

ANTON WILHELM AMO:
THE INTERCULTURAL BACKGROUND OF HIS PHILOSOPHY

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by

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Preface to the English Edition

African philosophy has no doubt carved a niche for itself in the domain of academic philosophy. This is seen very clearly in the number of philosophy departments all over Africa where the sub-discipline of African philosophy is usually given pride of place. It is also seen especially in the result of the researches of African philosophic workers in these departments, and their predilection for different themes in African philosophy. Still, one lacuna that is yet to be filled in the field of African philosophy is the rarity of researches on individual African philosophic thinkers. It is in this regard that this booklet devoted to the Wilhelm Anton Amo and his philosophy solves a very special academic need.

The book first attempts to throw more light on the life of Amo. There are of course, some writings on his life, but in the process of presenting this enigmatic African, many inaccuracies have arisen to cloud the history. Jacob Mabe attempts to correct some of these using the result of the latest researches on the life of the African philosopher. In doing this, Mabe makes a very useful effort to underline the dual belonging of Amo to two intellectual traditions: European and African. There is no doubt that Amo lived for most of his life in Europe and that his intellectual work was axed on the philosophical issues that were current in European philosophical terrain. Still his Africanness was not without influence on the outcome of his thought and his life, forcing a non-extant monograph on the rights of Africans in the then European societies and eventually the sad turn that marked the end of his mysterious life in Europe. It is therefore very appropriate that Jacob Mabe presented Amo from an intercultural perspective.

For so long Amo has not gotten much more than fleeting reference both in African and European philosophical terrain. There are not many researches that concentrate on the outcome of his philosophical reflection; there is hardly any philosophical engagement with the issues that he discussed in his many books even notwithstanding the fact

that these books have been edited and translated. It appears that it was enough that an African was able to ascend to be a professor of philosophy in the Europe of the time. That is why there has been till date just one doctoral thesis devoted to Amo's philosophy. From the domain of African philosophy, this neglect may be due mainly to the unavailability of research material as well as the still lingering colonial colour of philosophy in Africa. But the deafening silence of German philosophy on Amo's thought even with German translations of his extant works is a pointer to more telling intellectual parochialism. On account of this parochialism such a doctrine as that of the thing-in-itself which is still today widely attributed to Immanuel Kant as originator is, unknown to many, traceable to Wilhelm Anton Amo.

It is by concentrating on the philosophical doctrines of Amo that Mabe's book is able to bring to light the consequence of the neglect of Amo's teaching in European philosophical history. There are of course other aspects of his philosophy that finds a suitable place in this book. Amo is placed in the context of the Enlightenment within which he worked. His ideas were as profound and critical as those of other enlightenment thinkers who are described as very bold in enunciating innovative ideas on many aspects of human life and thinking but failing colossally in translating these to practice.

Mabe dwells on specific philosophical reflections of Amo, concentrating on his theory of knowledge and brief description of his theory of thing-in-itself; the nature and methodology of philosophy; theory of language; hermeneutics and the problem of prejudice; materialism as well as dualism of mind and body. Each of these themes is discussed within the context of Amo and also traced through its later development in European philosophy, as well as how such issues have evolved in contemporary African philosophy.

All these enabled the book to place Amo very firmly within the intercultural context. Amo's philosophy was mainly an engagement with themes that were current in the European context of his time. But Mabe tries to show at each stage that the issues discussed remain

relevant in contemporary African philosophical discussions. It goes without saying therefore that the relevance of Amo to African as well as European philosophy goes beyond mere wonder about how a black man could attain such a distinguished academic position in the Germany of that time. Amo was a very active participant in the philosophical development of the Enlightenment period. He was able to use his philosophical acumen in defense of the rights of his fellow Africans living in Europe, but finally gave up in despair to return to Africa on account of his disappointment with European racism. He was taken out of Africa but Africa was not taken out of his life.

The publication of this book poses a challenge to both European and African philosophers. To the Europeans, it is a challenge to review the reason why such an intellectual should be received rather in silence over the years; and to inquire whether such an incomprehensible neglect is not rather a reflection of the subtle politics of purportedly objective intellectualism. And well beyond Amo, Mabe's book points a visible finger toward the obviously wide neglect of African philosophy in most European universities. To African philosophic thinkers, Amo's life and teaching as presented in this book is also a strong challenge to go beyond the often unconscious tendency to prove the claim of Africans and those of African origin to the patrimony of philosophic reflection, and through that furtively affirm the ability to think. Amo's life and thought make him an heir to these two traditions of philosophy. Like Aurelius Augustine before him he deserves to have an indisputable place in the annals of both traditions. This book and its translation into English will certainly go a long way in ensuring his relevance in these and indeed in other regional philosophies of the world.

