are very much concerned with political instrumentalism, . . . with economic self-interest."¹⁵⁶ Indeed, in spite of the fact that an Assets Clause was written into the 1969 Constitution as a deterrent against the indiscriminate and unscrupulous amassing of wealth by Members of Parliament, the new breed of Parliamentarians moved quickly toward individual and collective affluence by taking advantage of a Ghanaian Business Promotions Bill which they had eagerly passed into law and on account of which the government had floated about \$40 million worth of Business Promotions Bonds.

The parliamentary "entrepreneurs" shared, and indeed carried to a higher plane, the Ghanaian cultural principle that being an intellectual, a professional or whatever is nothing, if it does not pave the way to the acquisition and flaunting of wealth. As Price notes, during the period the number of new Mercedes-Benz cars for private use registered in Ghana exceeded that of cheaper makes such as Volkswagon, Datsun, Fiat and Toyota. "The importance of the luxury automobile as a symbol of status," he goes on to reflect, "apparently outweighed its seemingly prohibitive cost."¹⁵⁷

In vain, a concerned Ghanaian pleaded with his fellow citizens in these early years of the post-Nkrumah era: "We must use every means in our power to wean people away from the notion that the most important thing in life is money and that the true end of politics is wealth."¹⁵⁸

The Amin Commission set up after the overthrow of the Busia regime in 1972 "found extensive evidence of malfeasance at all levels of the administration during the period."¹⁵⁹ But things were hardly to get better under the successor military regime that called itself the National Redemption Council (NRC). Its head, Acheampong, took office proclaiming:

“Our very existence as a sovereign nation is at stake and it behoves every patriotic Ghanaian to decide whether he will help the national government or undermine it for his own selfish ends. For me, there is no choice. This nation must be saved and, gun in hand, we shall save it. The time has come to say enough is enough. The time has come to put an end to the destruction of our national soul, to the ravages of our national economy, and to turn over to a new standard of public morality and public duty.”¹⁶⁰

And yet by 1975 corruption had permeated the governmental apparatus and every sphere of life to an unprecedented degree, "and its prevalence had made bribery, embezzlement and larceny an everyday occurrence."¹⁶¹ *Kalabule* - activities aimed at "diverting monies and goods from the formal to the informal economy" and usually entailing "the redirection of state funds into private pockets, the misuse of import licenses and the abuse of bureaucratic regimen in order to augment personal income"¹⁶² -- now reigned supreme in the land. Acheampong, the chief practitioner of *Kalabule*, is reported to have accumulated a personal fortune of \$100 million in six years of rule.¹⁶³

These factors, combined with "problems arising from a functionally insupportable work ethic,"¹⁶⁴ created hyperinflation and massive shortages which destroyed the livelihood of most citizens. As Chazan elaborates: "The standard and quality of life of the average Ghanaian deteriorated. Not only did real income decline by an average of eighteen percent during the decade (1969-1979), but services deteriorated even more. Hospitals could no longer provide drugs or adequate medical services. Urban water supplies were erratic. Power availability in areas where it had been established became haphazard. Roads fell into disrepair and during certain seasons were impassable. Infant mortality rates were on the rise."¹⁶⁵

With the restoration of civilian administration in 1979, the People's National Party (PNP) headed by Hilla Limann took office: Kwame Arhin's reflections on the performance of this regime just before it was overthrown from office in 1981 afford a familiar tale in which "Holders of authority acquire the means for the purchase of foreign houses; for building mansions in Ghana; and for acquiring all the paraphernalia of modern civilization, all at the expense of a healthy economy; and to the pauperization of the rest of Ghanaians."¹⁶⁶ As reported in *Africa News*, "... Ministers and regional administrators are diverting government-supplied goods for the personal use of this regime just before it was overthrown from office in 1981 afford a familiar tale in which "Holders of authority acquire the means for the purchase of fout to neighboring Togo, Upper Volta, and Ivory Coast, where they are sold for hard cash that is then stashed in private bank accounts. . ."¹⁶⁷

Meanwhile, an on-going sanitation workers' strike in Accra, the capital city, "so aggravated the already noxious sewerage conditions that large areas of the working class neighborhoods in the capital are virtual latrine dumps. Flies have a field day. The sanitation workers, in an expression of anger against authority, recently blocked the street entering the president's official residence and the entrances to the Accra City Council with volumes of human excrement..."¹⁶⁸

But by far the "most serious effect" of the economic calamity plaguing the country was the "mass exodus" of both skilled and unskilled labor: "the situation is so bad that several schools are unable to re-open or are opening with anywhere from 50 percent to, in extreme cases, 95 percent of the teachers absent. The Economics Department at the University of Ghana, near Accra, for instance, has only four lecturers left, and no new graduate students have been admitted as a result. Worse still, most schools find it difficult to re-open because of lack of food to feed students in what is predominately a boarding system...Yet, as complaints mount all over the country, government has announced a fantastically high

salary and allowance for parliamentarians. The Members of Parliament will be receiving monthly pay of about \$1,475, almost 25 times the basic wage for workers...¹⁶⁹.

