

Consciencism, a Philosophy and Ideology for Existential Being in the Technological Age

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Abstract

This essay undertakes a re-examination of Kwame Nkrumah's Consciencism, not merely as a political ideology of anticolonial resistance, but as a sustained philosophical project that articulates a distinctive mode of Being: Existential Being. Far from a regional or historically-contained discourse, Consciencism presents a syncretic and dialectical account of Existential Being as one that actively reconciles contradictions in material conditions with the transformative influence of the transcendental (but nevertheless within-the-world) mind through what Nkrumah designates as *categorical conversion*. By retracing the genealogy of this ontological formulation with pre-Socratic and Aristotelian metaphysics, Heideggerian ontology, and African socialism, this essay argues that Consciencism offers a viable philosophical framework for confronting the crisis of Existential Being brought on by the augmentation of technological *Enframing*. In an era where technological acceleration threatens to displace and subsume the grounds of Man's Existential Being itself, Nkrumah's thought enables a renewed interrogation of what it means *to be*—not as a merely abstract question, but as a concrete and historical condition thoroughly intertwined with the dialectical interplay of material and idealistic conditions of life and its vicissitudes.

Keywords

African Humanism, Consciencism, Heidegger, Nkrumah, Technology

1. Introduction

The case of the Republic of Ghana, the progenitor of independent states in sub-Saharan Africa, has, arguably, long since been eluded from conscious light. Our "Eurocentric" secondary institutions of socialization do not teach us—or, if they do, tend to merely skim over—the revolutionary position of this small, African nation in contemporary global history (Biraimah et al., 2024). No sooner does the

average student, in this unipolar world guided by the principles of neoliberalism and Western cultural hegemony—an *Absolute certainty* ever since 1989 (Derrida, 1994)—come to learn of the forces that have wrested power from the yoke of colonialism in the post-Second World War world, than he subjects himself to the collective repression over the forces that hold responsible for this very emancipation. To blame the student himself for this repression, however, would be to overlook structuralism in favor of blatantly-idealistic egoism; all egos may be in the service of repression, but nowhere is repression in the service of the ego, insofar as there is an invariable return thereof to plague it (Lacan, 2002).

Yet it is not merely the history itself that is avoided, but rather the philosophical and ideological underpinnings that have—rightly so—*made* that history through mass mobilization: in thought and in praxis. One such example is the thought of Ghana’s founding father, Kwame Nkrumah, eponymously dubbed “Nkrumaism”: a term synonymous with the philosophy and ideology called *Consciencism* (Mohan, 1967). While sometimes described as “socialism based on the conditions, circumstances and peculiarities of African life” (Mohan, 1967: p. 211), and a doctrine “intended to translate or transform the conflicted tripartite elements of the African conscience [Islam, Western *modi vivendi* (Capitalism and Christianity), and African communalism] into a uniformed ‘personality’ whose fundamental principle or ideology is socialist in nature” (Kwesi, 2017: p. 188), Consciencism—as outlined by Nkrumah (1970) himself—entailed a far more diverse set of principles that could combat a hegemony in a society, particularly a colonial one like his very own. Namely, Consciencism encompasses a syncretic thought paradigm, drawing from vast fields of philosophy such as: the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers (Thales, Anaxagoras, and Heraclitus), Aristotelian physics, Marxism, and the pan-Africanism of Padmore, Garvey, and Du Bois, whilst at the same time being a *prescriptive* force wherein, “The cardinal ethical principle [...] is to treat each man as an end in himself and not merely as a means [and that] *from a materialist viewpoint.*” (Nkrumah, 1970: p. 90).

If, thereby, Nkrumah’s Consciencism distinguishes itself from, for instance, the Kantian “Categorical Imperative” by virtue of its foundation resting on materialism—as opposed to a transcendental, prescriptive entity—it would be fallacious to assume that Nkrumah himself stops there in his inquiry. Rather, he goes on to state that Consciencism as a doctrine finds *primacy* in the material world, but is just as much influenced by the *dialectical change* thereof of this matter as a manifestation of Being, writing, “Consciencism, by avoiding the assertion of the sole reality of matter, prepares itself for the painless recognition of the objectivity of different types of being.” (Nkrumah, 1970: pp. 85-86). For Nkrumah (1970), Being is a multifocal condition not solely related to the material realm of physical dialectics, but rather exists as different modes that do not reject the influence of the immaterial realm of ideas, but, arguably, subscribe to their very influence for their existence: a notion he called *categorical conversion*.

Nkrumah’s 1964 text, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decoloniza-*

tion, has been—and continues to be—considered a seminal text for pan-African thought. As a matter of fact, it is quite possible that this work—alongside his economical analytic of *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*—served a decisive role in instigating the CIA-backed *coup d'état* of 1966 that removed him from power. Nevertheless, to stop with a geopolitical analysis of this peculiar, *borderline* doctrine would be to do a great injustice to its revolutionary nature—both in theory and praxis. Rather, this essay will argue for the application of the unique formulations of Being in Nkrumah's Consciencism as they manifest within the ever-changing contemporary world dominated by technology where, arguably, the meaning of what it means to Be is subjected to an unprecedented degree of jeopardy.

Thus, this essay aims to define Existential Being as that modality of Being which always-already serves as the bridge between the long-polemicized immanent-transcendental divide having played on categorical perplexity and *mis*-categorization in Western philosophy for millenia. This position of “bridging” the divide between the immanent and transcendental, unique to Man (*Dasein*)—and thus serving as the fundamental basis of philosophies such as African humanism—is precisely what Nkrumah posits through as his notion of *categorical conversion*, revised and funneled through a Heideggerian exegetic lens. The meaning of what it means to Be, and how it differs from Existence is, henceforth, what deserves to be explored and distinguished through the lenses of thinkers such as Thales, Anaxagoras, Aristotle, and Heidegger in order for us to be able to answer the above, first and foremost.

2. To Exist—Metaphysics and “What There Is”

Since the advent of philosophy, ontological questions concerning Being and Existence have been indubitably posited. The pre-Socratic philosophers—of whom Thales was the progenitor—while largely investigating the metaphysics of matter, nevertheless came to deduce the first naturalistic conception of reality: the fundamental principle (*arche*) from which all matter structuring our reality is made is water (Smith, 1867). Aristotle (n.d.), in his *Metaphysics*, justifies Thales' conception of reality, writing:

“[Thales got] the notion [of water being the *arche*] perhaps from seeing that the nutriment of all things is moist, and that heat itself is generated from the moist and kept alive by it (and that from which they come to be is a principle of all things). He got his notion from this fact, and from the fact that the seeds of all things have a moist nature, and that water is the origin of the nature of moist things.” (p. 4).

Interpreting the above, it thus follows that water itself was considered the *causa prima* of the world we find ourselves in—namely, that there cannot be any other substance from which the first cause of a thing's essence can come into being. Nkrumah (1970) himself praised Thales' metaphysics for the sheer reason that he was the first Western philosopher to dispel the myth of divine, anthropomorphized (or zo-

omorphized) creation. For, Thales—Nkrumah (1970) considered—was the first naturalist, comparing him to Berkeley’s idealism wherein, “they both seek the origins of the varieties of objects of the world in something which itself forms part of the world.” (p. 12). For Berkeley, these were human ideas and perceptions, whereas for Thales it was water (Nkrumah, 1970). Notwithstanding this, however, Nkrumah (1970) emphasized that the Principle of Sufficient Reason, which outlines that every effect has a cause, ends up contradicting itself when we set out to find out the *cause* of this *causative effect* we call the *arche* of—in Thales’ case—water. If there is such a “basic raw material” out of which cosmogony runs its course, such as water, then its cause must be its very own effect *qua causative effect*; the effect of the *arche* of water must be the cause for its very own effect, which leads to a vicious circle of infinite regress in causality (Nkrumah, 1970).