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CHAPTER 1

LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Anton Wilhelm Amo was probably born in 1700 in Gold Coast (today's Ghana). Precise information about his ethnic root is not available in that his family background is not known. He was not an orphan, but rather became, early in life, a victim of slave trade¹ in the Gulf of Guinea,² and thus had to grow up without parents and close relatives. It is well known from oral and written sources that the whole of west coast of Africa from 15th to 18th Century served as a big reservoir from which many bound Africans "were loaded into Dutch vessels and sold in Brazil and mostly Central America."³

The trade in human beings is without doubt the worst inhuman burden that Africans ever experienced.⁴ Irrespective of their sex and age, millions of human beings were mercilessly bound and held for lengthy periods in closed fortresses built by Europeans; raped, humiliated, suppressed, etc, before they were transported and then displayed in

1 Around the end of the 17th Century, the English, the Dutch, the French, Portuguese and Danish built many forts in West Africa from which bound Africans were transported to Europe, Asia and America. According to John Kells Ingram between 1680 and 1700 the British exported around 300,000 Africans to England and from 1700 to 1786 around 619,000 were exported to Jamaica. In addition to this, he estimates that the number of Africans deported to West Indies from 1680 to 1786 to be 2,130,000. This makes a yearly average of 20,095. John Kells Ingram, *Geschichte der Sklaverei*, translated by Leopold Katscher, Dresden and Leipzig, 1895, p. 108 ff.

2 Amo constantly presents himself as coming from Axum and Guinea in order to stress his identity. By Guinea is meant the Gulf of Guinea which at the time referred to the west coast of Africa.

3 Robert and Marianne Cornevin, *Die Geschichte Afrikas von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Frankfurt a.M./Berlin/Wien 1980, p. 229

4 See Joseph E. Inikori, *Der Sklavenhandel*, in: *Das Afrika-Lexikon. Ein Kontinent in 1000 Stichwörtern*, edited by Jacob E. Mabe, Stuttgart and Wuppertal, 2001, (special edition 2004) pp. 556 – 559.

slave markets mostly in Europe and America, and offered for sale at laughable prices.

The usually lengthy and tortuous stay in the fortresses, in addition to the massing together of human beings without any ethnic, social and cultural links had a devastating effect especially on children. They very quickly forgot not only their mother tongues but also their names and those of their parents. After he was captured, Amo was taken to a Dutch fortress near Axum from where he was later to face the forced journey to Europe. Given the background of his particularly young age, his correct identity could not be found. Still the legend of Ghanaian origin of Amo continues to make the rounds.

The ethnic confusion in the fortresses had negative results even in adults. They came from different regions and spoke very different languages. They could not therefore communicate adequately with one another. From this situation comes what can be called “slave ideology” which means that the enslaved Africans were forced, not only to learn the languages of the slave dealers, but also to deny their ethnic and personal identities. The simple use of African names was also strictly forbidden. Worse still was the painful remembrance of family and cultural life before their capture since one could never share that with any other person. Because of the mixture of different folks, one can neither ascertain that the original home of Amo was Akonu-Nkubean, nor connect him genetically with the Nzema people.

The fact that above all, Amo was brought to Rotterdam⁵ by Dutch-West Indian company⁶ that not only had fortresses in West Africa but

5 Before he was sold to Germany, Amo remained a few weeks or months in Rotterdam. On account of this short stay he was listed among the “historical sons and daughters” in Rotterdam.

6 This agency was founded in 1621 and was very much involved in the commerce in slaves.

also exported Africans to the slave metropolis with their own ships excludes any speculation that his emigration to Europe had any humanitarian and social motive behind it. Against some affirmations, Amo's journey to Europe was not undertaken with the wish or consent of his parents to be trained for priestly work in the Netherlands.⁷ The widespread opinion in Germany that the Dutch-West Indian Company gave the young African as a gift to Herzog Anton Ulrich (1633–1714) of Wolfenbüttel-Braunschweig⁸ is not backed by any evidence.

