THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AS A RESPONSE TO DOMINANT WESTERN POLITICAL DISCOURSES ON AFRICA: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

by

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Trust in the Lord with all you heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge Him,
and He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

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categories is taken into account, thus allowing for subject matter that may appear to fall in another discipline, to also be considered part of the field of politics.

The research theme is situated within the field of Political Science, and also has relevance to the field of International Relations. The theme is relevant to Political Science as it looks at the development of political discourses and suggests that such discourses have to be critically examined to determine how they are formed and what function they fulfil. The theme also has relevance to the field of international Relations as the examination of Western political discourses on Africa is concerned with the relations between the West and Africa and how these relations are reflected as well as shaped by the discourses the West produces of Africa. The research theme also has relevance to the field of South African politics in particular, as South Africa has been integrally involved in discussions regarding the African Renaissance.

The research undertaken here is significant as it assesses the African Renaissance in an original way. It indicates how important it is that the African Renaissance involve an examination and challenge of Western discourses, as these discourses are intricately involved in the power relations which the African Renaissance seeks to change. The study is also significant in that it draws attention to the role of discourse in maintaining current power relations between the West and Africa.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The dissertation examines the question: 'What is the African Renaissance's response to dominant Western political discourses on Africa?' Three secondary questions are asked: 'Does the African Renaissance challenge Western discourses?'; 'Has the African Renaissance the potential to provide a critical challenge to Western discourses'; and 'How can the African Renaissance's response to Western discourses be improved?' These questions are grounded in the proposition that Africa will not be able to assume a more prominent role in global affairs and to shape its own destiny, if Africans have little control over the generation of knowledge about their continent. The rebirth and revival of Africa is unlikely while discourses regarding what Africa is, what it is capable of, and what its future holds, are produced by the West rather than by Africa itself. The African Renaissance will be no more than an empty buzz-word if it does not challenge Western discourses

regarding Africa and provide alternative discourses. Before an African response can be put forward, Western discourses about Africa need to be critically examined.

The research problem is demarcated with reference to two key concepts: discourse and the African Renaissance. Discourse is a debated term which is used in different ways and with different connotations. Before examining Western discourses of Africa, it is thus essential to clarify what discourse means. This is done by first rooting the concept in the broader framework of postmodernist critical theory. The conceptualisation of discourse by postmodernist critical theorists is then discussed. The concept of an African Renaissance must also be carefully studied, as it too has been assigned a variety of meanings. The origins, predecessors and current articulation of the African Renaissance must be examined in order to get a clear idea of what the African Renaissance is taken to mean today. Once the concepts of discourse and the African Renaissance have been adequately examined, it is possible consider discourses regarding Africa and the response provided by the African Renaissance.

While the main focus of the research is Africa, its scope is broader. Ideas of an African Renaissance have been articulated not only by those on the African continent, but also by people in other parts of the world (especially the United States of America) who identify themselves as being African or African-American. Movements based upon Pan-Africanism, Black Consciousness, African Revival and related ideas have provided a foundation for the current articulation of an African Renaissance. The dissertation's scope is not only relevant to Africa, but also to the West and to groups who feel that discourses regarding themselves but articulated by outsiders, have a detrimental effect on their current position and future.

In order to ensure that the scope remains manageable, only certain forms of discourse will be discussed. Obviously discourse may be articulated by means of different modes and media, but in order to limit the scope of discourse in this dissertation, discourses articulated in written form in academic and journalistic sources form the focus of the discussion.

The time-frame of the research regarding both the Western production of discourses regarding Africa, and the articulation of the idea of an African Renaissance is potentially very broad. Western discourses regarding Africa stretch back centuries and the ideas

embraced by the African Renaissance have been expressed by other African schools of thought from the early colonial era onwards. However, the focus of this study will be upon current Western discourses regarding Africa and the current articulation of the African Renaissance. More specifically, the focus will be upon discourses produced during the years 1990 to 2001. When examining the African Renaissance, the focus will be on the period 1994 to the present, as the concept only became popular during the years following South Africa's first democratic elections. Because of the prominence of South African government officials and South African academics in the formulation of the African Renaissance, considerable attention is given to the role of South Africans in the conceptualisation of the Renaissance.

