

# The Concept of Man-Centredness in Zambian Humanism<sup>1</sup>

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At a seminar of Zambia's top civil servants and heads of parastatal organizations held in Lusaka early in September 1972, Vice-President Mainza Chona described man-centredness as the most important principle of Zambian humanism. Certainly, the concept appears to be pivotal to the whole gamut of Zambia's ideology. "Zambia can say with pride that its humanism is original, based very much on the importance of man," President Kaunda has said. "The oft-declared principles of non-tribalism, non-racialism and no discrimination based on religion or creed are very much part of the principles embodied in the importance of the common man." Zambian humanism, Dr. Kaunda says "centres around the importance of Man—Man in the rural areas as well as in the urban areas; indeed, Man everywhere".<sup>2</sup> Mr. Timothy Kandeke, in a forthcoming study on the Zambian philosophy, sees the principle of man-centredness or, as it is sometimes called, the centrality of man, as "the heart of Zambian humanism".<sup>3</sup> And to Mr. Zenon Pierides "the importance of Zambian humanism is the undisputed fact of the utmost significance given to man."<sup>4</sup>

This short essay discusses some of the main ideas subsumed under the principle of man-centredness in an attempt to throw more light on Zambia's ideology.

The concept of man-centredness, like Zambian humanism itself, has its origins in the traditional African society, and in stressing this point, President Kaunda keeps referring to the African village way of life as the paragon of social organization which modern Zambia would do well to emulate. "We have got to be man-centred, truly man-centred. That life I keep referring to in the village is 'the key'," he says. "We have got to translate it at the national level."<sup>5</sup>

Elsewhere, President Kaunda states even more explicitly that it is in

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of man-centredness is briefly discussed in my *Main Currents of Zambian Humanist Thought* (Lusaka: Oxford University Press, 1973) and this article is a further discussion of this central idea in Zambia's ideology.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth D. Kaunda, *Humanism in Zambia and a Guide to its Implementation* (Lusaka: Zambia Information Services, 1967), pp. 12, 32. By saying that Zambian humanism is original Dr. Kaunda obviously means that the ideology is derived from Zambian or African experience and not imported from other political systems. For, as *Humanism in Zambia* and his other work, *A Humanist in Africa*, imply, he is aware that there are other forms of humanism elsewhere in the world.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy K. Kandeke, *A Systematic Introduction to Zambian Humanism* (Lusaka: Neczam, forthcoming). I am grateful to Mr. Kandeke for allowing me to consult his manuscript and to quote from it.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Times of Zambia*, 14 September 1972.

<sup>5</sup> *Zambia Daily Mail*, 23 October 1972.

traditional village life that the roots of the concept of man-centredness lie: "The principle of recognising Man as the centre of all activities stems from a critical study of a good Zambian village."<sup>6</sup> In the traditional society, the worth of a person was not reckoned in terms of his material possessions or social status but was recognized and taken for granted. "In the best tribal society people were valued not for what they could achieve but because they were there," says Dr. Kaunda. "Their contribution, however limited, to the welfare of the village was acceptable, but it was their presence not their achievement which was appreciated." And this "gift for Man enjoying the fellowship of Man simply because he is Man"; this high valuation of man and respect for human dignity; this man-centredness is, in his view, "the greatest blessing bestowed on Africa."<sup>7</sup>

Man-centredness in the traditional society manifested itself in such social traits as generosity, hospitality, mutual aid and inclusiveness which made the individual, whether rich or poor, strong or weak, physically handicapped or healthy, old or young, feel that he or she was catered for by society.<sup>8</sup> All activity in the traditional society was directed at meeting the needs of its members and at the promotion of their welfare. Such resources as nature could provide were harnessed for the betterment of man. In similar manner, social institutions, customs and other social values were seen as being no more than instruments for enhancing the quality of human life. "Human need", as President Kaunda puts it, "was the supreme criterion of behaviour." Traditional society "was organized to satisfy the basic human needs of all its members" and, thus African society was man-centred. As Dr. Kaunda says,

Indeed, this is as it should be otherwise why is a house built? Not to give Man shelter and security? Why do you want a State ranch? For what else would there be need to grow food? Why is the fishing industry there? We can go on asking these questions. The simple and yet difficult answer is 'Man'. Simple in the sense that it is clear all human activity centres around MAN. Difficult too, because Man has not yet understood his own importance.<sup>9</sup>

It was by no means an accident that man was the centre of human activity in the traditional society. Man-centredness was a natural concomitant of African ontology, which was both religious and anthropocentric. While God his Creator and the spirits, comprising his ancestors and other superhuman beings, reigned over him, man in traditional African society remained the centre of the universe, dominating the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms, upon which he also subsisted. Thus, in African ontology, as Professor John Mbiti puts it, "God is the Originator and Sustainer of man; the Spirits explain the destiny of man; the Animals, plants and natural phenomena and objects constitute the environment in which man lives, provide a means of existence

6 Kaunda, *Take up the Challenge: Speeches made to the United Independence Party National Council*, Lusaka, 7th-10th November, 1970 (Lusaka: Zambia Information Services, 1970), p. 14.

7 Kaunda, *Humanism in Zambia*, op. cit. pp. 5-6.

8 For a discussion of these humanist traits in the traditional African society, see my *Main Currents of Zambian Humanist Thought*, op. cit., especially Chapter 1.