Drawing from this, Nkrumah (1970) further argued that this paradox of cause and effect when it comes to substantial “first principles”, such as Thales’ water, leads man to one of two axioms adopted: the theistic/deistic perspective, and the atheistic one. In Nkrumah’s (1970) words:

“If, that is to say, the cosmic raw material is conceived to have an origin, then one adopts a theist or a deist position. In either case one posits a force transcendent to the cosmic raw material, and which occasions it. One is a theist if one supposes that this transcendent force is nevertheless immanent after some fashion in what there is, continuing to affect it one way or another. If, on the other hand, one holds the force to be strictly transcendental, and excludes it from the world once made, then one is a deist. If, however, the Principle of Sufficient Reason is thought not to apply to what there is, and the world is thereby denied an outside, then one is an atheist. For this purpose, pantheism is but a kind of atheism. It is atheism using theological language.” (p. 14)

For Nkrumah (1970), it follows that if we were to apply the Principle of Sufficient Reason to first principles/causes as substances, we would have to be transcending the *firstness* of said principles—in that we would be positing another, ultimate first cause that is an immaterial deity from which this first cause arises. This echoes in with the Aristotelian notion that there exists an *unmoved mover* as God who cannot have his own cause, and is, in thus a way, *unmoveable* (Aristotle, n.d.). Similarly, if we choose to not apply the Principle of Sufficient Reason to substantial first causes, we are treating them as un-deified *unmoved movers*, and taking an atheistic standpoint—which, for Nkrumah (1970), is no different to the pantheist who believes that the universe is, itself, God, for in both cases there is no dichotomy between “inside” and “outside” the world, or the immanent and the transcendental.

In spite of the above, however, attempting to find a “Godliness” in the substantial universe, much akin to Thales’ own naturalistic monism, runs into another paradox of its own, I would argue. Namely, if everything ought to come from wa-

ter as its first cause, and water is a substance of the natural world with no supernatural elements (and thus no “inside” and “outside” dichotomy), is the universe composed of water finite, or infinite? If water is itself taken to be something capable of being *finitely* delineated—say, in a glass, or a pot when poured into it—then the first cause becomes a material cause, which Aristotle (n.d.) was himself quick to point out when critiquing Thales’ philosophy, writing, “From these facts one might think that the only cause is the so-called material cause.” (p. 3). Namely, the water—in its finite delineation within the container concerned—divorces itself from an infinitude of spacetime by being solely in the *here and now* examined. It is, in other words, positioned as a *thing* in relation to the receptacle—in this case, spacetime—which “contains” this thing, and delineates it from other things. In this way, spacetime is seen as something separate from the water that it contains, and delineates from other things-in-the-world; the opposition between “outside” and “inside” is again reinstated in the manner elucidated prior, where something is “within” the world (i.e. water), whilst spacetime itself behaves as “outside” this *within-the-worldness* (*In-der-Weltlichkeit*). In such a way, I would argue that the *thingness* of the finite water is fundamentally dependent on a Worldhood that is not—in the Heidegger (1962) sense—dependent on it and its relations to other things, and other subjects *being-in-the-world* (*In-der-Welt-Sein*), but rather that Worldhood is always-already there before the *arche qua water*, its very first cause, comes to be. Such is, in this very way, a paradox, for this finitude would be, moreover, an essence itself of *the* first cause, as if that which is the progenitor of existing things in the world had a beginning or end that divorced it from the world it was present in—yet simultaneously comprising—through coordination (in the *here and now of spacetime*). Consequently, that there would be a *cause* at the moment of this first cause’s *coming-into-existence* follows, thus drawing us back to the infinite regress paradox elucidated in the paragraphs before.

On the contrary, should the universe as made from water be infinite, then there arises the problem whereby this infinitude must be, if we examine it as something external to us—as a scientific object of inquiry—finite, for we examine it from the perspective of a subject in the *here and now*. Thus, if we ought to study the universe, we have to be studying a finite object considered external to the subject which is, in this way, modeled on a certain “end” at the moment the world is studied, and thus not infinite. Nevertheless, this does not—paradoxically—do away with the question of infinitude, for, in this way, Nkrumah (1970) draws parallels to how there may exist an infinitude of negative numbers preceding their “end” at term “0”, quoting Wittgenstein’s own example: “...minus four, minus three, minus two and minus one: I’ve done it! I’ve recited the negative numbers!” (p. 16). I would, furthermore, add to Nkrumah’s own argument with my own by stating that Zeno of Elea had already uncovered this paradox of “finite infinitude”, namely: plurality cannot exist, for if it exists, everything must be finite and infinite simultaneously (Vlastos & Graham, 1995). Zeno argued that if an object has mass,

say, a mass unit “ x ”, then it would be permitted to infinitely divide this mass by a constant—for example, “2” in $(n2)|n = x2N$, $N =$ natural numbers —and never reach an ultimate, finite mass (Vlastos & Graham, 1995). Thus, an infinite number of objects within the set of $\{x|r(x01), xr\}$ must exist which comprise the initial object of finite mass (1st term, $n = x21$) within the aforementioned set, whilst never reaching annulment (0). How something may be both finite, qua 1st term/initial object, and yet simultaneously infinite, was drawn into a question—and this question would, arguably, not be answered dialectically in philosophy until Hegel’s exegesis on the topic of “finite infinitude” (good infinite) versus “infinite infinitude” (spurious infinite) in the *Science of Logic*, two millennia later (Hegel, 2010).

In addition to the above problem posed by an infinitude of the *arche* in a universe devoid of the separation between “inside” and “outside” it, one may also find the argument that: should water as the *arche* be infinite *without* a fall-back on the Zenonian “finite infinitude”, how may we possibly confine it within a particular container and make it finite by all quantifiable measures (ie. a glass of water with a length of x cm, a height of y cm, and a width of z cm)? This is, where I would argue, the Aristotelian theory of the forms comes into play, for a substance is not solely the *matter* that comprises it (ie. water), or the *form* it takes as its shape (ie. water in the shape of a glass), but rather *both* in unison and separation as the very definition of a substance, with Aristotle (n.d.) writing, “It is obvious then, from what has been said, what sensible substance is and how it exists—one kind of it as matter, another as form or actuality, while the third kind is that which is composed of these two.” (p. 81). Nkrumah (1970) himself, to corroborate Aristotle in our analysis, drew his own conclusions from the above paradoxes by stating, “There can, therefore, be no material grounds on which the adjectives, ‘caused’, ‘uncaused’, or ‘finite’, ‘infinite’, can be descriptively applied to the universe.” (p. 16).

It is at this point that Nkrumah (1970) begins to draw up the foundation of his Consciencism *vis-à-vis* the notion of dialectics as that which bridges contradictions in the world, primarily those that create the notional dichotomy of “inside versus outside the world” and a continuity of the world with things therein (in the Heideggerian sense), where he states that:

“Beyond mere formal dialectics, however, one significance of the cosmic contrast of the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of the world is that it implies an acknowledgment that there is a conversion of a process which commences ‘outside’ the world into the world and its contents [and vice versa].” (p. 17)

Nkrumah (1970), furthermore, links the above theorem with several aspects of Christianity, such as donations of wealth to be secured in the “Heavenly Kingdom”, and St. Augustine’s notion that us men—although dwellers of the corporeal world—always return unto incorporeality, for the essence of men is still divine in nature. This stance of Nkrumah’s (1970) was, in addition to the respective Hege-

lian and Marxian dialectical idealism and materialism, largely influenced the philosophy of Anaxagoras, who argued that the world is composed of seeds which arrange and rearrange due to motion (*kinesis*) to create the substances we see as things-in-the-world. This *kinesis*, for Anaxagoras, was assumed to be, however, not of this world—and the only thing not belonging to the world: mind/reason (*nous*) (Nkrumah, 1970). On Anaxagoras, Nkrumah (1970) called him—for the very reason of *kinesis* as the only differentiating principle in a world of similitude—the “first socialist”, positing a theory of a “responsibility of each [seed] for all [*things*], and all for each” (p. 40), writing:

“He [Anaxagoras] did not affirm a mere identity of basic make-up. He put forward a theory of the participation of any one kind of object in every other kind of object. In his philosophy, nature was more firmly united than in any other philosophy. Whereas in democracy it is sufficient to affirm a mere egalitarianism, in socialism it is necessary to affirm a convertible involvement of each in all. In other words, whereas the monists [Thales, Anaximander] in social terms sought to transform an oligarchic society into a democratic one, Anaxagoras sought to transform a democratic one into a socialist society.” (p. 40)

There is a further element to this argument when Nkrumah (1970) directly synthesizes Anaxagoras’ *kinesis* with the dialectical interplay of contradictions between the notion of an “outside”, incorporeal realm of spirituality, and an “inside”, corporeal realm of the world which is solely composed of matter. This synthesis was, arguably, a synthesis itself of the forespoken arguments of metaphysics and cosmogony Nkrumah (1970) tried to reconcile. Namely, where Hegel (2018) labels this self-negating kinetic potential of dialectical movement “Force” (*Kraft*) in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Nkrumah (1970) calls it *categorical conversion*. Further supporting his thesis regarding the preeminence of dialectics in *categorical conversion*, Nkrumah (1970) draws on Heraclitus’ teaching emphasizing the predominance of change and conflict in the world, wherein:

“Strife[...]this see-saw, this sweltering social environment gave birth in the mind of Heraclitus to the idea that the universe itself is an attunement of forces perpetually in strife. From that moment the idea of a finite history was killed and that of the dialectic of history born.” (p. 40)

The notion of *categorical conversion* thus lead to a peculiar syncretism, wherein it was accepted that “mind” and “matter” posed two distinct categories of existence in the world, whilst nonetheless bridging the dualistic gap with a form of metaphysical interactionism that was itself subjected to dialectics (Nkrumah, 1970). For instance, Nkrumah (1970) gives the rather-well-nuanced example of traditional, sub-Saharan African societies which resorted to animistic practices prior to the arrival of the Abrahamic religions on the subcontinent, writing:

“The dialectical contradiction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ was reduced by

making the visible world continuous with the invisible world. For them heaven was not outside the world but inside it. These African societies did not accept transcendentalism, and may indeed be regarded as having attempted to synthesize opposites ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ by making them continuous, that is, by abolishing them.” (p. 17)

In other words, and to give an example of my own, should I fall ill with a disease, and simultaneously belong to an animistic African tribe with little influence of the transcendental, Abrahamic notions of God (or Yahweh, Christ, Allah, etc.), the worldview of that tribe would be that—while I have fallen ill physically, and while it would be *known* that I have fallen ill due to a physical agent of some sort, with, say, a hemorrhagic diathesis that is within the corporeal realm—the tribe would likewise couple my corporeal manifestations of illness with those of an incorporeal, supernatural entity that resides among us as *being-in-the-world* (*In-der-Welt-Sein*). This example I have drawn primarily from the 2019 TV series *The Hot Zone*, based on Richard Preston’s 1994 best-seller of the same name, wherein an American virologist, Carter, sent to Zaïre during the 1976 Ebola virus outbreak in Yambuku sits with a chief of an Ebola-afflicted tribe (Hart, 2019). The chief tells Carter that he knows it is a virus which is afflicting his people, but *why* some people, and not others, are afflicted by the virus is due to supernatural forces (Hart, 2019). A short while later, the chief—having fallen ill himself—asks Carter to spare his village of any more infections, and burn the house he is convalescing in, indicating an awareness that even though supernatural forces of the incorporeal realm may aid in setting the ease of viral permissivity in a specific target, the transmissibility of the virus within the corporeal realm was well known by this remote tribe (Hart, 2019). Thus, the continuity in interplay between the corporeal and incorporeal realms—while depicted over half a century since Nkrumah’s death on the television screen—was exemplified yet again.

The above, although a fictional account, echoes in well with the real-life example of the “power of the spoken word” as a causative agent of illnesses in West African traditional societies, expounded on by Anizoba (2021), which elucidates that a certain, materially-grounded signifier (i.e. word sound-image) is able to evoke the curse of ancestors which have long since passed on to the spirit realm, highlighting the interplay of Man in mediation between the immanent and transcendental realms as per Nkrumah’s *categorical conversion*. In the same way, Anizoba (2021) gives yet another compelling example we may link back to *categorical conversion* there where the *ogbanje*—reincarnated “spirit children” of Yoruba mythology which cause mischief unto the living—are in a perpetuating cycle of death and rebirth; a shuttling between the immanent and the transcendental realms. The *ogbanje* die young in the immanent realm, return to the transcendental (spiritual) one, and are reborn again within immanentness, exemplifying their mediatory prowess as “synthesizers” of “inside” and “outside” registers, to use Nkrumah’s (1970) own terminology.

To lend a final credence to the above argument of *categorical conversion*

from a curative perspective, on the contrary, the unique position of faith healers and “witchdoctors”—who could, arguably more than anyone within the semiosphere of the tribal world, effectively serve as a bridge of continuity between the two realms—should not be forgotten, for amidst the “magic”, there remains also the scientifically-supported use of flavonoids, terpenes, and alkaloids from medicinal herbs as treatments for illnesses by these faith healers (White, 2015).

3. To Be—Thinghood and Objectness

Whilst Nkrumah’s notion of *categorical conversion* nevertheless deals with the existence of things in-the-world, one question that has as of yet remained untouched is the distinction between “Existence” and “Being”, for metaphysics itself leaves the two largely undifferentiated. This is precisely where ontology as a field of inquiry must come to light. Aristotle (1931), in *On the Soul (De Anima)*, deals with the distinction between Being and Existence with a thorough exegesis on the concept of the soul. The soul, according to Aristotle (1931), is the essence of any living thing, such that this living *thing* is accorded a form: the form of the soul. To this extent, Aristotle (1931) endeavors into explaining two concepts as they relate to a living thing: *actuality* and *potentiality*.

Actuality entails two distinct, albeit converging, states in Aristotle’s philosophy to describe a *thing-being-in-its-own-type*—namely: *energeia* (ἐνέργεια) and *entelecheia* (ἐντελέχεια) (Sachs & Aristotle, 1995). *Energeia* is a *being-in-its-own-type* of a particular type of action, whilst *entelecheia* is the teleological conclusion of an *energeia*, thereby presupposing that—for example—in building a house, the building action is a *being-in-its-own-type qua* “building”, whilst the *telos* (end) of the building action is the finished house (Sachs & Aristotle, 1995). On the other hand, *potentiality* (*dunamis*, δύναμις) refers to the capacity to *bring-into-actuality* (*bring-into-being-in-its-own-type*) (Sachs & Aristotle, 1995). Aristotle (n.d.) further describes matter as having *potentiality*, and form having *actuality*, for, “The potency [potentiality], being, as matter, universal and indefinite, deals with the universal and indefinite; but the actuality, being definite, deals with a definite object, being a ‘this’, it deals with a ‘this’.” (p. 141).

In other words, Aristotle (n.d.) may be interpreted as saying that *potentiality* as a *bringing-into-actuality* must be understood to encompass matter as the element of a *substance* as spoken of prior, as matter is that which may *bring-into-actuality* the form *qua entelecheia* of the completed *substance*. Not only is this the case, but the process of *bringing-into-actuality* as an existential process which Exists in-the-world is already an actuality of its own kind, the actuality of *energeia* as movement (*kinesis*) towards a *telos* (*entelecheia*) (Sachs & Aristotle, 1995). This is exemplified where Sachs & Aristotle (1995) highlights that, when a man walks across a room, “The actuality of the potentiality to be on the other side of the room, as just that potentiality, is neither more nor less than the walking across the room.” and that:

“The genus of which motion [movement] is a species is being-at-work-staying-itself (*entelecheia*), of which the only other species is thinghood. The being-at-work-staying-itself of a potency [potentiality] (*dunamis*), as material, is thinghood. The being-at-work-staying-the-same of a potency as a potency is motion.” (pp. 78-79).

A particular moment in which the lapsus between Being and mere Existence comes into light is precisely the moment where *kinesis*, in the Aristotelian sense, is understood as the *actualization* of a *potentiality-qua-potentiality* as opposed to the *actualization* of a *potentiality's* teleological *thinghood* in a *staying-itself* (-*in-itself*). In other words, Aristotelian *kinesis* may be likened to the dialectical “Force” of Hegel (2018) which is a *force proper* insofar as it negates its meditative action between a given set of contradictions by becoming something “mediately immediate” in itself in this process, and thus an *actuality* in its own accord by being that which gives a happening in-the-world to *potentiality*. If we take Existence to mean anything *which is*, then it of course follows that *energeia qua kinesis* Exists, for *it is* as an *actuality* (*being-in-its-own-type*). However, *kinesis* may solely Exist by virtue of the fact that it does not attain its *telos* as *entelecheia*, for at the moment that *kinesis* is transfigured into a species “*being-at-work-staying-itself*” it must cease to be a “*being-at-work-staying-the-same*”, if *staying-the-same* ought to be interpreted as procedural in nature (Sachs & Aristotle, 1995). The procedural aspect of giving a *happening-in-the-world* to a *potentiality* must entail a fundamental dissolution of self-reference in terms of *thinghood*, if the above argument is followed, wherein *thinghood* is reserved for *entelecheiae*. Nevertheless, as we have examined, *energeia/kinesis* may itself be a self-referential *thinghood*—in the Hegelian sense of Force, for instance—for it is still an *actuality* as *being-in-its-own-type*. Thus, we come to a certain paradox of *thinghood* which may only be logically delineated by answering the deeper question of Being.