New researches in the “Ulrich-Anton Archives” have now shown that Amo was a servant of the Herzog. With dismay the writers report that “There has been much discussion concerning the position of Amo in the court. Now we can prove his exact responsibility in the court at Wolfenbüttel. Amo had a position as a lackey.”⁹ He had also other responsibilities. There were cost and payment receipts that were signed by Amo himself.¹⁰ Before and after him there were court servants

7 That is what Francis Ogunmodede wrote citing William Abraham: “He stowed away as a child in a ship to Holland 1707 to become a Presbyterian priest.” Francis I. Ogunmodede, “The Scholasticism of William Amo: The 18th Century Ghanaian Philosopher in Diaspora,” *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 2 (1999), pp. 57–73. In his search for the reason for Amo's journey, William Abraham himself formulated three hypotheses: (a) Amo was kidnapped, (b) Amo was sold as a slave, (c) Amo came to Europe for training as a pastor. See also William Abraham: *The Mind of Africa*, London, p. 61. The third hypothesis that was also favoured by Paulin Hountondji corresponds to what is known at the time. He should therefore not be regarded as naïve. Paulin Hountondji, *Afrikanische Philosophie: Mythos und Realität*, Berlin, 1993, p. 128.

8 Anton Ulrich was not only the ruling State prince and Duke of Braunschweig and Lüneburg-Wolfenbüttel, but also baroque poet and chivalry knight. He made many chivalrous tours to Italy and to the Netherlands during which perhaps he came across Amo and the Dutch-West Indian Company.

9 Cultural City Wolfenbüttel Society (ed.), *Anton Wilhelm Amo – Ein Schwarzer am Wofenbütteler Hof, Wolfenbütteler Barockjahr 2006, Ausstellungsheft Nr. 6, Wolfenbüttel, 2006*, p. 4.

10 According to receipts Amo was paid from Easter 1716 as he was 16 years old. The last receipted payment was made on 28.11.1721. His means of livelihood

from Africa who were kept as servants or decorative vassals not only in Wolfenbüttel but also in many other Electorates' yards. It is no longer a secret that the court of the Elector of Wolfenbüttel was deeply involved in slavery. For there was "already during the reign of Herzog August a court moor¹¹ named Augustus who belonged to the court."¹² Credit must be given to the orientalist Burchard Brentjes (1929)¹³ for researches on Amo. But his portrayal of Anton Ulrich as a humanitarian supporter of Amo is somewhat exaggerated. For this Herzog was by no means in position to give a minor the appropriate paternal education, due to his family situation as well as his advanced age, being 74 years old at the time of Amo's arrival. Again, he had thirteen children of his own, even though they were already adults at the time.

What else apart from pure prestige could have made him to take care of a young African three years after the death of his wife Elisabeth Juliane of Holstein-Norburg (1634–1704)! Taking this aspect into consideration, Anton Ulrich cannot be attested to have had charitable intention. He acquired Amo and other Africans for the sake of his reputation above all, and in order to maintain the standard of European

and how he financed his studies is not known.

11 The expression "court moor" is characteristic of the baroque age and a typical expression of racist discrimination. It has thus a negative connotation.

12 Augustus and another African were sold at the slave market in Leipzig for 50 Thaler each. Augustus served in the court with his wife (also from Africa) that he married in 1703 till his death in 1725. His wife Juliane Rosina lived alone for 17 years after the death of her husband. According to the sources, Rudolf August earned 230 Thaler a year for his court service. Kulturstadt Wolfenbüttel, loc. Cit., p. 2.

13 Burchard Brentjes: "Anton Wilhelm Amo, afrikanischer Student der Philosophie und Medizin in Halle, Wittenberg und Jena (1727–1740)" in: In memoriam Herrmann Boerhave (1668–1738). Wissenschaftliche Beiträge der Martin-Luther-Universität, CR 10 Halle, p. 135–138; the same author: Anton Wilhelm Amo. Der Schwarze Philosoph in Halle, Leipzig 1976.

court life,¹⁴ for the ownership of slaves raised the reputation of a king or a duke at the time.