Profit, as Ali Mazrui has warned, "is often at its most naked among those who are newly converted to the profit motive."¹⁷⁰ The impact of Western culture and the effects of capitalism in Africa were profoundly disturbing for many reasons, not the least of which is that they "released new forms of self-interest, new patterns of self-fulfillment, new manifestations of personal greed"¹⁷¹ that fundamentally militate against any strategem of development. Thus would Africa become "a continent where self-promotion is among the most developed or twentieth century skills..."¹⁷². This is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the experience of Ghana from the era of the CPP regime through the NLC period, the Busina administration, the government of the NRC, and the rule of the PNP. The anti-developmental propensities continue under the Rawlings regime that seized power in 1981.¹⁷³

Individualistic calculations of self-interest and profit linked to unbridled pursuit of imported luxuries in underdeveloped countries make a tragic and explosive mixture that pre-empts development itself. The Nkrumah regime, as well as its various successors, "made one of the central features of Ghana's political economy a virtually unbridgeable gap between standards of consumption and the availability of means to maintain them."¹⁷⁴

Conclusion

We have posited in this study the value ingredients of a pragmatist approach to the mode of production, socially responsible uses of ownership of the means of production, high productivity, frugality, equitable distribution of wealth in society, social corporatism, and political freedom and pluralism, as constituting the essence of Dignitalism. The three country cases in this study – Sweden and Japan of the 20th century and Asante of the 18th century – all reflect the high developmental fruits of Dignitalism and vividly portray the value denominators of the model.

The logic of the Japanese "capitalist" system places a heavy reliance on the private market. And yet Japan's market economy is not based on Adam Smith's notion "that a society benefits from the liberation of individual greed--each person seeking his own self-interest." In "socialist" Sweden the government's role has been to foster social uses of ownership, which is overwhelmingly private, to ensure the sovereignty of society's interests over private interests. Nationalization is eschewed on the grounds that it would hinder, rather than promote, increase in output. In Japan, private companies supply social services that in Sweden are the province of the government which is itself significantly dependent on the collaboration of the private companies for the wherewithal. In "mercantilist" Asante, even though the public sector loomed larger than the private, no rigid antipathy to private enterprise existed. On the contrary, the private sector was nurtured by the state to generate wealth through the fostering of a breed of private entrepreneurs.

Socially responsible uses of the ownership of the means of production, private or public, is a demonstrable value in all the three cases. In Sweden, while it is acceptable for a private owner of industry to create a fortune, this is conditional on the wealth being used in socially useful ways. In Japan, the private sector exudes social responsibility through a "corporate socialism" that confers such benefits as lifetime employment and egalitarian job practices. In Asante, private acquisition of wealth was encouraged but on condition that the riches were obtained by honest means and hard work and could be relied upon by the system for pecuniary assistance.

In Sweden it is reasoned, on grounds of its tendency toward "excessive bureaucratization inside state enterprises," that the state is unsuited to administer economic

firms. The assigning of a dominant economic role to the private sector was calculated to ensure rapid economic growth--a goal that has been achieved. In Japan, private enterprise combined with the administrative guidance of the government through its Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), reinforced by an institutional incentive to achievement by way of the designation of the most gifted living talents as "national treasures," have propelled the country into an "unstoppable economic machine." In Asante, good government, the touchstone of the country's value system, entailed at core the generation of wealth by both the private and public sectors. A system of honors glorified those who amassed new fortune and used it to contribute outstandingly and selflessly to the common weal.

In Sweden, government intervention ensures that private wealth is used to create jobs and manufacture quality products, and not wasted on reckless, unpurposeful spending. Taxes on income and profits, for instance, make it more profitable for private owners to reinvest in business than to consume them. Overall, the system has succeeded in getting private companies to accept the principle of a severe curtailment in their discretion in the use of their wealth. In Japan, the propensity to save, which is phenomenal, has been accounted the key momentum behind the country's unmatched economic performance in the post-war era. In Asante, the good citizen was defined to be one who "worked to bequeath to his successors than he had acquired from his predecessors." In consequence, wealthy individuals took to voluntarily willing their estates to the nation, or to making an endowment to an office.