1.3 LITERATURE SURVEY

The subsequent research is based on a diversity of literature. While there are no studies looking particularly at the African Renaissance and its ability to confront Western discourses regarding Africa, there is a variety of literature which have some relevance to the theme.

The theoretical foundation of the research is based on literature regarding discourse and the relationship between discourse and politics, with a focus on the relationship between discourse and politics in Africa. This survey of discourse and its functions is rooted in critical theory, especially postmodernist critical theory. Sources introducing critical theory, postmodernism and postmodernist critical theory and situating postmodernist critical theory within political theory include Agger (1991,1992), Geuss (1998), Ermarth (1998), West (1993), Linklater (1996), Leonard (1990), Poster (1989), Fairlamb (1994), Gibbins & Reimer (1999), Smith (1997). Sources exploring the general meanings and uses of the concept discourse include Jaworski & Coupland (1999) and Van Dijk (1997). Sources specifically examining postmodernist and critical conceptions of discourse include McHoul & Grace (1993), Lemert & Gillan (1982), Macdonnel (1986), Foucault (1972) and Leroke (1996). Sources relating discourse and politics include Fairclough (1989), Rothgeb (1993), Clegg (1989), Rouse (1987), Ball (1987, 1988), Foucault (1972, 1980), Singh (1987), Young (1995) and De Kock (2000). Sources looking at discourse in the context of the academic and journalistic domains include Parenti (1993), Agger (1991), Neuman *et al.* (1992), Rajab (1995), Awa (1986), and Somerville (1995). After analysing what discourse is, an examination of how power and knowledge are related through discourse

is needed. The following sources provide insight into this subject: Lemert & Gillan (1982), Foucault (1980), Clegg (1989), Painter (1995) and McHoul & Grace (1993). Subsequent to this, what is meant by 'dominant' is based on the following sources: Leroke (1996), Young, R. (1995), Foucault (1980), Derrida (1994), De Kock (2000), Leysens (2000) and Dubiel (1985).

The historical background to this research as well as the definition of the concepts 'Africa' and the 'West' requires an examination of the meaning of the terms 'Africa' and the 'West' as well as the history of relations between Africa and the West. Relevant sources here include Safire (1993), Scruton (1996), Sullivan (1970), Harris (1998), Mudimbe (1988), Nederveen Pieterse (1992), Akinrinade & Falola (1986), Bennet (1975), Davidson (1994), Thomson (2000), Young, C. (1995), Cheru (1996) and Callaghy (1995). Sources on the subsequent discussion of the decolonisation of African minds include Sogolo (1995), Ngugi (1986), Nederveen Pieterse & Parekh (1995), Louw (1995), Hattingh (1995), Young, R. (1995), Said (1978) and Mudimbe (1988). Their use allows the argument that the African Renaissance should challenge Western discourses, to be presented.

Conceiving the Western academic and journalistic discourses on Africa as such, these discourses are examined under two broad themes: discourses on the African situation, and discourses on ways to improve the African situation. Although the main focus of this dissertation is upon academic and journalistic sources of discourse, Western discourses are also reflected in many popular sources presented using a variety of media. The Western academic discourses come from a variety of sources including: Baker (2000), Simon (1995), May (2000), Michaels (1993), Van de Walle (1995, 1996), Dowden (1993), Oliver & Atmore (1994), Pfaff (1995), Rotberg (2000), Diamond (1999), Clark (1993), Jaycox (1992) and Spence (1997). The Western journalistic sources come from a variety of Western newspapers and magazines including: Dellios (1998) and Salopek (2000) in *The Chicago Tribune*, Robert (1999a, 1999b), Marin & Rekacevicz (2000) and Sada (2000) in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Anderson (1997) in *Deutsche Press-Agentur*, *The Economist* (1996, 1998, 2000a, 2000b), Morrow (1992) in *Time*, Russel (1996, 1998), Deedes (1999) and Simpson (2000) in *The Electronic Telegraph* (1996, 1998, 1999), DeYoung (1999) and Fletcher & Mufson (2000) in *The Washington Post (DC),* Kent (1999) in *The World Today*, Fox (2000) in *Reuters*, Lewthwaite (2000) in *The Sun (Baltimore),* Shillinger (2000) in *The Boston Globe* (*MA*), Wright (1996) in the *Los Angeles Times (CA*),