However, the life of Amo raises many puzzles particularly as no one can give reliable information about his birth and the year of his death. It was merely presumed that he was eight years old at the time of his baptism in 1708. Research on Amo is all the more difficult on account of his complicated biography. Already his name presents a very difficult problem to African researchers in nomenclature in so far as they have sought in vain to link Amo's name genealogically and genetically with any ethnic group in Africa. It is clear that the name Amo was not a native name in Ghana as it was very often claimed. Amo is the verb form of *amo*, which means I love in Latin. In my opinion, there are many reasons to believe that he got this artificial name obviously in the Dutch fortress near Axum.

In addition the word “*amo*” was fashionable in Dutch poetry and arts from the Barock period. This means that as symbol of love, the name was assigned with extraordinarily majestic meaning, to rehabilitate and gladden human beings. Still Anton Wilhelm Amo never argued over the possible connection of his name with Latin, although he studied, lectured and wrote books in this language. All the more he had interest in onomatology, which he defined as the discipline that is concerned with the “clarification of names.”¹⁵

Amo is not alone in this, for there are still many Africans with names that have no known connection to their ethnic group or language today. This is so because the Africans that were pushed into slave ghettos received artificial names which they were allowed to use. No other

14 For a critique of European court behaviour see Norbert Elias: *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, Neuwied and Berlin, 1969.

15 Anton Wilhelm Amo: *Traktat von der Kunst, nüchtern und sorgfältig zu philosophieren*, translated by Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Halle (Saale), 1965, special part Chapt. IV, 5, p. 217.

possibility was left to them than for them to come to terms with this imposed identity. Especially little children could in no way be worried about the authenticity of their names under such situation. Adults found themselves in conflict with their identity at the beginning, and others began on account of unknown reasons, to personally suppress their past. It is in this way that a sort of historic and African denial which shapes the consciousness of the future generations of Africans that were taken to America and other parts of the world step by step developed. The historical break conditioned by long colonial time in addition strengthened the cultural and emotional distance from Africa of blacks in oversea.

However, freed slaves in Africa were also confronted with the hidden identity paradox. After their liberation, they mostly remained near the fortresses in which they vegetated for many years, and from there they tried to adapt to the culture and conditions of life of their new neighbours. Thus they were obliged to imitate the styles of life as well as the thought patterns of these neighbours in order to avoid renewed social ostracism. However most of the descendants of these freed slaves had fewer impediments to integrate in so far as it was possible for them to be integrated in the village communities of their respective partners through procreation. Some of them retained the names that they were given in the fortresses without questioning the origin of these names. Still there were Africans who, after lengthy research later consciously upheld their artificial identification because they saw a special symbol of their paradoxical identity and authenticity in it.

On 29th July 1708 in the court chapel of Salzdahlum (Salzthal) near Wolfenbüttel, Anton Ulrich allowed Amo to be baptized in the Protestant Church with his first name and that of his most beloved son and crown prince Wilhelm August.¹⁶ In 1709, he changed to the Catholic faith. After the death of the Herzog in 1714, Amo still went to an unidentified school in addition to his duties as a lackey in the court of

¹⁶ The document of the chapel has a written remark that a small moor with the name Anton Wilhelm was baptized.

August Wilhelm (1662–1731).¹⁷ Perhaps he ended his education in the Knight Academy in Wolfenbüttel before he went to study philosophy and jurisprudence at Halle. He was matriculated there on 9. 6. 1727.

At that time in Halle philosophy was marked not only by the rivalry between the philosophies of Cartesianism,¹⁸ and Leibnizianism¹⁹ but also between two opposing doctrines. On the one hand there was the secularism that was influenced by the Enlightenment under Christian Wolf (1679–1754), which attempted to reconcile reason and worship of God, so as to give religious faith a rational foundation, on the other hand there was pietism. Amo was strongly influenced by epistemological rationalism. At the same time he was inclined towards sensualism because he regarded them as suitable for the explanation and demonstration of the truth.

He explained this with the argument that with the sensation the causal connection between things which can be grasped through the senses can be explained; and also the necessary connection of things with their explanations through reason, i.e., with arguments that are well

17 August Wilhelm was married three times and remained without a child till his death.

18 Cartesianism is linked with René Descartes (1596–1650), the so called father of modern philosophy and founder of the new rationalism, according to which things in the world follow laws in accordance with logical and mathematical thinking. From this, rationalism draws the conclusion that human beings can arrive at the knowledge of the world through general rules and necessary concepts, i.e., innate ideas.