Heidegger (1971), for instance, distinguishes *thinghood*, especially from *objectness*, in an apophantic fashion, such that the *thinghood* of a thing attains such status by the capacity to *no-longer-exist* in a given space, and at a given time. In this regard, Heidegger (1971) gives the example of a jug, such that:

“[...]no representation of what is present, in the sense of what stands forth and of what stands over against as an object, ever reaches to the thing qua thing. The jug’s thingness resides in its being *qua* vessel. We become aware of the vessel’s holding nature when we fill the jug” (pp. 166)

And

“When we fill the jug, the pouring that fills it flows into the empty jug. The emptiness, the void, is what does the vessel’s holding. The empty space, this nothing of the jug, is what the jug is as the holding vessel.” (p. 167)

In other words, what Heidegger (1971) argues for in this passage is that the *jugness qua thinghood* of the jug comes from its capacity to “hold” a certain vol-

ume of fluid. Nonetheless, in its capacity to “hold” something, it also carries the capacity to, a) *no-longer-be-as-empty-existence* before it comes to hold something, or b) *no-longer-be-as-holding-existence* when its contents are poured out (Heidegger, 1971). Thus, a certain void (*manque*) comes to be an essential element of *thinghood* in the aforementioned terms of the jug, and Heidegger (1971) himself corroborates this by explaining the paradoxical nature that, “The twofold holding of the void rests on the outpouring. In the outpouring, the holding is authentically how it is.” (p. 169). *Objectness*, on the other hand, would refer to the physical properties of the jug that can be said to Exist for the perceiver thereof—its length, width, height, etcetera (Heidegger, 1971). In this way, *objectness* may be relegated to a necessary condition that satisfies any given set of categories in the work of Aristotle (2000), where such categories describe—or we may say *inscribe*—the qualities of a certain thing. These qualities *inscribe* predicates (such as quality, quantity, relationality, etcetera) on whose *objectness* a thing is founded, and—consequently—whose absence the *thinghood* of a thing is founded on, likewise.

The above—and certainly necessary—distinction between *thinghood* and *objectness* by Heidegger (1971) is made more pronounced there where Heidegger argues that *thinghood* is not merely an apophantic delineation, but an ability of this apophantic nature of the “void” of the *thing* to gather seemingly-unrelated and non-corresponding categories (such as mortals and immortals, Earth and Sky, etcetera) into a solidarity: a “gathering”. For instance, in ancient rituals, the capacity of the jug to be “voided” by an outpouring took on various significations which could be converged beyond the material limits of spacetime (i.e. an outpouring as libation for the Gods of the transcendental realm, or an outpouring of drink of water to sustain mortal life in the immanent, and diametrically opposed one), such that:

“The gift of the outpouring is a gift because it stays earth and sky, divinities and mortals. Yet staying is now no longer the mere persisting of something that is here. Staying appropriates. It brings the four into the light of their mutual belonging. From out of staying’s simple onefoldness they are betrothed, entrusted to one another. At one in thus being entrusted to one another, they are unconcealed. The gift of the outpouring stays the onefold of the fourfold of the four. And in the poured gift the jug presences as jug [*qua thing*].” (p. 171)

We can thus conclude that *thinghood* must—of its very essence—be comprised of an Aristotelian *potentiality* that is not to be found in the concreteness of an *actuality*: either in its modality of *energeial kinesis* as “*being-at-work-staying-the-same*” or its entelecheia as “*being-at-work-staying-itself*”. Thus, it follows that *thinghood* as an apophantic essence cannot be *what is*, and thus cannot Exist, insofar as its very nature is predicated on *non-Existence/no-longer-Existence*.

If, however, *thinghood* is a non-actual *potentiality*, and is thus based on non-Existence, then its basis is in matter, for, as we have seen, *potentiality* lies within

the material constituent of a substance (Aristotle, n.d.). It is leading on from this fact that I would argue that Nkrumah's (1970) emphasis on the primacy of the material in *categorical conversion* comes to prominence, for—even if we are not dealing at the level of an Existence of an *objectness*, an *objective* nature—the apophantic nature of matter as a *no-longer-existing* itself still holds truth. For instance, the eventual, natural, and rather abstractly-conceptualized decay of uranium-238 radionuclides to their daughter element of thorium-234 in x billion years is what makes uranium-238 itself as a shadow of its *objectness*, for it is in the *potential to no-longer-exist* that its *thingness* is distinguished from its *objective* Existence as “ x kilograms of uranium-238, with y amount of radionuclides, and z atomic radii wide”, *ad infinitum*. To this extent, Aristotle (n.d.) himself delineates the uniqueness of *potentiality* as opposed to *actuality* wherein only *potentiality* holds the capacity to be its opposite (*contrary*), while *actuality* is fixed in a given form that does not tolerate its contrary, stating, “The capacity for contraries [*qua potentiality*], then, is present at the same time; but contraries cannot be present at the same time, and the actualities [embodying them] also cannot be present at the same time, e.g. health and illness” (p. 92). In this way, the same uranium-238 has the *potentiality* to be used in, for instance, generating plutonium, *or* has the *potentiality not-to-be-used* as such—which, I would argue, is the locus of its very utility to mankind: a utility *qua thinghood*.

From this position we may deduce what *to be* entails more clearly than ever; namely, Being is only ever defined as its capacity to its negative. A tarrying with itself as that which emerges in the shadow of its Existence is what Being must be said to entail as its fundamental essence. Yet to stop here with our inquiry would be to forget the locus in which this tarrying with itself *qua* negative is brought forth: the locus of the material. It is only in matter that contraries, as we have seen, may be brought forth, for it is in matter that *potentiality* is a *potentiality-to-exist* or *potentiality-not-to-exist* as a certain substance—and in which these two contrary *potentialities* may co-exist until set into *actuality* (either as *energeia* or *entelecheia*). And as the form of a substance as a reciprocal to its matter is, for Aristotle (n.d.), something which cannot both Exist and not-Exist simultaneously—it is an *actuality* that allows no room for a lack thereof—so it follows that form itself cannot Be. The essence of the form of a substance, we may conclude thus, is that it solely Exists, and never Bes.

Aristotle (n.d.) himself subtly recognizes this there where he argues that, “that which is spoken of as form [...] is not produced, but the concrete thing which gets its name from this is produced, and that in everything which is generated matter is present, and one part of the thing is matter and the other form.” (p. 68). In other words, the form of a substance *always-already* Exists as an abstraction-in-retrospect after its coming to Existence, and is thus not itself produced by the efficient cause moving matter to create it therefrom. Nevertheless, however concretely Aristotle (n.d.) tries to put the aforementioned as an opposition in his critique of Platonism, this disjunction between form and matter takes up, arguably, a sur-

prising level of abstraction, leveraging however much of a distance of substance away from the material conditions of production necessitated to bring it into Existence.

In such a way, furthermore, it becomes evident to see why *actuality* cannot be said to be—in spite of its *objective* nature—something to be found within the material conditions of the world, for its sole dependence rests on the assumption of transcendental forms that are themselves transcendent to the production process (yet are, nevertheless, still *within-the-world*, and thus not something external to it, insofar as the World cannot be conceived of without the difference bestowed upon it by these *actualities*). The *objectness* as such of an object is, in spite of being reducible to the materialism of the signifiers that quantify it, something which itself has to come out of the acquisition of a further, *formal* character of said object that had no basis in material reality *per se*. Even the “*x kilograms, y centimeters wide, z centimeters long...*” categorization of any Existent thing, while—of course—seeming physicalistic at first glance, entails the *formalization* of these qualities viz. *the form of x kilograms, the form of y centimeters wide, and the form of z centimeters long*, which concatenate into a respective form of the object interrogated. *Potentiality*, on the other hand, is that which always occurs as part of the material, determined by the interplay of units of matter indistinguishable in essence on their own. For, matter is the only thing that can carry the possibility to induce change in-the-world viz. dialectical resolution and creation-anew of contradictions, whilst forms remain static in order to be *formal* (“to mould”—*formare*). Yet precisely how it is possible for a transcendental, abstract form giving an object Existence *qua actuality* is to be coupled to the dialectical nature of matter—without pitfalling into the *hard problem* in the philosophy of mind—remains a mystery yet to be explored.