9 Kaunda, *Humanism in Zambia*, op. cit. pp. 5, 7.

and, if need be, man establishes a mystical relationship with them."<sup>10</sup> In this hierarchical order of nature, then, the African can be said, in the words of Father Placide Tempels, to be "... in intimate and personal relationship with other forces acting above him and below in the hierarchy of forces. He knows himself to be a vital force, even now influencing some forces and being influenced by others."<sup>11</sup> Thus, partly from African ontology and partly from Christian teaching comes the anthropocentric principle in Zambian humanism and President Kaunda has from time to time enunciated, that "man is the most important single unit in God's most complicated creation."<sup>12</sup>

The emphasis laid on the fact, which is often laboured in discussions on Zambian humanism, that traditional African society was man-centred should not be construed as an attempt to romanticize the African past or to whitewash it. To argue that everything was good in traditional society would be to state an ethnocentric falsehood because like any other society, African society was not all roses. In any event, as the saying goes, there can be no rose without a thorn! Indeed, that the traditional society was not perfect is a point which President Kaunda stresses when he talks about life in that society. "It should be emphasized," he says, "that this way of life was not a kind of idealised social experiment . . ." Life in the village was both difficult and dangerous, and a high degree of social cohesion, the attainment and maintenance of which called for the use of various sanctions by society against anti-social individuals, was, therefore, vital for survival.<sup>13</sup> Certainly, the social environment of the African in traditional society appears to have been so harsh in certain respects that one may ask to what extent African society was man-centred. Accounts by early missionaries and explorers paint a very grim picture of the state of affairs in the continent. David Livingstone, for example, had this to say about the Makololo in the 1850s in Western Zambia:

The poor of this country might be fairly compared with the Jewish money-lenders of England, and by no means with the common run of the poorer classes. A poor person who has no relatives will seldom be supplied with water in illness, and when death ensues will certainly be dragged out to be devoured by the hyaenas, instead of being buried. Only relatives of the deceased will condescend to touch the dead body. Food is given to servants in consideration only of services expected. Boys and girls may be seen undergoing absolute starvation when their masters or rather their owners are scarce of food. No one else will give a morsel to the poor wretched skeletons, public opinion being that such generosity without hope of an equivalent is stark folly.<sup>14</sup>

Of the Wanyika of Tanzania, the British explorer, Richard Burton formed the impression that they

. . . are so bound and chained by . . . custom, that inevitable public opinion, whose tyranny will not permit a man to sow his lands when he pleases; so daunted and cowed by the horrors of their faith; so thoroughly conservative in the worst

10 J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 16.

11 P. Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959), trans., Colin King, pp. 68-69.

12 *Zambia Mail*, 5 January 1968.

13 Kaunda, *Humanism in Zambia*, op. cit., p. 5.

14 D. Livingstone, *African Journal*, Vol. II, edited by I. Schapera, (London: Chatto

sense of the word and so enmeshed by tribal practices . . . that the slave of rule and precedent lacks power to set himself free.<sup>15</sup>

Not only was progress in African societies rendered impossible by the tyranny of custom in the European view, but intertribal wars gave rise to great political instability which also resulted in social and economic stagnation. As another Briton, Sir Bartle Frere observed:

If you read the history of any part of the Negro population of Africa, you will find nothing but a dreary recurrence of tribal wars, and an absence of everything which forms a stable government, and year after year, generation after generation, century after century, these tribes go on obeying no law but that of force, and consequently never emerging from the state of barbarism in which we find them at present, and in which they have lived, so far as we know, for a period long anterior to our own era.<sup>16</sup>

This state of affairs in the traditional African society as depicted by European observers was obviously system-centred and far from rosy, but it also appears to have been exaggerated. A number of factors account for this vilification of the African social milieu by the early white men and among them is the fact that at this time British self-confidence was at its peak, while African conditions were at their worst. This coloured even more the British prejudices against the African which, in the words of Dr. Cairns, "provide a clear example of [European] ethnocentricism in action".<sup>17</sup> The actual situation appears to have been neither too rosy nor so grim. It was, like in every other human society, as Livingstone argued in respect of the M'akololo, a mixture of good and evil:

It would not be fair, in estimating the moral status of these people, to enumerate their bad actions only. If the same were done in England, the lower classes of that country would appear worse than they are here. It seems better to compare the actual amount of goodness in each class, the badness in both being rather exceptional than otherwise.<sup>18</sup>

This is a view to which Dr. W. Elmslie of the Livingstonia Mission subscribed when he observed:

It is a mistake to suppose that even among barbarous tribes, such as the Ngoni, all their customs are bad. There were, before Christian teaching began to influence them, many things which were admirable. Those traits of character and customs so readily seen by strangers, the observation of which has so often led travellers to believe that the state of the untutored savage was happy, free and good, are nevertheless found alongside lower ways of living and a grossly immoral character. . . .<sup>19</sup>

and Windus, 1963), p. 318.

15 Cited in H. A. C. Cairns, *Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central African Society, 1840-1890* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 78.

16 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 86.

17 Cairns, *op. cit.*, pp. 86, 101.

18 Livingstone, *African Journal*, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

19 W. A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni: Being Some Chapters in the History of Livingstonia Mission in British Central Africa* (Edinburgh/London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1901) p. 51.

Moreover, as Father Placide Tempels has observed, the African was probably too conscious of the moral code dictated by his God-centred and anthropocentric view of the universe for him to have been so callous as to ignore the importance and dignity of man:

The moral conscience of Bantu, their consciousness of being good or bad, or of acting rightly or wrongly likewise conforms to their philosophical views, to their wisdom. The idea of a universal moral order, of the ordering of forces, of a vital hierarchy, is very clear to all Bantu. They are aware that, by divine decree, this order of forces, this mechanism of interaction among beings, ought to be respected. They know that the interaction of forces follows immanent laws, that these rules are not to be played with, that the influences of forces cannot be employed arbitrarily. . . . They have a notion of what we may call immanent justice, which they would translate to mean that to violate nature incurs her vengeance and that misfortune springs from her. . . . This ethical conscience of theirs is at once philosophical, moral and juridical. . . .