In Sweden, a highly progressive taxation system, a distinctly egalitarian wage structure, a policy emphasis on equality of the sexes, and cradle-to-grave benefits for all, have contributed to a morale-boosting equitable distribution of national wealth. In Japan, the "single status" of workers and management and the narrow wage gap between them, sharply progressive income taxes, and extremely stiff inheritance taxes, all have given the country "the most equitable distribution of income of the industrialized nations." In Asante, legal restraints such as death duties prevented fortunes being transmitted intact from generation to generation, even as they pre-empted the consolidation of a bourgeois interest and the emergence of class consciousness.

Collectivism is the predominant impulse in Sweden, in the sense that the system emphasizes the sovereignty of collective well-being over individual, private interests. In Japan, where society is similarly conceived in corporate terms, individuals "are seen to benefit only through the elevation of the group as a whole." In Asante, the welfare of the national society was placed well above calculations of individual self-interest and self-indulgence. The ethic of social corporatism expressed itself even more vigorously at the level of the extended family which was the foundation and linchpin of the social organization and which, in essence, was corporate in nature. As Rattray noted, the extended family in Asante "was a corporation; action and even thought were corporate affairs."¹⁷⁵

In Sweden, a country of "consensus solutions," the values embedded in the collective society have been embraced by all the political parties including those of the right. There is social consensus on the primary value of the elaborate social welfare system that was inaugurated in 1932. The consensus is reflected in the virtually unbroken rule of the Social Democratic Party since that year. But, it must be noted, the consensus itself has been a function of the interplay of freedom of speech and vigorous national debate on issues in a pluralistic framework. In Japan, too, the consensual approach to decisionmaking is emphasized at every turn. Here, the belief, as we noted, is that decisions "should not be left up to any one person" but should be arrived at by consultations and debate. The unbroken

rule of the Liberal Democratic Party since the post-war period reflects the crystallization of consensus on values in one party operating in a pluralistic, competitive framework.

In Asante, a national debate was considered a "necessary condition" of any matter becoming law. Such debates geared to the creation of consensus on issues were fueled by a bi-party system which "bore sufficient resemblance to those of nineteenth century Europe for nineteenth century European commentators to . . . write of both in the same terms."¹⁷⁶ So, then, kingly rule in Asante was checked by the orchestration of national values through pluralistic political debates. Additionally, great religious sanctions also circumscribed the king by enjoining him "to act constitutionally--to conduct himself in a manner worthy of his loyal ancestors and in accordance with the laws and customs which they .had imposed."¹⁷⁷ As Geoffrey Bing noted in 1968, "A hundred years ago political power was more dispersed among the Ashanti. . . government than it was among the British. . . at that date, even taking into account the enlargement of the franchise secured in England by the Second Reform Bill of 1867."¹⁷⁸

In both Sweden and Japan, *de facto* one-party ruling regimes emerged from a pluralistic environment and a Dignitalist value framework. We infer from this that a party that tends to persistently win freely contested elections is a party that embodies a Dignitalist value consensus. Where a party embodies the values of Dignitalism, it tends to enjoy at the hands of the electorates a monopoly of ruling, of governance, though not a legal monopoly of existence.

Systems rarely embody Dignitalism in a pure form. In time and in some respects, they tend to develop and manifest a slide into Profligasm. Unless the shortfalls in Dignitalism are rectified in due course, they will, in the end, prove a system's undoing. Thus in Asante the failure to extend the premises and benefits of Dignitalism obtaining in its core or metropolitan region to its "dependencies" of conquered peoples, in the end became ammunition for the British as they battled to dismantle the empire.

In sharp contrast to the developmental trajectory of Dignitalism is the anti-developmental animus of Profligasm which contemporary Ghana typifies. It needs to be emphasized that there is no intention here to limit the search for causes for the deterioration of Ghana's political economy to internal, primarily normative explanations, as opposed to global economic or structural reasons. We have established that the incorporation of Ghana into the global capitalist economy had everything to do with the adulteration and vulgarization of traditional developmental social values. The central point in this regard is that, once these values took root, Ghana was left virtually no chance to either work to remove the colonial institutional legacies that block development, or to contain the scourge of neocolonialism.

