

GEORGE U. UKAGBA, SYLVESTER IDEMUDIA ODIA  
(Benin, Nigeria)

## MICHAEL H. MITIAS ON CHALLENGES OF UNIVERSALISM

### Introduction

The universalist society spearheaded by the Polish Academy after many years of vigorous academic activity has become a credible philosophic movement to be reckoned with. It has gradually ceased to be a Polish affair (if ever it was intended to be taken as such) since the founding of the International Society for Universalism in 1989.

In two separate essays: (a) “Cultural Relativism: Some Comments”.<sup>1</sup> and (b) “Kai Nielsen on Cultural Identity, Self-Definition and Progress in Philosophy”.<sup>2</sup> Otakpor dealt with some of the problems closely associated with the universalist philosophic agenda. Yet there is still room for the exploration of some recalcitrant themes of universalism.

### M.H. Mitias on Universalism

In an essay entitled “Challenges of universalism” M.H. Mitias<sup>3</sup> offered further explanations of the themes of universalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Nkeonye Otakpor, *Cultural Relativism: Some Comments*, “Philosophica”, vol. 53, No 1, 1994, pp. 57–71.

<sup>2</sup> Nkeonye Otakpor, *Kai Nielsen on Cultural Identity, Self – Definition and Progress in Philosophy*, “Indian Philosophical Quarterly”, vol. XXI, No. 1, January 1994, pp. 11–34.

<sup>3</sup> Michael H. Mitias, *Challenges of Universalism*, “Dialogue and Humanism: The Universalist Quarterly”, vol. 1, No 1, 1991, pp. 5–15.

The central theses and focus of his essay is the examination and analysis of the perceived challenges of universalism. The following issues appear germane to the elucidation of those challenges.

According to Mitias, universalism is a meta-philosophy and is thus very close to the ancient Greek conception of philosophy “for it seeks to provide an understanding of our world, the world as it is experienced by us as human beings, as a unified whole.”<sup>4</sup> In this respect “it does not reject or belittle any past or present philosophical idea, system, or point of view; on the contrary it is anxious to grasp the basic insight or intuition of this idea, system, or point of view and incorporate it in its attempt to arrive at the richest possible vision of the world as a whole”.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, universalism as a meta-philosophy does not mean the analysis of language, principles or concepts. It equally does not mean owing allegiance to any ideological or religious “outlook insofar as such an outlook fails to take into serious consideration the universal nature of man and world. This is certainly a commitment to the principle of objectivity in analyzing the basic data of reality.”<sup>6</sup>

For Mitias universalism is a practically oriented philosophy which attempts to shift emphasis away from the exclusivity often associated with academic philosophy. In other words, it envisages the loosening of the stranglehold of the academic on philosophy. “This claim is based on the assumption which is endorsed by a large number of contemporary philosophers, that we do not live in order to think, but we think in order to live. No knowledge is worth seeking if it does not serve the highest ends of human living.”<sup>7</sup>

Against this background, Mitias contends that universalism is a response to three serious challenges.

- (1) It is “an attempt to make sense of our unusually complex and rapidly, developing world”.<sup>8</sup> A world in which science has radically uttered and expanded the horizon of human knowledge. The world, it is now claimed has increasingly become one global village.
- (2) Universalism is “an attempt to restore to philosophy its role as the leading visionary of human civilization”.<sup>9</sup> At the moment, philosophy is crisis-ridden, has gradually and painfully lost its human touch, and in the process has

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 7.

become too fragmented, too specialized and too academic. Those human concerns that matter most have to a large extent become irrelevant to philosophy and philosophers.

- (3) Universalism is “an attempt to fill our ideological vacuum, and as such it is a quest for a workable world order, an order that can promote global peace, progress and human solidarity”.<sup>10</sup>

Against the background of recent developments in the former Soviet Union, the movement towards European political union; the growing concern for economic, political, technological, and educational advancement and stability in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Arab States, it may be the case that there is no single ideological format that can satisfy the different shades of opinion.