If the above arguments are true, then the form of a substance as applied to a living thing—namely, its soul—also lies in wait for the locomotive of mystery to run it over. The soul as that “which is the actuality of a certain kind of body” (Aristotle, 1931: p. 16) cannot Be, even though it Exists. But if the soul is not a necessary part of Being a living thing by virtue of its inability to *not-exist*, then how do we account for whether Man *qua* living thing is a Being, or an objective Existence? Furthermore, what logic delineates the possibility of both not simultaneously co-existing at the same time as different categorical modes of life for Man himself?

Aristotle (1931), perhaps noticing this issue at stake, attempts a synthesis of the notions of *actuality* and *potentiality* through the introduction of the concept of a “*first actuality*” as an equivalent to a principal *potentiality-to-exist* as a living thing:

“[...]the word actuality has two senses corresponding respectively to the *possession of knowledge* and the actual *exercise of knowledge*. It is obvious that the soul is actuality in the first sense, viz. that of knowledge as possessed, for both sleeping and waking presuppose the existence of soul, and of these wak-

ing corresponds to actual knowing, sleeping to knowledge possessed but not employed, and, in the history of the individual, knowledge comes before its employment or exercise.” (p. 14)

To paraphrase, Aristotle (1931) states that the soul is the very medium that has to Exist as an *a priori actuality* in order for it to bring about the *potentiality-to-exist* of any other, subsequent substance concerning a living thing embodying it, or—in the above case—man himself. That is, this *a priori actuality* of the soul is what establishes a different trajectory of *potentiality* for living and non-living things. This may be said to solve the paradigm of infinite regress—at least in terms of living things—which necessitates a return to a “*primary potentiality*” from which every *actuality* flows, which in turn must—insofar as it is a *potentiality* as a *potentiality-to-actuality/existence*—give way on its own accord to a *capacity-not-to-exist* as that which its *actualized Existence* as a *potentiality* is predicated on. For instance, in Aristotle’s (1931) case of the man who has an *actual* predisposition to using knowledge, yet who does not use it when he is sleeping as he does when he is awake, this predisposition to knowledge is an *actuality qua potentiality* in itself, and one of the characteristics of his soul as that *actuality* which allows the subsequent *potentialities* of his character to develop. Thus, this outlook offers a bridging point, particularly in light of man, for the two seemingly-dichotomized categories at hand, and—arguably—affords Aristotle (n.d.) somewhat of a placation for his notion that “actuality is prior to potency” (p. 121).

It is precisely the above resolution to the dichotomy of Being and Existence that may be said to be pivotal in Nkrumah’s (1970) own formulation of Conscientism. Namely, the centrality of the soul of man—particularly African man—as something which is neither material *potentiality*, nor purely abstract form as an *actuality*, but both, as Nkrumah argues, cannot be ignored (Nkrumah, 1970). For, it may be argued the whole principle of *categorical conversion* rests on there being a commonality that bridges the dichotomy between the immanent and the transcendental (Nkrumah, 1970). But where the immanent is, for Aristotle (n.d.), both the domain of *potentiality* and *actuality*—and the transcendental of forms formally negated (to however contradictory an extent, as we have seen above)—Nkrumah (1970), I would argue, presents more authentically the *thinghood* viz. Heidegger as the basis of material conditions of *potentiality*, and *objectness* as the *actuality* that resides within the powers of transcendental forms—yet which do not ‘transcend’ their own *Being-in-the-world (In-der-Welt-Sein)*, inasmuch as the World contains them as materially-irreducible-albeit-continuous with it, and constitutive of it. The commonality to be found between *thinghood* and *objectness* thereby, I would argue—and such a commonality which allows a mediation in the first place between these two, irreducible categories—is none other than that which belongs to the soul: a Being and an Existence—an Existential Being, and is as such the fundamental basis for *categorical conversion* to unfold.

4. Nkrumah's Formulation of Existential Being

If, nevertheless, what establishes an Existential Being as a peculiar mode of *potential actuality*, or *actual potentiality*, is its soul, it still remains important for us to see both why Man himself occupies a special reservation as *the* Existential Being *qua* Man, and how Nkrumah himself may be said to treat this unique reservation. For, certainly it is indubitable that every thing may be said to have an *actuality* as form, and a material *potentiality*, and is as such indistinct from “Existential Being” on its own (Aristotle, n.d.). To do this, however, we would benefit from a revisiting of this uniqueness to Man in light of Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*.

Dasein (being-there) is a mode of Being and Existence that is peculiar to Man in that “in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it.” (Heidegger, 1962: p. 32). It is through *Dasein*'s ability to understand the fleeting nature of its Being, primarily as a *being-towards-death* (*Sein-zum-Tod*), that its modality of Being is unique to it (Heidegger, 1962). This faculty of *understanding*, as opposed to mere *knowing*—in the Jung (2002) sense where *knowing* is founded upon a rationalization of conflicting with the irrationality of man's unconscious—is what is unique to man: it is unique precisely because it is an Existential issue for him (Heidegger, 1962). In this way, the Heidegger (1962) uniqueness of Man *qua Dasein* may be said to be a furthering of Aristotle's (1931) notion that man's soul is unique by virtue of his “calculative” faculties, wherein “those who successfully resist temptation [mankind] have appetite and desire [as animals] and yet follow mind and refuse to enact that for which they have appetite” (p. 42). No longer must we consider, thus, Man as of a merely “calculating” soul, but that this calculation itself entails deeper layers of *understanding* which give Man his peculiar position as the only Existential Being *qua Dasein*.

Nkrumah's (1970) notion of Being, as we have seen, revolves around the “painless recognition of the objectivity of different types of being.” (pp. 85 & 86). But does Nkrumah not himself recognize the answer we seek in his position on man's Existential Being—namely, where he vouches for the *pain* it produces? This capacity to feel *pain*, of course, is not reserved for humans. But it is Pain with a capital “P” that I would use to invoke the unique mode of existential angst Man faces, and which the existentialists (Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, etc.) have before me. Man's uniqueness in Existential Being is precisely what allows him the faculty to experience Pain: Pain as an anxious condition, and “that which anxiety is anxious about is Being-in the world itself.” (Heidegger, 1962: p. 232). Pain is *Painful* because of its realization—viz. *understanding*—of a certain *fading*; a *fading* of *actuality* in favor of *potentiality*, a *fading* of Man from his Existence into his authentic mode of Being. This *fading* is none other than the *understanding* of death (*Tod*), and *Dasein* as always-already a *Being-towards-death* (*Sein-zum-Tod*).

In this very way, Nkrumah (1970) aims to prescriptively disestablish the Painfulness of this experience; an experience of *authenticity*, where *authentic Dasein* refers to the state of *Dasein* that has come to terms with its “*ownmost* potentiality-

for-Being.” (Heidegger, 1962: p. 264), ultimately as *death*. But perhaps that is where he sets up his own ontological approach—a “radical acceptance” of the flux between Being and Existence which, at any given point, may sweep an Existential Being into its dichotomizing grasp. From the *Wuji* come *Yin* and *Yang*—from the monad a dyad—the Chinese teach us, and such is the same in the case of Existential Being—if not being directly inspired by its vicissitudes, I daresay. It is Nkrumah’s (1970) prescriptive assertion that our acceptance of this flux be Painless—in a rather Buddhist sense of “letting go”—where his “different types of being” refer to, in actuality, the flirtatious dance of *potentiality* and *actuality* in Existential Being, as distinct from any other *thing-in-the-world*.

Moreover, when it comes to the question of the “primacy of the material”, for Nkrumah (1970) it should—in the above way—be understood as the primacy of a *thinghood*. But *thinghood*, as we have seen, is what Existence precisely leaves in its wake when it *ceases-to-exist*. The *void* of the jug, for Heidegger (1971), could not be a *void* unless some entity Existed both a) to fill it prior, and b) within an Existing container of *objectness* as the object of the jug. The primacy of this *thinghood* Nkrumah (1970) describes in the following way by way of example of Einstein’s theory of General Relativity:

“If the sole existence of matter is asserted, then space and time, insofar as they are not matter, must be unreal. Philosophical consciencism does not assert the sole reality of matter. Rather it asserts the primary reality of matter. Here again, if space were absolute and independent, matter could not with respect to it be primary. Therefore philosophical consciencism, in asserting the primary existence of matter, also maintains that space must, to the extent that it is real, derive its properties from those of matter through a categorial conversion. And since the properties of space are geometrical, it then follows from philosophical consciencism that the geometry of space is determined by the properties of matter [...] In Einstein’s Theory, the loss is calculable according to the general formula $e = mc^2$ where e represents ergs of energy, m mass, and c the velocity of light [...] According to philosophical consciencism, however, though the whole of this amount of mass is converted, it is not all of it which is converted to the emergent properties. In actual chemical changes, some of it transpires as heat. 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.” (pp. 84 & 85)

In other words, Nkrumah (1970) purports that *categorial conversion* is solely able to proceed by way of a *loss (manque)*, such as a *loss* of energy when mass (m) is converted into its corresponding energetic value (e). As such, *thinghood*, as itself a *loss-of-Existence* (loss of *actuality* of “jug of water” ness when emptied), and yet a *potentiality-for-Existence* (filling the jug to create a “jug of water”) by that

same token, must be understood as the pretext for any and all future transmutations of *categorical conversion* in Nkrumah's (1970) philosophy. Thus, it becomes clear to see why there is a "primacy of the material": by virtue of the fact that there is a *potentiality to lose* the *actuality* of a form of matter, the transcendental form that gives this *actuality* to matter is itself created. But, if this is the case, then it likewise holds true that Nkrumah subjects himself to paradox in light of our analysis, for how may one category be "primary" in light of the other, and create it—insofar as creation invokes a cause for an *a posteriori* effect—if it is itself predicated on the *a priori* existence of this other category?