19 As the first modern philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) heavily influenced the Enlightenment as well as all rationalist and idealist debates in Germany. He agreed with René Descartes about the rationalist principle of philosophy, according to which all true knowledge comes from reason. Contrary to Descartes, he in addition defends an idealistic position according to which the being of things is of spiritual nature.

grounded, can be reflected.²⁰ The school of Wolf which had its original domain in Halle had two fundamental goals: strict adherence to method for the sake of science and the spreading of philosophy through popular genre like conversations, etc. Rationalism was the dominant way of thinking in early Enlightenment and Amo himself described it as the most effective means against authoritarian clericalism and feudalism.

German pietism under Philipp Jacob Spener (1646–1705) and later also under Hemann Francke (1663–1727) was a protest movement within the Lutheran Church which saw a danger for religious thinking and life in the increasing secularism. Pietism stood for a renaissance of religiosity and for more subjectivity, individuality and interiority of faith. Amo was a convinced Enlightenment thinker. But from his critique of dogmatic theology one can see that he did not distance himself from pietism clearly.²¹

Amo was gifted with languages. Apart from German, he had a mastery of Latin, Greek, Dutch and French.²² On 28. 11. 1729 he held his first disputation on “De jure maurorum in Europa” (“On the Rights of Blacks in Europe,”²³ which unfortunately is no longer extant.) If this

20 Anton Wilhelm Amo, *Tractatus*, Chapt. III, sect. II and IV, p. 223ff.

21 *Ibid.*, chap. I, sect IX, Iff, p. 117 f.

22 Amo already learnt Dutch in the Dutch fortress at Axum. Later, he also maintained good contact to the language and culture. He often referred to Dutch thinkers like Cornelis van Bynkershoet (1673–1743), Gerhard Noodt (1647–1725) etc. He uses Aristotle and Epictetus in the Greek original. Again he engages in critical discussions with French intellectuals Claude Saumaise (1588 – 1653), Jacques de Cujas (1522–1590), etc. He could also have known Hebrew and English.

23 Here Amo criticizes the miserable conditions of many blacks who serve in European royal houses who are used as body guards and objects of exhibition for curious Europeans without any protection of the law. This disputation was delivered almost at the same time as the protest of British Quakers against the slave trade in 1727. Already by 1671, the founder of the Quakers George Fox

scientific lecture²⁴ which was not commented upon in public were not lost, undoubtedly it would have been of special importance not only for political philosophy and theory of rights, but also for international law. For it is possible that Amo was able to lay the foundation for some of the intercultural and international debates on human rights, minority protection, racism, tolerance, migration, xenophobia, social exclusion, and so on. Amo tried to present the conditions of those who came from Africa and who were victims of shameless arbitrariness and abuse in the European society.

This disputation precedes the Pan-African ideology which sought a practical solution for the problem of discrimination against blacks especially by whites about 170 years later. Pan-Africanism is traceable to the club “African Associations” founded by Henry Sylvester from Trinidad in 1897 which had the aim of providing legal aid to Africans living in Great Britain. As a lawyer in London Sylvester even prepared official delegations from Africa to the British crown on legal issues. Through this means, he became aware of the critical situation of the African people. The brutal politics of expropriation in which the colonial masters rubbed the Africans of their land he found particularly explosive. In 1900, he decided to call a conference which bore the name “Pan-African Conference.” He wanted to develop strategies to protect African landed properties. After his conference, Africans felt

described slavery as a grave denial of human dignity. Still the understanding of human rights as inborn, inalienable and unimpeachable right and dignity was first clearly formulated in the declaration of independence of America in 1776 and was documented after the French Revolution of 1789.

24 The disputation was an open lecture which was followed by discussion. In the then university system, the first came after two full years of study and was comparable to the Anglo Saxon Bachelor that will be gradually introduced into Germany. The great disputation was the defense of doctoral thesis. Amo himself described the disputation as an art of defending the truth. “The disputation is an act of celebration in which reflexive truth discovered by the act of the mind is defended uprightly and publicly against objections and doubts raised by opinion for the sake of the firmness of truth.”

strengthened in their fight against European racism and colonialism. Pan-Africanism was, however, able to acquire international dimension only after the cooperation of African Americans. The operative aim was to enhance the solidarity of all peoples of African origin and to realize their cultural and political emancipation.