Each state, culture or society is gradually revisiting its past in an attempt to find workable answers and solutions to its peculiar problems. For Mitias “no philosophy during the past sixty years made any serious attempt to provide answers to these questions or to take seriously the predicament of the world as a human society. Most of the philosophies which we encounter in this century are either regional or individual, they are not universally minded. They most express a given historical intuition, an aspect of the world of human life.”<sup>11</sup>

As a meta-philosophy, “universalism seeks to articulate a conceptual framework which can be used as a basis for: (a) understanding the present world reality in the richness of its complexity and dynamic growth, and (b) providing a suggestive plan for ordering the major relations and needs of world states.”<sup>12</sup>

Mitias rightly cautions that he should not be understood as suggesting anything close to Plato’s prescription of the rule of philosopher kings, that is, the rule of the future world by universalists or that they should design and redesign the basic fabric of such a world. Rather the primordial quest of universalism is to understand and appreciate the fact that the world is a well ordered whole.

In substantial agreement with Janusz Kuczynski whom he quotes approvingly, he declares, “in its ontology and epistemology, universalism should express the whole complexity of the diversified world and its unifying forces, its differences, specificity, universalities, various universal elements, levels, tendencies, and needs.”<sup>13</sup>

Can universalism meet these three challenges? Mitias and Kuczynski contend that it can because:

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<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Janusz Kuczynski, *Dialogue and Universalism as a New Way of Thinking*, (Warsaw: University Press, 1989), p. 26.

1. It is an all – embracing view of the world as a whole.<sup>14</sup>
2. It seeks to provide a basis for defining and justifying all the values which promote human satisfaction in art, politics, economics, education and social life.<sup>15</sup>
3. It seeks to understand the history of the world in the complexity and cultural richness as a dynamic, creative process.<sup>16</sup>

### **The problem with the challenges of universalism**

The concern of the proponents of the universalist movement is legitimate and genuine in terms of the dominant issues and problems associated with the human predicament anywhere and everywhere. These issues and problems are in the main as many as they are human groups. They are inexhaustible. These can be narrowed down to: reality viz., matter, life, consciousness, spirit and law (nomos), the historical process, human freedom, ultimate meaning and the destiny of human life. This is a refinement and restatement of *Philosophia Perennis*: Man, World, being, Truth and Language. This attempt even for heuristic and instrumental purposes is of value.

Universalism is (supposedly) the answer to these problems. It is perhaps the ultimate one in terms of seeking solutions to them. However, this paper does not support the idea that there is only one, single answer (universalism or something other) to these issues and problems to the extent that they are fundamental and profound.

What the proponents of universalism are doing or attempting to do is reduce all other possible answers to one, that is, universalism. Reductionism is attractive, indeed very intellectually attractive. It makes, or can indeed make life a lot easier. Yet it is narrow because its base is equally narrow.

On this score, universalism amounts to a *soup con* for special pleading. And what is being pleaded is simply a return to the common ground, the common denominator of our humanity, that is, that the human species is one, just one human family. It is thus a plea for a re-relation and revalidation of our humanness. This much I concede to them.

It is obvious that the facts of human experience do not speak of one answer or one solution, ultimate or not. Rather, they speak in a multiplicity of registers.

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<sup>14</sup> Michael H. Mitias, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 14.

The human experience in birth, death, suffering, torture, hunger, disease, war and so on is probably similar if not exactly the same. In between birth and death, or even preceding both is history, the history of the individual human person/community/society.<sup>17</sup>

Is this history, for all it is worth, the same for every individual? Are the histories, philosophies, cultures and mores of all nations – states exactly the same? Certainly not. All explanations and clarifications “that can be offered (in this respect) leaves us with unanswered questions.”<sup>18</sup>

There will ever remain unanswered questions because of the novelty inherent in experience. In demonstrating the novelty inherent in experience but which is experienced by most of us, we also demonstrate the unity of all humans in a way. In essence, the central experiences of life are deeply similar even though the forms of experience dictated by cultural and environmental conditions are different. There can only be similarity in this regard, and never sameness.

These cultural and environmental conditions determine the kinds of answers and solutions sought for and offered. In other words, these answers and solutions are not culturally indeterminate. They are not sought for and offered in a socio-cultural void. Hence there is nothing like an uncontaminated truth. What we make of the world is largely culture dependent. We see in nature what we are culturally equipped to look for. There is nothing like a *universal* man, only a *cultural* man exists.