The above paradox, nonetheless, becomes resolved when we take into account the physics formula posited itself. For, in Einstein's $E = mc^2$, one finds the answer to the problem at hand. Energy (E) is equal to mass (m) subjected to the *function of the square of light's speed in a vacuum* (c^2). There is a *conversion* of mass to energy *if and only if* light's speed in a vacuum acts on it, and this speed is a constant (2.99×10^8 meters per second). Similarly, energy can only convert into mass *alongside* this constant, and never mass on its own standing. What acts as a mediator, in both respects, between energy and mass is the speed of light, squared, and as such there is no possibility for their conversion without the *a priori* existence of this quantum of a fixed value: 2.99×10^8 m/s. The very fact that this quantum is fixed indicates that it is to be understood in the Nkrumaist terms as "matter", for it is a "quantitative disposition" (Nkrumah, 1970: p. 85), and not a qualitative one: it has a value assigned to it. And whilst light itself is massless, according to physics—and thus has no quantifier of mass, seemingly making it purely qualitative and transcendental in nature—the sheer fact that its speed is quantitative means that it fits within the classification of "matter", and allows us to equate it viz. its energy via the formula: $E = hcv$ (E = energy, h = Planck's constant [6.626×10^{-34} J/s], c = speed of light [2.99×10^8 m/s], v = frequency [Hertz]). Thus, the "primacy of matter" Nkrumah argues for in terms of the function of lightspeed is evident, and supported by physics.

Yet we must not be quick to be complacent, for—in the above way—we have negated *potentiality*, and posed an *actual* value (2.99×10^8) that seemingly "defines" light; we have made it into a formal thing viz. Aristotle. And, we have seen that for Aristotle (n.d.), matter *is potentiality*. This, I would argue, is solved when we realize that light is a quantized thing in itself *only because* it has speed, but that this quantum is not its only feature—light is also *only itself* by virtue of the fact that it is the only massless, standalone substance (with *potentiality qua matter* and *actuality qua form*) known. Thus, light—in addition to its *objectness* viz. its speed—also carries with it a simultaneous *thinghood* viz. its virtual *inExistence*. And its *objectness* viz. speed cannot Exist without the *thinghood* that is its elusive nature/*inExistence* as an entity, for its speed belongs to itself and itself only (nothing in Existence travels at-or-faster-than lightspeed). It is precisely this unique property of light which I would argue allows the active state of *conversion* between seemingly unbridgeable categories (i.e. energy and mass) to occur.

If, thus, to Einsteinian physics light is the *objectness-thinghood* mediator of mass and energy, I would then argue that metaphysics and ontology finds its correspondent in the Existential Being that is *Dasein*. Namely, *Dasein* as Existential Being finds itself as the *sole mediator* with an Existence grounded in the *objectness* of the form of The Man (with all its features), and Being grounded in the *thinghood* of Man as that *lack (manque)* of himself that structures his subjectivity. For, no matter how he attempts to quantize himself in spatiotemporal finitude, Man will always fail to fully represent himself in his immanent signifiers-at-hand (Lacan, 2002).

In the attempt to sketch the nature of Existential Being in light of Nkrumah's Consciencism, we have, however, failed to address a final, important aspect of *Dasein*: its *being-in-the-world (In-der-Welt-Sein)*. *Dasein*, for Heidegger (1962), always finds itself in a world of other *Daseins*—other people—in addition to things that merely Exist (as means to an end, or *ready-to-hand*, and as ends in their own respect, or *present-at-hand*). *Dasein*, thus, finds itself amongst other Existential Beings in its world, to tie it to our analytic.

Not only is this *being-alongside (Mitsein)* other Existential Beings present in Heidegger's (1962) corpus, but this phenomenon itself edifies the idea purported by Nkrumah's (1970) African socialism that communal life takes precedence over individual life, and that the individual solely Exists because the community Exists (*Ubuntu*)—a notion particular to African societies. Accordingly, Archbishop Desmond Tutu has explained this notion as, “Ubuntu says not ‘you are human because you think’, [but] ‘you are human because you participate in relationships’” (Tutu, 2013). In this respect, Nkrumah (1967), in *African Socialism Revisited*, explained that “what socialist thought in Africa must recapture is not the structure of the “traditional African society” but its spirit, for the spirit of communalism is crystallised in its humanism and in its reconciliation of individual advancement with group welfare.” (p. 1). This spirit of humanism is precisely what Kenneth Kaunda (1968) calls “the greatest blessing bestowed on Africa” (p. 5) in that it is “Man enjoying the fellowship of Man simply because he is Man” (p.5). Nevertheless, even Kaunda (1968) argued that African society cannot merely regress to the past in this regard, but must orient in the implementation of the metaphysical Spirit (*Geist*) of African humanism in an ever-modernizing world of industrialization, writing:

“Our past is rich with this type of society [humanistic], for that is how the people of old lived. From this we must get our strength to plan for our new society, always bearing in mind that there is also a lot that is good from other people who, for many reasons, good or bad, are now able to mix with us in the new international community.” (p. 27)

What the spirit of humanism proposed by African socialists allows us to deduce is not that the African community ought to be an *objectness*-template to be followed by modern African society. Rather, it is precisely in the *Master Signifier* of Spirit, a *thinghood* that has only retroactively emerged after the collapse of tra-

ditional society as a *potentiality* anew, that it should draw a kind of *mana* to organize contemporary, developing society around as it *actualizes* in *kinesis qua developing*, and eventual form (the Form of the Developed). This *thinghood* of Spirit, however, is none other—I would argue—than the *thinghood* of the very humanity of *Daseins* that have lived it once, but do not live it anymore. In such a way, the *humanism* of African socialism may be said to be none other than an embodiment of ancestral *Dasein* as an ever-haunting specter, to muse on Derrida (1994), perpetually haunting the *actuality* of contemporary societies as its *potentiality*—its guide to future Existence. In such a way, has African socialism not brought forth a resolution to the “supernatural” notion of Spirit by grounding it in materialism itself? This being the case does not, however, ignore the fact that—even in ancestry—African societies have had a way to express *Dasein* to, arguably, its utmost capability in their sheer emphasis of Man’s role as “mediator” between the categorical and transcendental realms, as we have seen (Nkrumah, 1970). Perhaps it is precisely because of this particular point that African socialism had found such a firm footing in the first place—a firm footing in the ontological and metaphysical by being the only ideology purporting Existential Being (unlike the dehumanizing, Existent Marxist-Leninism, or the abstractly individualistic Being of capitalism) (Kaunda, 1968).

Nevertheless, in this detailed exegesis on Nkrumah’s conception of Being—the interfaces where Consciencism grapples with African society as it *has-Existed* and *is-Existing*, and is yet to Exist—the applications of such an ontology cannot be said to stop at the level of postcolonial analysis of African society. Rather, I would argue that Nkrumah’s theory, and the African situation, will be intricately applicable to contemporary, technologically-saturated society, and the crisis of Being it produces in *Dasein*.

5. Consciencism and Enframing in the Era of Technology

Aside from the detailed exposition on ontology as it relates to human Existence, the later Heidegger (1977) also flirts with the question of Being as it relates to our ever-expanding age of technology. In the 1954 essay, *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger (1977) sets out to define the essence of technology by examining the way humanity related to it in the past, and how it related to it in the late-industrial present of the Cold War era. In spite of the relevance of this piece at the time—coinciding with the Third Industrial Revolution and post-war economic boom—many would, nevertheless, argue that Heidegger’s insights remain so to this day (Huttunen & Kakkori, 2021). In this part in particular, I would like to focus on why precisely Nkrumah’s Consciencism outlined previously, especially in light of its unique notion of Being, bears a further synthetic potential with Heidegger’s notions in the domain of technology.