Carter (2000) in *The Washington Times (DC),* and Maligorne (1999) in *Agence France-Press.*

The discussion of the meaning of the concept 'African Renaissance' and the analysis of the extent to which the African Renaissance challenges Western discourses relies on a number of sources. These include sources such as: Maloka (1997, 1999, 2000), Vale & Maseko (1998), Ntuli (1998, 1999), Cornwell (1998), Bankie (1998), United Nations University (2001), Magubane (1999), Mulemfo (2000), Napier (2000), Ramose (2000), Privorov & Shubin (2000), Kwaa Prah (1999), Mazrui (2000), Khoza (1999), Landsberg & Hlope (2001), Guèye (1999), Le Père (1997), Kritzinger-van Niekerk (2000), Botha (2000a, 2000b), Stremlau (1999), Cleary (1998), Kornegay & Landsberg (1998), M. Mbeki (1998), Karithi (2000), Seepe (2000, 2001), Liebenberg (1998), Mamdani (1999), Holiday (2001). The discussion of the African Renaissance was also based upon primary sources that include speeches made by South African government officials, official government documents, as well as African National Congress (ANC) documents. The following were particularly useful here: Mbeki (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c), Mandela (1994), J. Zuma (2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c), N. Zuma (2001), Pahad (2001), Shezi (1998), Netshitenzhe (1999), Shilowa (2000), Fraser-Moleketi (2001), ANC (1997a,1997b), Department of Foreign Affairs (2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d, 2001e). Sources on the predecessors of the African Renaissance movement include: Ramose (2000), Ka Seme (1906), Maloka & Le Roux (2000), Biko (1998), Snyder (1990), Lemelle (1993), and Thompson (1969).

1.4 METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

When looking at the methodology used it is necessary to ask what approach is adopted and what methods are used in order to address the research problem. The approach adopted is that of postmodernist critical theory and in selecting this approach a positivist methodology is rejected. Western discourses are not considered to be accurate reflections of reality based on empirical observations, nor are they considered to be inaccurate reflections of reality which must be shown to be fallacious and then rejected. Rather, the approach adopted here scrutinises Western discourses in order to determine the underlying assumptions that allow these discourses to be produced. An attempt is made to 'read between the lines' and elicit the implications of Western discourses, rather than just examining their content.

Accepting this approach rooted in postmodernist critical theory, the methods adopted are those of careful critical analysis and of comparison. When discussing research methods it is important to indicate how information is gathered, whether qualitative or quantitative methods are used and whether the study is inductive or deductive. In this study, information is gathered by a broad literature survery. Written works from academic and journalistic sources as well as primary sources such as speeches are used.

The research method used will be qualitative rather than quantitative. The research problem being can only be addressed with the use of careful assessment and critical judgement. The writings of various Western academics and journalists as well as the writings and speeches of the proponents of the African Renaissance have to be carefully and critically examined. This method of careful reading and critical examination is rooted in the approach chosen, that of postmodernist critical theory.

The research method used is deductive rather than inductive. The choice of postmodernist critical theory as an approach makes the inductive method of moving from empirical evidence to a generalisation, impossible. The deductive method, on the other hand, is compatible with the chosen approach as it allows for propositions to be posited and conclusions to be logically drawn from these propositions. The critical analysis of Western discourses and the African Renaissance allows certain propositions to be put forward and certain deductions to be made which enable the research problem to be addressed.

Although the study is essentially not a comparative study, the comparative method is used in order to address the research problem. Once Western discourses and discourses produced as part of the African Renaissance have been analysed, it is necessary to compare them in order to address the research question 'What is the African Renaissance's response to dominant Western political discourses?' The comparative method must be used to identify whether the African Renaissance responds in agreement with Western discourses or whether it disputes these discourses and their underlying assumptions, and posits alternative discourses on Africa.

1.5 THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to this study and indicates the research theme, the research problem, the literature survey, methodological aspects and the structure of the dissertation. The structure of the rest of the dissertation is as follows.