The individual knows what his moral and legal obligations are and that they are to be honoured on pain of losing his vital force. He knows that to carry out his duty will enhance the quality of his being.<sup>20</sup>

True, traditional African society had, in the words of Elmslie, its "lower ways of living". But even though it was manifestly far from perfect, it had, as is implied in Tempels' analysis, a sense of man-centredness which, if adopted to the modern world situation, would, in the Zambian humanist thinking, serve as an effective antidote against the social maladies of organizational man. It would rehabilitate man and bring him back to sanity from his wanderings in the spiritual wilderness of materialism and ideological dogmatism and system-centredness. For, modern man has lost his sense of self-esteem; he has lost his sense of purpose in life. Much as man was, by his Creator's design, intended to be an end in himself, he has, perhaps unwittingly, become the means to that end rather than the end itself. In the capitalist economies, as Professor Erich Fromm points out, modern man has become 'a thing' for market research and manipulation in a relentless attempt by business enterprises to maximize profits. And this manipulation of man has spread to the political sphere. Thus, while "The idea of democracy originally centred around the concept of clear-thinking and responsible citizens," capitalist democracy has become "more and more distorted by the same methods of manipulation which were first developed in market research on 'human relations'."<sup>21</sup> Indeed, says President Kaunda, the manipulation and exploitation of man has transcended the economic and political spheres; it is everywhere:

The industrialist uses him as a means of wealth. To the demagogue he is the means to power, to the selfish lover the means to gratification. The war-monger uses him as cannon-fodder; to the economist he is a statistic; to the entertainer, he is an instrument to be manipulated. Everywhere man is being used. . . . He ceases to be the absolute standard by which all systems should be measured. Instead he has to twist his personality and reduce his stature in order to fit into the system.<sup>22</sup>

20 Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

21 E. Fromm, "Man Is Not a Thing," in Hendrik M. Ruitenbeck, ed., *The Dilemma of Organizational Society* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1963), pp. 59-60.

22 Kaunda, *A Humanist in Africa* (London: Longmans, 1966), p. 66.

System-centredness, if such an expression could be used as an antithesis of the term man-centredness, seems to be a creeping pestilence whose signs and symptoms can be diagnosed even in a developing country like Zambia, even if the disease itself may still be in its incubation period. This does not, of course, mean that the Zambian society has been entirely free of system-centredness; for, as can be recalled, there was in traditional Zambian or African society what early European missionaries and explorers somewhat hyperbolically termed the "tyranny of custom". In any case, as Mr. Mubanga Kashoki has rightly observed, all societies have a bit of both man-centredness and system-centredness.<sup>23</sup> But it is the proportion in which these two ingredients are blended which makes a society man-centred or system-centred, in relative terms. Thus, capitalist and communist systems of social organization are said to be system-centred because, in the words of President Kaunda, they "put either their money above men or their system above men". Zambian humanism with its avowed man-centredness, on the other hand, "enables us to put man first and all other material things are really for his use, as God would have him do."<sup>24</sup>

It is, therefore, in this sense that Zambia is trying to build a man-centred society through humanism and to eschew the pitfalls of system-centredness rampant in other modern societies. And President Kaunda has been at pains to warn Zambians against the dangers of this social malady which seem endemic in the developed world. Addressing the Second National Convention in Kitwe on 13 December 1969, he drew attention, for example, to some of the signs and symptoms of system-centredness in the economic sphere:

We [planners] become so preoccupied with our plans and their success that we completely lose sight of man in whose service we are supposed to be planning. The 'target' becomes all important; we must achieve self-sufficiency at all costs; we must minimise in investments; we must concentrate our efforts on production; we must show a profit, even if it means spending more of the tax-payers' money and raising the cost of living even higher. And so we go on. But do we ever stop to ask ourselves why we must do these things? Are they good in themselves? Are they to be sought for their own sake? Or are they good only because they serve the good of man?<sup>25</sup>

The solution to the problem in President Kaunda's view, seems to lie in injecting liberal doses of the serum of man-centredness into the Zambian social milieu to counteract the toxin of system-centredness. "The primary end of development planning must be the development of man," he says. "The development of our resources must in all instances be subordinate to the development of man and the relationship between man and man."<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere, the President lays even greater emphasis on this point:

23 M. Kashoki to the author, 5 March 1973. I am grateful to Mr. Kashoki for his useful comments on an earlier draft of this article. (Mr. Kashoki is a Senior Research Fellow in Linguistics at the University of Zambia.)

24 *Zambia Mail*, 12 January 1968.

25 *Report of the Second National Convention on Rural Development, Incomes, Wages and Prices in Zambia*, Kitwe, 12th-16th December 1969 (Lusaka: Zambia Information Services, 1970), p. 30.

26 *Ibid.*

We as leaders of the United National Independence Party must bear this [man-centredness] in mind all the time. Our goal has been, and is and must continue to be the reconstruction of Zambia, so that man East, West, North and South is central in the Party's and its Government's activities. Indeed, consciously we must continue to ask all our people in Zambia to come round to this thought. In other words, we must constantly remember that whatever we do is supposed to be about man and that it is within our power to shape our society accordingly.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, as Dr. Kaunda puts it, in Zambian humanism "love for each other, coupled with concern . . . and care for man are the foundations." Zambian humanism, he says, "holds man in the highest esteem". And he has warned: "You should look out against the danger of letting money take charge of you instead of you taking charge of it."<sup>28</sup>