End Notes

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33. *ibid.*, p. 142.
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65. *Newsweek*, 7-2-90, p. 19.
66. *The New York Times*, 12-21-81, p. D1.
67. *Newsweek*, 7-2-90, p. 19.
68. *The New York Times*, 12-21-81, p. D4.
69. *Time*, 3-30-81, p. 59. This is the case even with small companies, as long as they remain solvent.
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74. *ibid.*, p. 10.
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79. Edwin Reischauer, p. 136.
80. *ibid.*
81. *ibid.*, p. 152.
82. *ibid.*, p. 150.
83. *ibid.*, p. 152.
84. *ibid.*
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87. *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 75, 26.
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92. I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1975, p. 668.
93. *ibid.*, p. 673.
94. *ibid.*, pp. 684-5. The 18th century mercantilist doctrine held that trade should be strictly regulated in order to pile up gold and silver in national treasuries. In other words, it conceived of the state as "an instrument for the generation of wealth through the control and promotion of trade." (*Ibid.*, p. 674).
95. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 686.
96. *ibid.*, p. 691.
97. *ibid.*, p. 700.
98. *ibid.*, p. 692.
99. *The Gold Coast Aborigines*, XVI, No. 115, June 30, 1900, p. 3; cited in I. Wilks, p. 692.
100. J. E. Casely Hayford's observation; cited in I. Wilks, p. 687. Emphasis mine.
101. I. Wilks, p. 687.
102. *ibid.*, p. 685.
103. *ibid.*, p. 692.
104. *ibid.*, p. 695.
105. An explication by Oheneba Sakyi Djang in 1936; cited in I. Wilks, p. 693.
106. I. Wilks, p. 697.
107. *ibid.*, p. 695.
108. *The African Times*, XXIV, No. 266, November 1, 1883, p. 122.
109. I. Wilks, p. 77.
110. *The Sierra Leone Reporter*, cited in I. Wilks, p. 78.

111. I. Wilks, p. 701.
112. *ibid.*, p. 697.
113. Cited in *ibid.*. In practice, as Wilks explains, it would seem that the system operated more or less stringently according to the estate of the deceased. Thus, a small estate of the ordinary farmer, for example, would be left intact, to be apportioned by the family of the deceased, whereas the estates of *asomfo* or *nhenKwaa*, the functionaries of the bureaucracy, would wholly be placed at the disposal of the government. In other cases, the estate would be carefully appraised by agents of the Treasury, after which its distribution would be decided upon. (See *ibid.*, pp. 697-8).
114. I. Wilks, p. 699.
115. *ibid.*, p. 701.
116. *ibid.*, pp. 701-2.
117. *ibid.*, p. 707.
118. Geoffrey Bing, *Reap The Whirlwind*, MacGibbon and Kee, London, 1968, p. 83; W. Tordoff, *Ashanti Under the Prempehs: 1888-1939*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965, p. 14.
119. See W. Tordoff, *Ashanti Under the Prempehs*, pp. 12-14.
120. I. Wilks, p. 699.
121. *ibid.*, p. 720.
122. Recorded in *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*. May 1848, p. 550; cited in I. Wilks, pp. 589-590.
123. Gwendolyn Mikell, *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana*, Paragon House, New York, 1989, pp. xvi-xvii.
124. It took 70 years of warfare before the British could defeat and subjugate the Asante.
125. K. A. Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti*, Chapters VI-IX; W. Tordoff, *Ashanti Under the Prempehs*, p. 108.
126. Gwendolyn Mikell, *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana*, p. 23.
127. *ibid.*, p. 38.
128. Wealthy commoners who were considered synonymous with aristocrats. They were involved in trade and usually controlled land and clients.
129. Gwendolyn Mikell, *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana*, p. 38.
130. *ibid.*, pp. 38, 237.
131. *ibid.*, pp. 237, 107.
132. *ibid.*, p. 108.
133. *ibid.*.
134. *ibid.*, p. 132.
135. *ibid.*.
136. Ali Mazrui, *Violence and Thought*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1969, p. 215.
137. A leadership is expressive when it is primarily concerned with the pursuits of spiritual or dignificatory goals; it is instrumental when it is paramountly concerned with personal material self-aggrandizement. While instrumentally motivated leadership is calculative, that is based on an assessment of material or status utility, an expressively induced leadership is consummatory, its basis being identification with the goals to which their role would contribute, as well as the spiritual satisfaction from such role performance. When commitment is expressive, activity is intrinsically rewarding in that it is directly expressive of the values of the individuals involved. (See D. Katz and R. Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organizations*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1966, p. 119.)
138. See Kwame Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., London, 1967; Opoku Agyeman, "Kwame Nkrumah and the Congo (Zaire) Revisited," *The African Review*, Vol. 4, "to. 4, 1974.
139. See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, New York, 1963, particularly pp. 149-150, 152, 154. See also Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Beautiful Ones*

- Are Not Yet Born*, Collier Books, New York, 1968, for a vivid indictment of the Nkrumah regime on the same grounds of the triumph of material over spiritual values.
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 151. See R. Jeffries, *Class Power and Ideology in Ghana: The Railwaymen of Sekondi*, Cambridge University Press, 1978 , p. 100 .
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 157. R. Price, *Society and Bureaucracy in Contemporary Ghana*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1975, p. 155n.
 158. Cited in *The Ghanaian Times*, May 28, 1968, p. 9.
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 161. Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics*, p. 181.
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