Our era of violent scientific changes demands that we find new ways to think and to act. This search unifies and unites us into new social contingents of some unprecedented structure. We may learn to signal truth-units from horizon to horizon, from culture to culture, from man to man, and in the process make attempt to jump gaps of prejudices and bias. Universalism is a new social contingent on which we are attempting to jump over age-long gaps of prejudices and bias. It is an attempt to build just one solid dwelling for man and within that dwelling we save mankind.<sup>19</sup>

It is doubtful whether all these important dwellings will ever be constructed. It is even more doubtful whether we can ever decide on its site, and if so whether we will ever do the clearing mainly because of deep-seated suspicions of each other which are based on self-interest and ideological posturing, age-long prejudices and

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<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Karl Britton, *Philosophy and The Meaning of Life*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), pp. 127–128.

<sup>19</sup> Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*, (London: Heinemann, 1982), p. 11. Kane’s original statement is as follows: We must build solid dwellings for men, and within those dwellings we must save God.

bias. It may be that the preliminary works have only just begun, though we remain largely incomprehensible to each other.

### The Claims of Universalism

Now let's examine the claims of universalism and the challenges it is intended to meet, one after another.

It is claimed that universalism "is an attempt to make sense of our unusually complex and rapidly developing world".<sup>20</sup> To meet this challenge what we need is "an all embracing view of the world as a whole".<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, reality is not intrinsically fragmented. One of the great, dramatic sicknesses of our time is the disaggregation of knowledge of hyperspecialisation. The reintegration of knowledge is the great task of this generation and a coming one. The need for generalists is, perhaps, now very much in evidence.

Yet this reintegration cannot take place in a void. It presupposes that we acknowledge the existence of all there is in their separate, constituent parts. In other words, the quest for sameness makes no sense without acknowledging the primacy of variance and plurality.

The case for an all embracing view of the whole world is bogus. According to the erudite Polish philosopher Krapiec, "when we open our eyes we do not see the entire whole world. We only see the world particular to our vantage position, the world as given to us"<sup>22</sup>

We cannot stand outside the culture particular to us in order to have this all embracing view of the whole world. We are naturally condemned to stand on the cultural matrix intricately woven around us. In other words, "tradition allows us to think our own insertion into historicity, the fact that we are constructed as subjects through a series of already existing discourses, and that it is through this tradition which informs us that the world is given to us".<sup>23</sup>

The world has always been, and may continue to be one global village because the human family is just one. But just as a family is made up of several individual members, so is the global family, itself made up of distinct cultural units, each

<sup>20</sup> Michael H. Mitias, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Albert M.Krapiec, *The Theory Of Analogy Of Being*, in: *Theory of Being To Understand Reality*, ed. By Kaminski et al, (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1980), p. 47.

<sup>23</sup> Chantel Mouffe, *Radical Democracy: Modern and Post Modern*, Andrew Ross, ed., *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Post Modernism*, (Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 39.

with its own values, mores, philosophies, meaning structures, world views and ways of life.

Here lies the origin of the complexity in the world order, and it is not unusually since it is inherent in the nature of the order. It is part of the essence of that order. The complexity is a reflection of the plurality of belief and other systems, and cultures in the world order.

To abandon or eliminate or de-emphasize this inherent plurality and variance on the grounds that they cumulatively exacerbate the inherent complexity in the world order does not make sense. To attempt to collapse them into one whole unit is reductionist. Universalism as a form of philosophy and as a species of reductionism cannot, does not, embody every holographic cultural context essentially because that context is largely phronesis.

It is further suggested that “universalism is an attempt to restore to philosophy its role as the leading visionary of human civilization”.<sup>24</sup> The philosophy under reference here is unindicated just as it is unclear which human civilization is under reference.

Doubtless, there are no cultural achievements common to humankind. The observation that philosophy has become crisis-ridden, highly specialized and exceedingly academic is insightful as well as poignant. It has ceased to provide a basis for justifying and defining values which promote the human good on a global scale.

Most philosophies today qualify to be regarded as cultural misfits in terms of their irrelevance to the lives and basic concerns of their immediate communities. This is as a result of the undue emphasis placed on specialization by philosophers. It is not because contemporary philosophy has no global content. No philosophy (past or present) can have this content because of the peculiar nature of philosophy.

Any definition of philosophy is apt to be personal rather than global or universal. The themes of philosophy have at once an infinite variety and an abiding constancy. The variety inherent in philosophical themes reflects the plurality of traditions, stories, ways of life, and cultures. The constancy reflects the one and only biological stream of life in which all humans are deeply rooted. To this extent it is utopian to work for a universal philosophy, a philosophy which is culturally neutral. Such a philosophy is homeless and baseless, and there can be no such philosophy.