Clearly, then, man-centredness in Zambian humanist parlance, means much the same thing as what Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole has called 'people-centredness', because both reject what was earlier termed as system-centredness in favour of humanity. "People", Rev. Sithole says, "are more important than ideologies, systems or things. People cannot be exterminated in order to enforce an ideology or doctrine. People cannot be treated like things in order to make super-profits. Neither profit nor doctrine can be allowed to be the centre of things." This, according to Rev. Sithole, is the essence of African socialism, an ideology which forms the basis of the political systems of many independent African States, notably Tanzania and Guinea.<sup>29</sup> And Guinea's President Sekou Touré holds the same view: "Political doctrines, social philosophies and economic systems should not be regarded as anything else but 'means' placed at the disposal of man and society for serving their permanent interest in fulfilling their rightful aspirations to full expression of the personality and the unfolding of man's political, economic, physical and moral capacities."<sup>30</sup>

The parallel drawn here between the concept of man-centredness in Zambian humanism and Rev. Sithole's people-centredness, which could also be called society-centredness, seems misleading. For it seems to equate man-centredness with people-centredness, which is not quite the same thing. As will be made clearer presently, Zambian humanism places a higher premium on the individual than on inter-individual relationships and interaction known as society. Indeed, President Kaunda, who is, no doubt, the greatest teacher of Zambia's ideology, has often emphasized this very point. "The word 'people' is rather abstract unless you come to the single unit in that people, and this is MAN," he said to civil servants at the Staff Training College (now the National Institute of Public Administration) in Lusaka in December 1963. "Whatever we do now and in future will be judged as success or failure by the extent to which it helps man to lead a better life, to improve his or her own

27 Kaunda, *Zambia's Guidelines for the Next Decade* (Lusaka: Zambia Information Services, 1968), pp. 1-2.

28 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 6 November 1972.

29 N. Sithole, *African Nationalism*, 2nd edn. (London: OUP, 1968), p. 190.

30 Sekou Touré, *Guinean Revolution and Social Progress* (Cairo: S.O.P. Press), p. 322.

conditions, to move forward with confidence, ready to fight and beat off so many of the rough tides that come in one's way."<sup>31</sup>

Yet the idea of people-centredness is very much a part of the principle of man-centredness in Zambian humanist thought, and the word 'people' is not infrequently mentioned each time system-centredness is condemned. For example, Dr. Kaunda, in the same speech at the Staff Training College, laid down the following as a pre-condition for helping man 'to lead a better life'. "To do all this successfully, Government, I repeat, must base its policies on people rather than on plans."<sup>32</sup> This frequent juxtaposition, and sometimes interchangeability of the word 'people' with 'man' in defining man-centredness in Zambian humanism, raises the question of whether the individual is more important than society or vice-versa.

The idea of man-centredness, which has been described as the heart of Zambian humanism, poses a number of conceptual difficulties which should be discussed at this juncture, even if only briefly. One such difficulty, which is perhaps as much semantic as it is conceptual, is to determine the locus of man's centrality, which, by implication, can only be plotted as a point of reference to some phenomenon or situation. In other words, in relation to what is man a centre? There seem to be at least two answers to this question. The first sense in which the centrality of man is perceived in Zambian humanism is in the African ontological and Christian contexts (which were referred to earlier) in which, with God occupying the apex of the hierarchy of vital forces<sup>33</sup> as Creator, man is seen as the centre of the universe, having dominion over all natural phenomena. This is relatively easy to understand. But what is not so easy to comprehend is the second meaning of man-centredness, which is carried in expressions like 'Zambia is a man-centred society'. This immediately evokes the age-old, and perhaps insoluble conundrum as to the relative importance of the individual and society or the State, about which political theorists and practitioners alike have argued from time immemorial. Is the individual, in the Zambian humanist view, more important than society, as John Locke painstakingly argued? Or should the opposite be the case, as men, like Jean Rousseau and Friedrich Hegel would have had it?

These are questions which no doubt have crossed the minds of many a Zambian or any interested observer when weighing the implications of the Zambian philosophy. A popular Zambian columnist, writing under the pseudonym of Kapelwa Musonda, for example, probably gave expression to this turn of mind when, quoting an imaginary interlocutor, he once posed the question: "We are talking about man being above everything, don't you think we are subordinating the interests of society to man himself?" The answer suggested by the questioner himself was that society should take precedence over the individual in Zambian humanism.<sup>34</sup> This is not, however, the 'official'

31 Colin Legum, ed., *Zambia, Independence and Beyond: The Speeches of Kenneth Kaunda* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons), pp. 30-31.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

33 Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, op. cit.

34 *Times of Zambia*, 8 December 1967.

view. President Kaunda makes clear what man-centredness implies in this regard when he says that:

We must remember that it is people above ideology; Man above institutions. We must continuously refuse to slavishly tie men to anything. Society is there because of Man. . . . In other words whatever we undertake to do we have got to remember that it is Man that is the centre of human activity.<sup>35</sup>

And Dr. Justin Zulu makes the point with even greater emphasis when he says that "Man must not only be the centre of society, but also at its growing apex."<sup>36</sup>

It must therefore be clear that man's centrality in society is seen by the Zambian humanist in terms of the purpose for which society exists. In isolation, either as a savage recluse or as a Robinson Crusoe, man cannot fully develop his natural capacity for self-fulfilment, but can do so only in society. Thus, as Professor Leopold Kohr of Puerto Rico University has written of the Zambian humanist in this vein, "His pivotal doctrine is that society exists for serving not business class, state or itself, but the short-lived weak human individual who cannot wait until after-life to get something out of his earthly existence." This, says Professor Kohr, stands in sharp contrast with the view of the capitalist that "what is good for General Motors is good for the country", and that of the communist who believes that "what is good for the working class is good for society; the humanist suggests that neither is necessarily good for anything but itself."<sup>37</sup>