Heidegger (1977) begins his essay by evoking the question of what the essence of technology is, and arguing that such an essence cannot be found in a conception of technology as an *instrumentality*: a mere means (*energeia*) to an *actuality-as-*

end (*entelecheia*), writing, “Technology is therefore no mere means.” (p. 12). In this light, Heidegger (1977) further explains that technology is itself likewise capable of being an end *qua entelecheia*, as it is the effect which is caused by the conception of its product *in potentia* by Man. For, if we understand technology to be a mere means, and a mere cause that produces an effect *qua* product, we fail to see the fact that the conception of the *need-to-Exist-as-product*—in which case it is a liminal *not-yetness* as a *potentiality* for the product—is itself a cause for the *actualization* of the *energeia* necessary to give the product Existence (Heidegger, 1977).

This pivotal point, for Heidegger (1977), is distinguishing the essence of technology—and its human operators—in the “past” versus “present”, with technology in the past having been not a mere means to an end of manufacturing (*instrument*), as was mentioned, but that which allowed a certain active relation between its causes in what is called “*bringing-forth*” (*Her-vor-bringen*). *Bringing forth*, Heidegger (1977) explains, is that which “brings hither out of concealment forth into concealment” (p. 11), an act which he calls “revealing”. In such a way, *revealing* is constitutive of the Truth (*aletheia*) of the thing at hand—its relation to Existence as an *actuality*, in our analytic (Heidegger, 1962). Past technology, likewise, was not solely concerned with the *revealing* of a product in the sense of *physis*, or a *bringing-forth* out of itself (*en heautoi*)—like a flower that blooms from a plant—but also entailed a different type of *poiesis* (creation/making) that *brought-forth* in another (*en alloi*): the artisan as Man himself operating the technology (Heidegger, 1977). In this *bringing-forth* of himself, Man was—in a sense paralleled to Marx—able to *actualize* himself through his *potential-to-produce* via tools and machines, and as the possessor of his labor’s Truth imbued with his *Existence-as-producer*. Heidegger (1977) thus concludes this part by saying, “Technology is a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence (*West*) in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth, happens.” (p. 13).

Furthermore, Heidegger’s (1977) emphasis was that technology—in the past—served as a *gathering* we spoke of prior in relation to the *thinghood* of the jug. This ability of technology to *gather-together* the Aristotelian Four Causes [the formal cause (the form of the product), efficient cause (artisan as maker), material cause (what matter comprises the product), and final cause (the *telos* of the product)] was something unique to—and defining of—the *bringing-forth* of past technology as its essence, moreover (Heidegger, 1977). For, technology was not a mere means for manufacture, but an instrument of an *actualizing* a Truth which was always-already there, but which has come into unconcealment from being hidden (Heidegger, 1977).

At the turn of the Third Industrial Revolution—which saw a gradual replacement of the Fordist, centralized production model with the post-Fordist and decentralized one (Dormois, 2013)—Heidegger found himself questioning the very *bringing-forth* then-modern technology introduced into society, such as gene

technology and nuclear power, although his critique undoubtedly reached, in retrospect, the vicissitudes of the Second Industrial Revolution of mass production, too (Huttunen & Kakkori, 2021). Heidegger (1977) noticed that technology in the modern age halts the above-explained *poiesis* characteristic of past technology as a way of *revealing*, and instead purports itself towards a different kind of *revealing*: *Enframing* (*Ge-stell*). *Enframing* is a “way of revealing having the character of destining, namely, the way that *challenges-forth*.” (Heidegger, 1971: p. 29), where *challenging-forth*—as opposed to our aforesaid *bringing-forth*—treats the world, and Man as part of it, as a *standing-reserve* to be set-upon. This *standing-reserve*, for Heidegger (1977), refers to a form of spatiotemporal paralysis of things-in-the-world, writing, “Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering.” (p. 17). The examples emblematic of contemporary technology Heidegger (1977) gives thereby are those of the hydroelectric power station, with the power plant and its workers “lying in wait” as a *standing-reserve* (being *challenged-forth*) on the prowess of the river to *reveal* itself in its capacity to generate electricity, as well as the airliner on the runway, with it, its pilots, passengers—and, arguably, the entire labor force of the airport—*challenged-forth* to the prospect of taking off, with no gesticulation to *poiesis*. I would, further, extend these examples to those of the twenty-first century, such as the rise of artificial intelligence (A.I.) predicted to attain a self-augmenting singularity wherein Man’s decision-making capacity, from economics to healthcare, may be subordinated to that of a completely-autonomous A.I. system (Mucci, 2025).

In such a way, the *standing-reserve* sets these things, to relate to Heidegger’s (1962) earlier work, *Being and Time*, as *present-at-hand*: there to be examined not as per its use value, but as an object of examination. Nevertheless, it is precisely this which, Heidegger (1977) says, negates the *objectness* of the object *present-at-hand*, writing, “whatever stands by in the sense of *standing-reserve* no longer stands over against us as object.” (p. 17).

I would argue that this is for no other reason than the fact that—if we examine an object without its purpose and usefulness to us (*qua telos*), an object as being *ready-to-hand*—then the distinctions between “object A” and “object B” become very subtle, and eventually dissolve formally. For instance, a lamp and a bottle both are distinct objects in-the-world, but their distinction, arguably, does not depend on the quantifiable categories (spatiotemporal arrangements/shapes) as much as it depends on the fact that we *use* a lamp to *see*, while we *use* a bottle to *contain*. For, if we attempt to dissect the *objectness* of these objects down to their fundamental material causes, we would find that the bottle is made of the same “strings” that make up the lamp, and vice versa. In such a way, the forms of the lamp and the bottle—their *actualities* as being distinct from each other—only relate to their *potentiality* to be used in “scenario x” as distinct from “scenario y” by Man which imbues this *potentiality* onto them through his *Dasein*; a *readiness-to-hand*. Should they become *present-at-hand*, and thus observed as objects of

scientific inquiry separate from the subject's conception of their utility, then they fall into a purity of matter when we categorically strip them down to their sole material cause: a *pure potentiality* (*potentialitas in puritate*), a *potentiality* to be *anything*—and thus *nothing in specific*.

In *Enframing*, the sheer issue of *revealing* the *presencing-at-hand* of objects which negates their *objectness* thus forces them into *thinghood*, the apophantic complement to their prior Existence as a Being (non-Existence). Though, Heidegger (1977) wishes to make it known that this influx of *thinghood* in things *present-at-hand* in an *Enframing* does not solely pertain to things-in-the-world, but Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-Sein*) itself as *Dasein*: the Existential Being. Heidegger (1977) explains this by writing:

“Only to the extent that man for his part is already challenged to exploit the energies of nature can this ordering revealing happen [as *standing-reserve*]. If man is challenged, ordered, to do this, then does not man himself belong even more originally than nature within the *standing-reserve*? The forester in the woods[...]he is made subordinate to the orderability of cellulose, which for its part is challenged-forth by the need [*potentiality*] for paper.” (p. 18)

It becomes clear to see how what seems to be at issue in *Enframing* is precisely a *potentiality* that becomes unresolved and *unactualized*: a *potentiality-for-potentiality*. The *potentiality* of paper—to even begin to be used as something *ready-to-hand* in manufacturing reminiscent of “past technology”—calls into necessity a *potentiality* for cellulose to develop, but which never *actualizes* (insofar as then there would be no *need* for paper anymore), and which itself *potentializes* the lumberjack *qua Dasein*. Nonetheless, this cycle of *potentiality* needs to itself be able to remain *in potentia*, insofar as an ever-perpetuating desire for something incompletely obtainable keeps *Enframing* as itself. *Enframing*—perhaps precisely because of its tendency to *potentiality-for-potentiality*—has a tendency to block any future *bringing-forth* as *poiesis*, leaving production in a liminal space of unfulfillment (Heidegger, 1977). This echoes in the fundamental insatiability of demand *qua* “demand for love” as the origin of the perpetuating, unfulfillable nature of human desire Lacan (2007) speaks of.