There are indeed universal values which are ostensibly in need of definition, redefinition, refinement and justification, but there is no universal philosophy to

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<sup>24</sup> Michael H. Mitias, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

perform this all important role. Only philosophy in the proper sense of being inherently particular can do so, if at all.

What makes philosophy unique, particular and privileged is the way we encounter life's experiences as a succession of presentations to which we provide integration, sometimes only to maintain orientations, sometimes only to give meaning and value to events that pass our consciousness. "But just as knowledge of life's presentation is a process of becoming aware, of providing a meaningful abstraction in a concept of our experience, so knowledge of philosophy's presentations is a repetition of the same process".<sup>25</sup>

The third and final claim is that universalism is "an attempt to fill our ideological vacuum, and as such it is a quest for a workable world order, an order that can promote global peace, progress and human solidarity".<sup>26</sup> In order to achieve this lofty goal, universalism seeks to understand the history of the world in its complexity and cultural richness as a dynamic, creative process.<sup>27</sup>

It is argued by proponents of universalism that no philosophy has been able to do this because each philosophy is either regional or individual, as indeed it should be. It is further argued that this alone disables such philosophies in terms of expressing as well as reflecting the human predicament in its wholeness and totality.

It should be obvious that each philosophy is a cultural testament of some sort. If universalism is a philosophy according to Mitias and others; if it has a cultural base; if it reflects a particular, unique and privileged perspective, then universalism is equally disabled in this respect.

In other words, it cannot perform the intended function for exactly the same reasons adduced by Mitias. There are no good reasons, no credible evidence on the ground which suggests that universalism as a philosophy is well placed and better equipped to perform the assigned role much better than other philosophies.

Perhaps because of present day problems and difficulties in the world order, Mitias thinks that we can revision philosophy. But as Elkins suggests "it is difficult to revision philosophy, for it is hard to know how or where to begin. The tendency has been to see philosophy out there, as some external body of knowledge. But is philosophy not closer to home, is not our philosophy the place to begin? Philosophy is at heart a constant reminder of human subjectivity".<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Wiliam Handy, *Toward a Formalist Criticism of Fiction*, N. Robert Murray Davies, ed., *The Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969), p. 205.

<sup>26</sup> Michael H. Mitias, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> James R. Elkins, *The Examined Life: A Mind in Search of Heart*, "American Journal of Jurisprudence", vol. 30, 1985, p. 182.

To revision philosophy, the place to begin is primarily the revisioning of the individual philosopher because “the philosopher’s empire is his own inner life”.<sup>29</sup> and to complete the process, we may then have to *ab initio*, revision culture because culture moulds personality. To make sense out of the bizarre suggestion it is important that we revision human subjectivity. It is certainly not too obvious how this can be made to work because the art of philosophizing “mean the spelling out of individual commitments. These commitments take their meaning from the fact that they are deeply experienced”.<sup>30</sup>

It is also contended by Mitias that there is an ideological vacuum in the world order because of recent developments in the world system. The so-called cold war between the West and East of Europe (including their proxies and surrogates) has come to an end. This alleged or supposed vacuum is consequent upon the conclusion of the cold war.

In order to properly evaluate Mitias’ thesis of ideological vacuum it may be safer, even better to find out what ideology means. According to Plamenatz, ideology means “a total system of thought and emotion and attitude to the world, to society and to man”.<sup>31</sup> It means “the manner of thinking, ideas characteristic of a person or a group especially as forming the basis of an economic or political system”.<sup>32</sup>

Against this background it is certainly not the case that there has been anything close to an ideological vacuum in any society or in the world. Each human group, each society has its own thought system and its own ideas, which form the basis of its economic and political system.

In certain parts of the world, colonialism and neo-colonialism may have distorted this. Yet this forceful distortion is one thing, the existence of an ideology is another. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, it cannot be said that the former countries in the Union and in the former Eastern Europe are experiencing an ideological closure either as a direct or an indirect consequence. Nature in itself has no room for any vacuum.