The principle of man-centredness has, up to this point, only been looked at in the light of what may be called the purpose-relationship of the individual and society, that is the purpose of the the existence of the one vis-à-vis that of the other. In this context, society is seen as a means and man as the end of that means. But this relationship is often upset by the competing interests of the one against those of the other. Just as society can and does submerge the individual in defence or furtherance of its values, so also can the individual exploit society. The conflict here seems to be one of individualism versus communalism, and not between man-centredness and system-centredness. In such a situation, the Zambian humanist ethnic calls for community-mindedness as reciprocation for the man-centredness which society observes or should serve for his sake. As a former Minister once said: "It is this type of a man-centred society, a society whose individual members are in turn community-minded that we would like to see in Zambia."<sup>38</sup> The idea is, as President Kaunda puts it, to "rebuild a man-centred society based on mutual aid."<sup>39</sup>

However, the harmonization or balancing of the individual's interests with those of society is a difficult task, and even after it is accomplished such social

35 Kaunda, *Humanism in Zambia*, op. cit., p. 4.

36 J. B. Zulu, *Zambian Humanism: Some Major Spiritual and Economic Challenges* (Lusaka: Neczam, 1970), p. 6.

37 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 17 January 1973.

38 Speech by Mr. M. J. Chimba, then Minister for National Guidance, at the President's Citizenship College (Experimental Seminar, Livingstone, 25 February 1970).

39 *Mulungushi Conference, 1967: Proceedings of the Annual General Conference of the United National Independence Party*, 14th-20th August 1967 (Lusaka: Zambia Information Services, 1967), p. 5.

equilibrium as is established soon breaks down. The question then arises as to whose interests should prevail, the individual's or those of society? Here Zambian humanism takes a majoritarian stance in order to try and resolve the conflict: the interests of the majority must prevail over those of the individual or of the minority. As President Kaunda put it in a speech to a seminar on mass media and nation-building in Zambia in Lusaka's Mulungushi Hall on 1 August 1972:

The Party and Government are duty bound to implement policies, based on our national philosophy of Humanism and principles accepted by the majority of the people, for the purpose of improving the economic and social welfare of the masses. We cannot and will not serve the interest of the minority at the expense of the majority.<sup>40</sup>

Even the implementation of Zambian humanism itself, it seems, leaves no room for the aberrations of the individual or the minority to continue unchecked. This was more than implied in Dr. Kaunda's words during a speech to the UNIP National Council at Kabwe in December 1972 when he said that "when a people have chosen Humanism but a few choose to follow the line of capitalism instead, then the Party has the right to take a hard line against them."<sup>41</sup>

One might call this 'tyranny of the majority' after Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill. But that is the essence of democracy, if democracy, in its various forms, can be regarded as the best form of social organization. "Democracy implies toleration of criticism and minority views. But democracy does not mean tolerating intolerant minority groups," says President Kaunda. "Justice does not require that the majority must stand idly by while a small clique of political vandals and opportunists destroy the basis of the very existence of society. . . . The majority have the right to map out the future and take decisions which it is the obligation of the minority to follow and implement."<sup>42</sup>

This majoritarian judgement in the ever-recurring conflict between the individual and society seems, on the face of it, to be a negation of man-centredness. It appears as though man, who should be the centre of all human activity and for whom society is presumed to exist, has finally been submerged in his own social milieu and his interests have been sacrificed on the altar of social expediency. However, it seems open to question whether individual-centredness or minority-centredness is any better as a criterion for man-centredness than majority-centredness or society-centredness. Is man, the individual, in fact, not equally important (and probably his dignity and interests even weightier) when he stands counted among the majority in a given social situation? He certainly remains man whether he is in a minority or in the majority when making options in a certain social context, and should therefore, wherever he is, be accorded a fair measure of man-centred consideration in Zambian humanism. But is it not much more man-centred to

40 *Background No. 53/72* (Lusaka: Zambia Information Services, August 1972), p. 3.

41 *Zambia Daily Mail*, 5 December 1972.

42 *Address to Parliament on the Opening of the Fifth Session of the Second National Assembly* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1973), pp. 6-7.

respect and further the interests of the individual more when he is in the majority than when he is a minority? This is a question which mankind has been trying to resolve throughout history. It is a tangled problem, because it raises such major issues as whether the majority is always right.

It must be obvious that Zambian humanism offers no new clues as to the solution of this age-old philosophical problem because the majoritarian approach to it has for long been prescribed in the history of political thought, presumably because man the world over has come to recognize the need for law and order in society, even if such social restraints and sanctions may entrench upon the individual's liberties. As Mr. Kashoki has observed: "We are all—capitalists, communists, socialists, humanists, non-aligned—agreed that *Law and Order and Discipline*, i.e., the supremacy of rules, regulations and *systems*, is paramount in society, and woe to the individual who does not toe the line."<sup>43</sup>

The logic of the majoritarian approach in Zambian humanism, however, seems clear. From one of the moral assumptions of man-centredness itself—that society exists for man—it would seem that social sanctions on the individual or on the minority are justified. For, it would be folly for man, through his waywardness, to destroy this very means for his own existence, namely, society, wherein lie the conditions necessary for the flowering of his humanity and for self-fulfilment. "After all," as President Kaunda once said, "society is so gracious to you, you are what you are because of society."<sup>44</sup> "It is in society," as Professor Y. Mei has pointed out in an illuminating analysis of Confucian ethics, "that the individual lives, moves, and has his being, and, furthermore, grows into the fullness of his manhood, even sagehood. . . ." Social obligations and responsibilities of an individual are not chains and burdens to be escaped from, or to be borne and suffered. To the contrary, it is in the fulfilment of these social responsibilities that the individual realizes his complete personal fulfilment. In a very fundamental sense, the individual and society in Confucian social thought are mutually dependent.<sup>45</sup> And so are they in Zambian humanist thought. Hence Mr. Justin Chimba's statement cited earlier, that in a humanist society the individual is expected to be community-minded. The concept of mutual aid, to which President Kaunda makes reference, is thus as much a part of Confucian social thought or any other as it is of Zambian humanist thought in the ordering of relations between the individual and society.