It is unfortunate that the Chancellor of the university Johann Peter von Ludewig (1668–1743) merely referred to this disputation in the November edition of the “Weekly University of Halle Questions and News Report,” with the following lapidary remark: “How far does the freedom or service of the blacks bought from Christians in Europe extend the normal right which they have?” However this ironic remark contradicts in any case the views of many learned Europeans.²⁵ After all, 250 year later, Ernst Popper, the Rector of the University of Halle-Wittenberg spoke and indirectly contradicted his predecessor with the honoured presentation that Amo was a shining “defender of the equality of all human beings and people irrespective of their racial belonging.”²⁶

25 Voltaire (Francois Marie Arouet, 1694–1778) wrote in 1756 “Nous n’achetons des esclaves domestiques chez (les noires); on nous reproche ce commerce. Un peuple qui trafique de ses enfants est encore plus condamnable que l’acheteur. Ce négoce démontre notre supériorité.” Voltaire: *Essai sur les moeurs et l’esprit des nation*, Paris, 1756. Voltaire condemns the European buyers less than the African sellers of slaves, without taking account of the basis under which Africans were led to slave trade. It is still surprising that he did not speak of the ethical or epistemological questions, which strengthened the European slave buyers, to degrade Africans as wares and thus with that also human rights. In any case, Voltaire devoted a chapter in his later work (*Traité sur la tolérance*) to slavery, in which he condemned the institution. Still he systematically bracketed the thesis of the superiority of Europeans over the Africans and other races.

26 Ernst Popper, Antonius Guillemus Amo ab Aximo in Ghana. Student, Doktor der Philosophie und Hockschullehrer an den Universität Halle, Wittenberg und Jena 1727–1747, translation of his works, Martin-Luther-Universität, Halle-Wittenberg, Halle (Saale), 1965, p. 2.

There is no doubt that Amo as a philosopher saw himself personally confronted with the central paradox of the European Enlightenment with reference to the sinful character of slavery as well as the question of the legality of racial discrimination. The trade in human beings, the victim of which he was, was incompatible, not only with natural law and human rights, but also with the spirit of humanism and the rationale of the Enlightenment.²⁷

In 1730 Amo left Halle and moved to Wittenberg. There he also studied physiology, pneumatology (now known as psychology) and medicine. This interest in natural sciences helped him to develop a new perspective on the being of human soul and body. On 17th October, 1730, Amo obtained a Master's degree in philosophy. August Wilhelm was present at the presentation of the degree. After Wilhelm's death in 1731, his brother and successor Ludwig Rudolf (1678–1735) maintained contact with the African. In 1733 Amo obtained yet another Master's degree in the natural sciences. Under the influence of mechanistic and atomistic methodical reflections, Amo tended towards materialism, and with that distanced himself from idealism.²⁸ This tendency is documented in his doctoral dissertation of 1734, *De humane*

27 The great humanist Karl Marx (1818–1883) described freedom and slavery as antagonistic concepts. Still he erred in his criticism of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), with the attempt to explain slavery as an economic category with negative and positive sides. He writes: "The only thing that must be explained is the good side of slavery." Karl Marx, *Das Elend der Philosophie. Antwort auf Proudhon "Philosophie des Elends"* German Edition, Frankfurt/M. 1978, S. 177. He states further: "Only slavery has given the colonies their value. The colonies were created by international trade and international trade is the condition of big industries. In that manner is slavery an economic category of utmost importance." p. 105ff. Whether with this Marx wanted to legitimize the racial and biological ideology of the right of the strongest is not clear.

28 Materialism is a philosophical thinking that understands the being of things from those things themselves and sees the cause of things in their original elements. Thus matter is prior to spirit and consciousness. Idealism on the other hand affirms the priority of the spirit or consciousness over matter or nature. Idealism was, since Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) the most important philosophical movement in Germany.

mentis apatheia.²⁹ Leaning on rationalism, Amo developed his own materialistic position without falling into atheism and radical empiricism.

Under his care, the Disputation of the student Johannes Theodosius Meiner successfully took place on 19. 5. 1734 in the presence of Ludwig Rudolf. As the latter died in 1735, it was obvious that Amo did not have any clear link any more to the court of Wolfenbüttel.³⁰ Once again he returned to Halle in the same year and two years later he submitted a work with the title: “Tractatus de arte sobrie et accurate philosophandi” (Treatise on the Arts of Sober and Accurate Philosophizing), a work that is a comprehensive collection of a systematic presentation of his most important lectures in Halle. This work qualified him for independent teaching position since at that time there was yet no Habilitation in Prussia.³¹ On 6th July 1737 he was registered as a university teacher, a sort of *venia docendi*, for philosophy. In 1738 he published the *Tractatus* in Halle.