Consequently, Mitias’ thesis of an ideological vacuum cannot be sustained. The thesis is unsustainable because these countries “are returning in many cases back to their religious or national roots for answers to their political and social problems”.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> M. Novak, *Belief and Unbelief*, (New York: Macmillan, 1985), p. 63.

<sup>30</sup> P. Sanborn, *Existentialism*, (Irvington Publishers, 1968), p. 25.

<sup>31</sup> John Plamenatz, *Ideology*, (London: Pall Mall, 1970), pp. 27–31.

<sup>32</sup> A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Dictionary*, (Oxford: University Press, 1974), p. 421.

<sup>33</sup> Michael H. Mitias, op. cit., p. 8.

### **Universalism, responsibility and intimation of the other**

According to Emmanuel Levinas, our discovery of our fellow men and our reencounter with them opens the closed world of our self-centered totality to the infinity of the wholly other.

In the over two and half centuries of European encounter with non-Europeans, what is the overall picture? In a profound sense, it is an encounter predicated on domination, exploitation, humiliation, despoliation, colonialism and apartheid of non Europeans by Europeans.

It is an encounter hinged on the division of the human family into the developed north and the underdeveloped south of our common hemisphere. It is an encounter that has subtly encouraged the hatred of the naked face of the wholly other.

The naked face of the wholly other means that, first, whether the other is rich or poor, alien or neighbour, developed or underdeveloped, primitive or modern, all these determinations and more are merely accidental. That face demands and insists on acknowledgement, that is, that we step out in pure disinterestedness from our totalizing self-centeredness towards that otherness.

Second, the nakedness of the face of the other reveals to us the fundamental equality of all human beings. That face poignantly reminds us that, the face represents to us, someone as human as we are.

Third, genuine self-fulfillment always occurs by means of others and by means of the world: by letting things be, and by letting others be as well as by helping them to become themselves.

Fourth, the fundamental fact in people's life is that they meet the face of the other who without any conditions and without force offers an affirmation. For Martin Buber, all real living is meeting. Without this meeting Kierkegaard thinks we are threatened by the possibility of self-dispersal. That threat has the potential not only of self dispersal but of the negation of all that is human.

To affirm somebody means to treat that person as beneficent not only to myself but, equally to him. Through this interaction and encounter both partners enter into an open existence, a positive relationship which is terribly lacking in our world and which is, perhaps, responsible for the neuroses of exclusivity, and unbridled individualism.

It is responsible for the totalizing subject looking at all things and persons as objects to be brought into the totality of his world.

On account of these, there is the failure to respectfully go out to others and their world, to value the other for their own sake, to recognize the other and to promote them for their own sake.

The discovery, encounter and acknowledgment of the naked face of the other takes place not by way of contemplative knowledge but under a moral option. This option is optics. Ethics is, thus, “an optics, but is a seeing without any image, lacking objectivation, synoptic and totalizing powers of the vision. The face of the other which lies beyond all objectivating representations and ideas, invites a moral option”.<sup>34</sup> This is an option that a section of the human family finds difficult to deal with. Yet the decision not to deal with the implications and consequences of this option is, in itself, an option and one that is consciously and conscientiously made.

As a consequence, we propose an ethic of tolerance, co-operation, accommodation, compassion, and mutuality. For this ethic to survive the strains of life there is the need for all of us to recognize and acknowledge the other human face, one that tells a different and an unfamiliar story about the human condition, our condition.

It is a face that we consciously fail to acknowledge because of its wrongly perceived oddity and newness. Ironically, there is grossly nothing odd and new about our common origin, heritage, and humanity. Humanity is not alien to itself, just as a corpse is not alien to earth.

We must learn to acknowledge the presence of the face of another, to treat it as one of our own kind, not as we treat inanimate objects. We must recognize and acknowledge that naked face comes from cultural systems different from our own yet it deserves our respect in virtue of our common humanity.

It is therefore essentially necessary that we abandon the ideology of domination, exploitation, and gun boat diplomacy (in both its ancient and most modern versions) and work assiduously for mutuality, coexistence and interdependence.

To achieve these goals and more, compassion should be acutely cultivated. Compassion speaks to us from both sides of the chasm, unlike universalism. Compassion is one of the goals of life. The paths leading to it may differ with each of us, but all the paths include suffering, sorrow and agony along with the joys of life and living.