To say, as the concept of man-centredness states, that man is the centre of all human activity might imply that Zambian humanism is irreligious. For, if all human activity centres around man, there can surely be no human effort made to serve a superhuman being or anything else; man must, by implication, remain the focal point of all social action. But in fact, the opposite is the case; man-centredness is in no way a negation of religion. "One way of defining

43 Kashoki, see footnote 23.

44 *Zambia Mail*, 6 February 1968.

45 Y. P. Mei, "The Status of the Individual in Chinese Social Thought and Practice," in Charles A. Moore, ed., *The Chinese Mind: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), pp. 327-328.

humanism" President Kaunda once said, "is a man-centred society, but man in that society is God-centred. . . ."46 Zambian humanism derives its religious character not only from religions such as Christianity but also from the strong religious tradition of African society which was inherent in its ontology. As Dr. Kaunda has said, in "a truly traditional society nothing was done without putting God first".47

Although both Zambian humanism and religion take man as their starting-point, the man-centredness of the former is not coterminous with that of the latter. For, as Dr. Zulu points out, Zambian humanism is "larger than religion".48 Whereas the man-centredness of Zambian humanism encompasses all facets of human life (moral, spiritual, material, etc.), Christianity, for example, has over the centuries over-emphasized the spiritual side of man, almost to the exclusion of his material welfare. In fact, traditionally, the Christian Church has sacrificed man's material well-being for heavenly reward after life, as can be seen from the gruelling asceticism of the hermits in early Christian times. Zambian humanism, on the other hand, takes account of man's diverse needs, material as well as spiritual, and seeks to cater for them all in order to make man truly the centre of all human activity. For this very reason, the Church has been urged from time to time by the Zambian leadership 'to come down to earth'. The Church, said President Kaunda early in 1968, must "get concerned with both the spiritual, the moral as well as the material side of the life of their members." It should "do exactly what we are trying to do in the Party, by teaching people good habits of feeding . . . their children and teaching them how bad excessive drinking is. . . ."49 And exactly five years later, Vice-President Mainza Chona made the same exhortation to the Joint Annual Conference of the North and South Zambia African Methodist Episcopal Church. "I should emphasise," he said, "the importance of Christian communities improving the material benefit of their members as a whole."50 The message clearly demanded of the Church to be man-centred in addition to being God-centred. For, as Mr. Mathew Nkoloma, Minister of State in the Ministry of Rural Development said, when Zambia was observing its first 'Humanism Week' in October 1972, "even God is man-centred because He had sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into this world in order to come and die for the salvation of mankind."51

Because of Christianity's failure to look after the material and moral welfare of man, it has until recently (with the giving of aid to African liberation movements by the World Council of Churches) done little to help the oppressed peoples under foreign rule. The Church has even refused to recognize the legitimacy of the use of force by these peoples to rid themselves of

46 *Zambia Mail*, 5 January 1968.

47 *Ibid.*

48 J. B. Zulu, "Humanism and Money in Zambia," in Bastiaan de Gaay Fortman, ed., *After Mulungushi: The Economics of Zambian Humanism* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969), p. 76.

49 *Zambia Mail*, 5 January 1968.

50 Opening Address to the Conference, 3 January 1973.

51 Mr. Nkoloma's speech to villagers east of Lusaka, broadcast on Radio Zambia, 21 October 1972.

oppression, itself justified by such sects as the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa by quoting the Bible. Mr. Dickson Mwansa, in an article on Zambian humanism, thus criticized the Church for failing in the pre-independence era "to unveil the injustices that underlay colonial regimes. Instead it worked to indoctrinate and hammer its converts into submission or rather passivity." It discouraged congregations from giving moral or material support to nationalist movements and instead Church leaders "waged a psychological war on their followers to acknowledge the unfair colonial administrators as legitimate rulers, equally accepted by the 'one above'."52

Mention was made earlier of the belief in Zambian humanism that man is above ideology and above all institutions and organizations, because they are created to serve him, he being the master, the centre of all human activity. Both the Party and Government are his servants and not his masters.53 But is man also above Zambian humanism? That is a question some people are likely to ask, especially in the wake of what President Kaunda said recently that Zambians should be prepared to die for their philosophy. "We must", he declared, "feel that our way of life is the best for us and every Zambian must be prepared to defend it at all times just like dedicated and committed capitalists or communists will fight and die for capitalism or communism. We must be prepared to fight and even lose our lives for Humanism."54 This may not read like man-centredness. Indeed, it may sound as if the central idea of the Zambian philosophy has been stood on its head, and humanism has veered round to system-centredness like other ideologies. But this does not appear to be so, for in the same statement, President Kaunda reaffirms Zambia's commitment to the principle of man-centredness. "We have elected to uphold the dignity and worth of the human person", he says. It would appear, therefore, that the President intended his remarks to stir up greater enthusiasm for and total commitment to humanism among Zambians, especially in the face of possible aggression from the white minority regimes of Southern Africa. Zambia, considered to be an oasis of racial harmony in a sub-continent arid with white racism, would, by implication, have to defend her way of life, and Zambians needed to wake up to this potential war situation. They would have to fight in defence of their humanist way of life, and in a war, death is a certain hazard. This appears to have been the instinctive reaction of man throughout history when his philosophy of life seemed in peril. As Professor Harold Laski points out: "That we must fight for our philosophy if we believe in it, seems to me the inescapable implication of the record."55

The idea in Zambian humanism that ideology and institutions are servants of man and not his masters raises another question and this is, what degree of inter-dependence is there in this master-servant relationship? In other words, can man be said to be master over his institutions and systems of thought without such mastery involving a certain degree of dependence which would

52 Letter to the Editor, *Times of Zambia*, 15 May 1970.

53 Kaunda, *Take up the Challenge*, op. cit., p. 5.

54 *Times of Zambia*, 18 October 1972.