29 Anton Wilhelm Amo, *Die Apatheia der menschlichen Seele*, German translation, Martin-Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, Halle (Saale), 1965.

30 Ludwig Rudolf was the youngest son of Anton Ulrich, who became the successor to his childless brother. But he had three daughters who could not inherit the throne on ground of their gender. After his death, the crown was transferred to a neighbouring royal house. All his daughters got married to men from other kingly dynasties, partly in foreign lands.

31 The Habilitation was first introduced in Prussia in 1819. The title *Privatdozent* is generally traceable to 1810. Amo described himself as *Magister legens* of the liberal arts, but this is not to be confused with today's *Magister Artium* (M.A.). The *Magister* was one who was a certified university lecturer who was normally called as a university teacher or a private teacher. Today there are in Germany what is called *Privatdozenten*, which means part time teachers in higher institutions. They drop this description once they are officially named professors. Also Christian Wolf served as a part time lecturer till 1710 when he was officially named full professor in the Law Faculty of the University of Leipzig. It is possible today for *Privatdozenten* without official teaching positions to advance to *Professorial* positions. It is therefore correct to call Amo a professor on account of the lecturing right that he received in Halle.

In 1739, Amo went to Jena and taught at the University till he disappeared without trace. According to Burchard Brentjes, Amo was first referred to in a degrading manner in a leaflet. He had tried to get married in Germany without success. However there was no legal justification at all why exactly this attempt was rejected, for there was no juridical consideration standing against marriage between a German woman and an African.

This does not however mean that it would have been easy for a European woman to enter into an open or evident marital partnership with an African. On the other hand, the relationship between African women and European men (Women were then not allowed to travel to Africa) in Africa were always surrounded by secrecy. The birth of children with European pigment brought the hidden sexual relationship between African women and European men in the open.

The probable newspaper announcement was published when Amo had already left Germany. He was said to have begged the Dutch-West Indian Society to enable him to travel back to Africa. The attempt was successful and Amo's ship left Rotterdam on 20.12.1746.³² When he died remains a puzzle. In 1782 he was named in the Memoires of a Swiss Ship doctor in the service of a Dutch shipping company named David Henrij Galandat, who reported about Amo's poor life in Ghana but without mentioning any motive for the report.

Whether Amo's return journey was undertaken freely or not, it reminds one of the destiny of many an Afro-American with nostalgia for Africa, as well as the New Testament parable of the "lost son" in which a young man decided to leave his homeland, and to move to another country with his share of his father's wealth. His hope of living an independent and free life in a distant place turned into a bitter dis-

32 According to the report of the Dutch National Archives in The Hague, Amo sailed in a ship named Catharina Galey. The Director of the port at the Gold Coast was even said to have confirmed his arrival on 7. 4. 1747.

appointment after he had lost his inheritance. When he was no longer able to withstand the consequent hunger, he returned to his father, who accepted him without any resentment. On the contrary, he celebrated the return of his son with music and dancing.

The nostalgia of Americans began around the end of the 19th century with the formation of the “Back to Africa Movement,” a radical movement, which had the aim of making the blacks aware of the racist discrimination against them in America and to encourage them to return to Africa. The first success was achieved with the foundation of the Republic of Liberia in 1859 by the first group of returnees. With Marcus Garvey (1887–1940), this movement assumed a racial undertone, as he formed an “Imperial League of Black Union” with the aim of building a united nation for all world “blacks” in Africa.

The intention of Garvey was to win many blacks for his ideology. In 1920 he created for the first time a “Black Kingdom” in New York that elected him as the first provisional President of Africa. Although he relocated to Liberia, he did not succeed to become President. The whole project floundered because of the stubborn behavior of the returnee in relation to their African people. It is astonishing that after more than a hundred years and till date, even their heirs feel superior to other Africans.

This racist tendency faced a humanistic Panafricanism, which was linked with the personality of William Edward Burghardt DuBois (1868–1963). He strongly backed a peaceful cohabitation between Africans and Europeans in the United States of America, and decidedly turned against all attempts of repatriation to Africa. He rather sought a means for a peaceful co-existence between all races of America, founded on equality and freedom.