The implications this carries for *Dasein* faced with such a *potentializing* may, arguably, be noticed at the first light of such a problem. For, as we have seen, *Dasein* is an Existential Being, and not a mere Existence, or mere Being. In *Enframing* reducing the world to *thinghood*—and *Dasein* with it—it fundamentally jeopardizes *Dasein's* Existence-in-the-world. *Dasein's* *actualization*—namely through its labor, the things *ready-to-hand* *qua* means of production, and the products of its labor thereof—fades into a *potentiality-for-potentiality* characteristic of *Enframing*, and “*more originally*” (Heidegger, 1977: p. 18) so than other objects in the world. But it is precisely because *Dasein*—in its *objectness* as an Existence-in-the-world—suffers from *Enframing* “*more originally*” than other objects, and thus a relegation to mere *thinghood* *qua* Being, that this relation sows a *potentiality-for-actualiza-*

tion of *Dasein* from this state: a *freedom*.

Heidegger (1977) explains that, “Precisely because man is challenged more originally than are the energies of nature [...] he never is transformed into mere *standing-reserve*.” (p. 18), and that, “It is to the happening of *revealing*, i.e., of truth, that freedom stands in the closest and most intimate kinship.” (p. 25). Due to the fact that *Enframing* is yet another mode of *revealing*—and *revealing* a “concealment” of the world’s *objectness*, as opposed to its unconcealment (*qua form*) in *poiesis*—it runs the *potentiality* to its own demise *qua potentiality-for-potentiality*: it runs the *potentiality* to return to unconcealment as a mode of *revealing* the Truth (*aletheia*) (Heidegger, 1977). And, for Heidegger (1977), Man as *Dasein* may be said to play a cardinal role in this very shift of modes of *revealing*, wherein, “when we once open ourselves expressly to the *essence* of technology [as *Enframing*], we find ourselves unexpectedly taken into a freeing claim.” (p. 26). Thus, Heidegger (1977) concludes that, “The rule of *Enframing* threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience a more primal truth [*aletheia*].” (p. 28). In this very way, it may be said that—by threatening *revealing*—*Enframing* reveals its *thereness* for Man to subsume in all its glory; a double-edged blade, its kryptonite through and through its very hegemony.

In such a way, aside from Heidegger’s exegesis, Nkrumah’s Consciencism may be said to offer one of the—if not the only thoroughly elaborated—philosophy and ideology for the aforementioned *freedom* in the modern technological age. For, the sheer emphasis on—what we have dubbed as—Existential Being in Nkrumah’s (1970) philosophy, and its African socialist principles, offer the capacity for *Dasein* to become *free* in its relation to the world of ever-evolving technology without the need to seek refuge in a technologically-primitive past. If Man’s unique capacity is his ability to mediate between the immanent and transcendental viz. *categorical conversion*, and is thus a “bridge” between the Existential nature of the transcendental *actuality*, and the Being of material *potentiality*, then—as has been explored—he must have elements common to both. This is precisely himself as an Existential Being, precisely among other Existential Beings (*Daseins*) he calls his *community*.

A point of emphasis as a methodology in this *freedom* becoming *actualized* shared by both Heidegger (1977) and Nkrumah (1970) alike is the role of art. Nkrumah (1970) describes art in capitalist and communist societies alike as having been perverted in favor of ideological indoctrination of an establishment, writing:

“Today, in the socialist countries of Europe, where the range of conduct is fixed by socialist principles, that particular art which glorifies the socialist ideology is encouraged at the expense of that art which the supremacy of aristocrats or the bourgeoisie might inspire [...] The bourgeoisie for their part injected a puritan strain into art, and in general directed it along lines of portraiture.” (pp. 63 & 64)

Nkrumah (1970), however, gives the example of art being used for revolutionary purposes, such as Francisco de Goya's own, which aimed to destroy the notion of an existing superstructure, and from here likewise comments on African art's nature in that:

"It is the moral-philosophical preoccupation in terms of which this portrayal was done which explains its typical power. It is this also which explains the characteristic distortion of form in African art. In the portrayal of force, whether as forces of the world, of generation and death, or the force of destiny, it was essential that it should not be delineated as something *assimilated and overcome*. And this is the impression which the soft symmetries of life-like art would have given. It is to avoid this impression of force overcome that African art resorted to distortion of forms." (p. 64)

Relating this back to what we have said about *Enframing*, it is precisely the *potentiality-for-potentiality* which negates human Existence that African art actively depicts, in spite of the African tribal societies centuries ago which painted it certainly not having reached the level of technology the world has now. Yet what makes African society so peculiar in this regard is that it understood the dynamism that Heidegger (1977) lays his bet on being primarily an element of contemporary technological society in a seemingly Painless fashion. In such a way, Nyerere (1968) mused on the relation of technological advancement and the traditional Tanganyikan society, such that, "We must take our traditional system, correct its shortcomings, and adapt to its service the things we can learn from the technologically developed societies of other continents." (p. 110), and yet never failing to recognize an endless, paradoxically-self-effacing-yet-fulfilling "mutual involvement *in one another*" (p. 107).

It seems almost as if these societies interrogated the very nature of *potentiality-for-potentiality* opposed to *potentiality-for-actuality* without any recourse to Heideggerian, technological *Enframing*, or existential Pain and suffering in light of this very *potentiality* as did, for instance, Schopenhauer. This, thus, is precisely why I would argue that Consciencism, in recourse to an absorption of the Spirit of these African societies, paves the only *bona fide* way forward in combatting the modern problem of *Enframing* viz. this "carrying" of history on one's shoulders. It is precisely this *dehumanization*, on the one hand, which is paradoxically contained in the Spirit of humanism in African socialism as the seed for its very own humanization: a humanization of *Dasein(s)* through the *freedom* it gives by depriving it, much like *Enframing*.

In a use of art in the tradition of African art applied to contemporary, *Enframed* society, we find a certain "essential space of man's essential being [which] receives the dimension which unites it to something beyond itself from out of the conjoining relation (*Ver-hältnis*) [between man and technology]" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 39). Art is, furthermore, for Heidegger (1977), a way of returning to *poiesis* as a primary mode of *revealing*, where "It was finally that revealing which holds

complete sway in all the fine arts, in poetry, and in everything poetical that obtained *poiesis* as its proper name.” (p. 34). To support this, Heidegger (1977) further emphasizes art’s uniqueness in relation to Nietzsche’s *will-to-power* (*Wille-zur-Macht*) in *The Word of Nietzsche*, where he says that, “The essence of art, understood from out of the will to power, consists in the fact that art excites the will to power first of all towards itself [...]” (p. 86).

Understanding the above exposition, it becomes clear that art—in all its manifestations—serves as the catalyst for the transformation of *potentiality* into *actuality*, and, coupled with Consciencism as a guiding philosophy which intricately lays out the experience of African societies having Painlessly grappled with this dilemma centuries prior as their lived experience, serves as the key to *Dasein’s freedom* in today’s world. It may be said to be the key to maintaining *Dasein’s* nature as an Existential Being in a world which ever-so-frequently attempts to strip it of its Existence thereby. Placing Man at the helm of *categorical conversion*, as Nkrumah did with Consciencism, allows Man to always straddle the boundary between the immanent and transcendental, and maintain it hence, such that in no case is he to be solely reduced to a similitude to other *potentialities*, nor a sole identification with other *actualities*.

6. Conclusion

What has been ubiquitous across the above analysis is the tension between *potentiality* and *actuality*, Being and Existence, and how both are encompassed in ever-changing social contexts. Heidegger’s critique of modern technology, culminating in the notion of *Enframing*, illustrates how *Dasein* risks being reduced to mere *standing-reserve* where *potentiality-for-potentiality* dominates, leaving the possibility of genuine *poiesis* suspended. In our *Enframed*, contemporary world, the freedom of our *Dasein* is imperiled, and the very act of *revealing* the truth (*aletheia*) is threatened by the insatiable technological ordering surrounding us.

Yet, as this work has shown, the philosophy of Consciencism provides guidance for reclaiming that freedom, and bridging the aforementioned dichotomizations through a Painless resolution. Nkrumah’s emphasis on—what I have called—Existential Being, mediated through the communal Spirit of African socialism, demonstrates that humanity can navigate the challenges of technological *Enframing* without reverting to a primitive past or fully succumbing to the state of *thinghood*, either. Art itself emerges as the perfect catalyst of this transformation, and Consciencism thereby frames a materialistically-grounded-but-simultaneously-idealistic *modus operandi* in which *potentiality-for-potentiality*—so central to *Enframing*—can be used against itself in allowing *Dasein* among other *Daseins* a taste of authenticity: an authenticity *qua* its very *freedom*.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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