55 H. J. Laski, *The State in Theory and Practice* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1935), p. 85.

tend to remove him from his pinnacle of supremacy over his own creations?

As is well known, human culture is essentially the process and the result of man's self-cultivating, self-conditioning and inventive ability and of the full development of his natural potentialities. Characterized in part by transmission or communication from one generation to another, culture is thus a combination of invention and acquisition. This creative activity inevitably puts man in a situation where he is at once a means and an end. This seems true of man everywhere, even in humanist Zambia. Thus, President Kaunda once spoke of "the miserable reality of the majority as our instrument of social change";<sup>56</sup> and Dr. Justin Zulu says that "man is not only a means for economic action, but also a setting for that action; man is not only an instrument for economic change, but also an end for that change."<sup>57</sup> But there is always the danger that the symmetry of "this characteristic duality of man", as Dr. Zulu terms it,<sup>58</sup> can be spoiled by giving undue importance to man's creative activity at the expense of the high value placed on man in Zambian humanism. Indeed, this is precisely what the capitalist system of social organization does. It looks at man (through his labour) more as a factor of production, more as an instrument for economic development than as an object of the development process itself. Labour, land and capital are seen to be in the same category of economic importance, as if man too were 'a thing'. This, in the Zambian humanist view, amounts to sacriligious treatment of God's most important creature in the universe.

Capitalist economic theory and practice are, however, some of the norms Zambia has inherited from the colonial era, and they still linger in some quarters, so much so that a few people still look at not only land and capital but labour as well in the capitalist perspective. A Labour Management Seminar held in Lusaka early in November 1972, for instance, passed *inter alia*, a resolution that "the equality of labour, land and capital be recognized by management and workers."<sup>59</sup> This resolution, as the *Times of Zambia* commented in an editorial, contains "important elements . . . which conflict with our national philosophy of Humanism." The paper went on to scarifify the capitalist and un-humanist assumptions on which the resolution was based, and it sets out the Zambian humanist case so well that it is worth quoting at length:

We are so used to seeing the equality of these three categories assumed that when any attempt is made to act as though labour is less important than the other two it is understandable that many of us should feel a sense of affront and clamour that their equality should be recognised.

Yet we need to recognise, too, that this in itself is a dangerous, old-fashioned attitude to adopt and takes us not forward to humanism but back to Adam Smith and the genesis of capitalism.

Let us be quite clear that any attempt to make man equal to land and capital in any society, far less a humanist one, is to open the front door to all evils that have generated in the West.

56 *Report of the Second National Convention*, op. cit., p. 21.

57 Zulu, "Humanism and Money in Zambia," op. cit., p. 76.

58 *Ibid.*

59 *Times of Zambia*, 20 November 1972.

This is because of its senseless spirit of indiscriminating expansionism, its over-centralisation and unit giantism, its lack of regard for the well-being of people and, perhaps more than anything, its capacity to work its will in its quest for profit and elude any attempt of the workers to exert social control.

This is one of the main reasons why life in Western societies is showing so many signs of disintegration and breakdown. It is because labour is regarded as being equal to land and capital that it is not possible to move forward to a humanist society. We must stop seeing labour as a 'factor of production' at all and come to see that the purpose of all production is the well-being of man and that man's labour is only one part of the spectrum of his needs which land and capital can be used to serve.

To bracket 'labour' as being equal to land and capital, is as good as saying that man is equal to a patch of maize or a bag of money. It is on this absurd basis that capitalism has been built and has been able to do so much harm.<sup>60</sup>

Of course the problem about labour is that, even though it is part of the human person and is, as the *Times of Zambia* put it, only one part of man's spectrum of needs, it is a marketable commodity the world over. It can be exploited and abused. Zambian humanism is yet to develop its own economic theory and practice before it can find the right niche for labour in its corpus of ideas. Only then perhaps will Zambia's humanist stature on the international scene be more noticeable, vis-à-vis the world's two ideological giants, communism and capitalism, "those Victorian brothers under the skin," as Professor Kohr has put it, "who think they have a different religion merely by calling Zeus Jupiter" but who are both exploiters of labour, the one "through huge *private* property in the means of production, and the other through huge *public* property, which is nothing but the private property of the public and, from the perspective of the individual working man, is as bad as the other."<sup>61</sup>

After what has been said, the question may still be asked as to why the concept of man-centredness, which seems a truism in the life of any people, should be accorded a special place in Zambian humanist thought. For, is it not true that man the world over is striving to make his life better? Is it not also true that human society, whether in the West or in the East, is, in one way or another, in the vanguard of this crusade to make the world a better place for man to live in? Surely the United States of America, Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and all other countries, including the developing world, are all, in their own ways, striving to improve the lot of their peoples? President Roosevelt's New Deal programme was surely only one manifestation of efforts by Western societies in this direction. And only very recently, Britain, the cradle of Western capitalist culture, rejected an all-round 2.76 per cent price increase on agricultural products proposed by some members of the European Economic Community; for fear that such an increase would impair not only her general economic position but that of the common man as well. She insisted on devising a product-by-product price fixing policy and on measures to ensure that any price increases would

60 *Ibid.*

61 Kohr, loc. cit.



not be passed on to the consumer.<sup>62</sup> Is this not a mark of man-centredness in a capitalist society?