We cannot have fellow-feeling for the sufferings and sorrows of the wholly other without having had some comparable experiences sometime, somewhere in our own journey through life. The indubitable fact is that in compassion, but not in universalism, we provide the nectar on which our common humanity subsists.

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<sup>34</sup> L. Monden, *Faith: Can Man Still Believe?* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1970), pp. 27–30.

## Conclusion

One of the features of the “new world order” is the rapid development of new concepts and the resurrection of old ones to define the “new” forms of global relations.

The more common concepts include universalism, globalization, post modernism, post structuralism, female genital mutilation, civil society, civil society organizations, sustainable development, stake holders, net work, empowerment, capacity development, poverty alleviation, millennium development goals. The list is inexhaustible.

These concepts are (following the history of the chequered relation between Europe and non Europeans) coined and stipulatively defined in Europe and North America, and are principally directed by their media at non-Europeans.

Of all the resurrected concepts, universalism and globalization are the two concurrently enjoying the greatest boom among philosophers and non-philosophers alike. Universalism presaged globalization. Globalization like any other European ideology has its roots in universalism.<sup>35</sup>

According to an Igbo proverb, the person who finds the truth holds the light. The truth about these two concepts, and their offshoots, is that their dominant function is ideological. In particular, globalization and free trade aim at promoting the integration of the dominated countries/people into the capitalist ideology of structural adjustment, privatization, trade liberalization, and self-help. These are the direct consequences of universalism conceived as a way of life and as a philosophy. But it is a philosophy lacking in authenticity.

Without philosophy in its ancient and most authentic sense as a way of life, human life will be like “a ship headed for no port and no harbour, with no rudder, no compass, no pilot, simply floating for a time, then lost in the waves”.<sup>36</sup> This may be occasioned by the fact that “philosophy is no longer a way of life as it was in antiquity, it has turned into an exclusively intellectual and academic affair”.<sup>37</sup> Philosophy has thus “hidden its human face in the arid wasteland of positivism”.<sup>38</sup> It has lost its human face in the arid wasteland of universalism. Consequently, the great problems of existence and of life rarely come up because of the undue concern for calculated self-interest, ideology, paternalistic tendencies, hatred of

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<sup>35</sup> (a) Nkeonye Otakpor, *Social Theories and Communal Ideology*, “Dialogue and Humanism”, vol. 1, No. 1, 1991, p. 55. (b) Szymon Chodak, *The Rise of the Global Civilization*, “Dialogue and Humanism”, vol. 1, No. 1, 1991, pp. 17–36.

<sup>36</sup> This statement is credited to Clarence Darius. I regret my inability to attribute it accurately.

<sup>37</sup> Carl Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, L. Langer, ed., 1969, p. 84.

<sup>38</sup> James L. Elkins, op. cit., pp. 170–171.

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the naked face of the wholly other, drought of compassion and fellow feeling and the celebration of the misfortunes of our other human kins.

Mitias' other proponents are sincerely bothered by this notorious and scandalous trend. There is no doubt at all that their interest in this regard is perfectly well grounded. But their proffered solution cannot work. Universalism cannot work, cannot deliver simply because like any other philosophy it is disabled, weakened and haunted by the same "sins" alleged to have been committed by other philosophies.

Worse still, universalism cannot deliver (whatever it is intended to so deliver) because it is patently and subtly reductionist. It is just one perspective out of many. If it is an attempt to revision philosophy it cannot succeed because it is difficult to do so. It is also impossible to revision philosophy.

Against this background, universalism is a metaphor for a future which we have neither lived nor experienced but which, hopefully, inhabits all the possibilities for all of us to co-create new values and history.

### Summary

The age-old philosophical idea of universalism defended by Husserl has in our times come under heavy inter-continental intellectualistic attacks. Advocates of localism, relativism and particularity have accused it of being a form of "Euro centrism", and thus of being an essentially hegemonic concept. This paper examines Michael H. Mitias on challenges of universalism. Despite its short-comings, Mitias is perfectly in order when he insists that universalism does not set cultural understandings aside, for it does not iconoclastically view them as the cultural muck of history or as a cluster of irrational prejudices. This may be a good start point in terms of the future needs of our humanity and collective destiny, but it may not be enough to secure this future for all of us.

**Key words:** universalism, collective destiny, humanity, prejudices

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George U. Ukagba, Sylvester Idemudia Odia – Department of Philosophy and Religions, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