In an account of his recent visit to the People's Republic of China and to the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, Vice-President Mainza Chona gives a very strong impression that the East is no less man-centred than the West. "Leaders in China and Korea are very serious in serving the masses", he says. "Service is the foundation of their ideology."<sup>63</sup> Indeed, man-centredness seems to have been central to Chinese humanist ethics, stretching back to the days of Confucius, whose teaching and writings have left an indelible stamp on Chinese social thought. "Though Confucian ethics called for duties of the individual to the community, it did not overemphasise the community and ignore the individual", writes Professor Hsieh Yu-Wei. "In fact, Confucian ethics considered the individual even more important than the community. Confucian ethics regarded individuals as roots, and communities as leaves—or individuals as foundations and communities as roofs."<sup>64</sup> Is this not again a mark of man-centredness in what is now a communist society? Wherein, then, lies the special importance of the concept in Zambian humanism?

This question has, in its essentials, already been answered in the preceding pages. But in essaying an answer to the question, it was also suggested that all societies are, to a greater or lesser extent, man-centred as well as system-centred. It is in this sense that the man-centredness of Western, Eastern and other societies should be understood; and it is also in this sense that Zambia could be said to be no different from other countries. This type or degree of man-centredness may be said to be *functional*. That is to say, it is man-centredness in action not contrived by social design, but caused by force of circumstances, because man, as a creative being, cannot be ignored in the development process, even if such a process may be system-centred.

It is, however, from the point of view of man-centredness as an ideology that Zambia may claim a special place in the stream of world political thought. It is Zambia's choice of humanism as her ideology, and her deliberate policy to build a man-centred society in the spirit of that ideology which mark her off from other countries; and which in turn give the concept of man-centredness a special place in her philosophy. True, other independent African countries profess similar systems of thought which are generally referred to as African socialism. But, as Dr. Fola Soremekun points out, "Rarely have African leaders . . . linked the development of their own countries to the development of Mankind as Zambian leaders have." In Zambia, "another African philosophy of political, social, economic and universal development has recently been called into existence."<sup>65</sup>

It is this universalism inherent in Zambian humanism, its man-centred approach to domestic as well as to international problems, which is probably

62 *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 April 1973.

63 Mr. Chona in the *Zambia Daily Mail*, 3 November 1972.

64 Hsieh Yu-Wei, "The Status of the Individual in Chinese Ethics," in Charles A. Moore, ed., op. cit., p. 318.

65 F. Soremekun, "Kenneth Kaunda's Cosmic Neo-Humanism," in *Geneve-Afrique* (1970), p. 2.

the most distinguishing characteristic of Zambia's ideology vis-à-vis other ideologies. "The philosophy of [Zambian] humanism does not aim at restricting its tenets to just within the geographical confines of Zambia alone", says Dr. Soremekun elsewhere. "It believes in the unity of all mankind. A Zambian for example is not a complete man if he does not think that he belongs to the wider human family." Hence the importance Zambia attaches to the United Nations, the OAU and the like.<sup>66</sup> This point was made very clear by Vice-President Mainza Chona when he once said:

Zambia feels that since her philosophy of Humanism recognises the importance of MAN and since this MAN can be a Zambian, an American, Chinese or a Russian, then her foreign policy must be formulated in the interests of MAN regardless of his locality, race, creed, religion or colour. In addition to the exchange of diplomatic representation; Zambia has played host to several foreign delegations and has also sent many delegations abroad. We have done, and will continue to do, this in accordance with our philosophy of Humanism which seeks peace, better understanding and mutual cooperation between governments and their peoples.<sup>67</sup>

Nowhere perhaps is this accepting and universalistic man-centredness of Zambian humanism made more evident than in the speeches of President Kaunda. "On many occasions when addressing a group", Dr. Soremekun has observed, "he would sometimes make a shadow speech in which he would address Vorster, Caetano, Smith *in absentia*, urging them to stop abusing man and to come back to the human family."<sup>68</sup> President Kaunda's prescription for a return to sanity and for peace among men is typically man-centred: there must be love among men, and "Love of humanity means separating man from his actions", which means that, as he puts it, "We must learn to hate what is done and not to hate the doer." For, by so doing, he says, "there is always a chance that the people whose activities we strongly disapprove of will change, and then we will have no cause to hate them." It is in this spirit that he has often made 'shadow' speeches to the leaders of white minority regimes in Southern Africa:

That is why we say to people like Vorster, Smith and Caetano that if they should change and adopt human policies we will welcome them. We don't hate them because they are white. We hate their actions. If they change their actions, we will welcome them to the human fold, to the human family. . . . If they should change, we will welcome them, they are our brothers, friends in the human family.<sup>69</sup>

Zambian humanism, with its central tenet of man-centredness, therefore, provides a vision for which not only Zambians but humanity as a whole should strive. It is, in the words of Dr. Soremekun, "a philosophy of hope".<sup>70</sup>

66 *Times of Zambia*, 12 February 1971.

67 Speech by Mr. Chona to Zambian diplomats attending a Foreign Service course at the National Institute of Public Administration, Lusaka on "The Zambian Philosophy of Humanism and its Effects on the Formulation of Zambia's Foreign Policy," 26 March 1971.

68 Soremekun, "Kenneth Kaunda's Cosmic Neo-Humanism," op. cit., p. 28.

69 Kaunda, *Zambia's Guidelines for the Next Decade*, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

70 Soremekun, "Kenneth Kaunda's Cosmic Neo-Humanism," op. cit., p. 28.