Chapter 2 consists of a discussion about discourses which focuses specifically on discourses within the context of critical theory as well as the politics of discourse. The entire discussion is related to its African context. The Chapter begins, firstly, with an analysis of critical theory, the influence of postmodernism on critical theory and the relevance of postmodernist critical theory to Africa. Secondly, there is a discussion of discourse and postmodernist critical reconceptualisations of discourse. Thirdly, the politics of discourse is carefully examined, looking at the way that discourse unites knowledge and power, and in this way serves as a political tool. Fourthly, a brief examination of the meaning of the concepts 'Africa' and the 'West' as well as a brief overview of past relations between Africa and the West is then conducted. Finally, discourse and the politics of discourse is applied to the African context and the proposition is advanced that Western discourses regarding Africa need to be challenged and that alternatives need to be presented.

Once the meaning and usage of the concept discourse has been clarified, it is possible to examine several dominant Western political discourses. This is done in Chapter 3 of the dissertation. The focus is upon written academic and journalistic discourses produced between 1990 and 2001. Chapter 3 begins with an overview of Western discourses on the African situation. This is followed by an examination of these Western discourses on the African situation from the perspective of postmodernist critical theory. Subsequent to this, Western political discourses on a possible 'cure' for Africa's current situation are discussed. Discourses on democratisation and development are focussed upon here. These discourses are then more closely examined in order to root out the assumptions implicit within these discourses. Chapter 3 culminates in the reiteration of the argument that Western discourses on Africa need to be challenged by the African Renaissance.

Chapter 4 of the dissertation clarifies what is meant by the concept 'African Renaissance'. The Chapter begins with a discussion on the conceptualisation and components of the African Renaissance. This is followed by a critical discussion of the role of Thabo Mbeki

and the South African government in the conceptualisation of the African Renaissance. Subsequent to this tensions in the conceptualisation of the African Renaissance are highlighted. This discussion is followed by an overview of the roots of the African Renaissance. Predecessors to the current African Renaissance movement are discussed, and the similarities and differences between the earlier concepts and the current African Renaissance movement are noted. This discussion of the roots of the Renaissance is followed by an examination of ideas which have branched out of the Renaissance concept, such as the conceptualisation of a plan for Africa's recovery which has been given a number of titles, the most recent being the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Chapter 5 looks at the responses provided by the African Renaissance to the dominant Western political discourses discussed in Chapter 3. This Chapter aims to answer the questions posed in Chapter 1 by assessing whether or not the African Renaissance truly challenges and confronts Western discourses, and whether it posits alternative discourses. The Chapter begins with a brief argument regarding why the African Renaissance should challenge Western discourses. The African Renaissance's response to Western discourses on the African situation is then critically examined and assessed. This is followed by a discussion of the African Renaissance's response to Western discourses on democratisation and development and the assumptions implicit in these discourses. The Chapter concludes with a critical assessment of the overall response to Western discourses provided by the African Renaissance.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation. It presents a summary of the findings of the examination of the African Renaissance as a response to dominant Western political discourses about Africa.

1.6 CONCLUSION

The African Renaissance is one of the most popular political concepts being debated in South Africa, and to some extent the rest of Africa, at the moment. The idea of Africa rising up and finally taking up a position of equal importance and equal influence in the world, is one that cannot but appeal to everyone who loves the continent of Africa. The concept rekindles hope in the hearts of Africans who have before hoped that Africa could be reborn, but have been disappointed.

The West has had a profound impact on Africa's situation and destiny for the last few hundred years. Africa has intrigued Westerners, and has led to the generation of many Western discourses on Africa - discourses on the African situation, as well as discourses on what should be done to improve the African situation. These discourses cannot be seen as irrelevant to the goal of an African Renaissance. If one accepts the postmodernist description of discourse and how it serves as a juncture where power and knowledge meet, it must then also be accepted that Western discourses on Africa are part of the intricate web of global power relations which the African Renaissance wishes to change. This means that the African Renaissance must engage with and respond to Western discourses on Africa. This dissertation presents this argument and then goes on to critically assess the response to Western discourses currently provided by the African Renaissance and to provide some comments which can hopefully contribute to the project of uplifting and revitalising the beautiful and majestic continent of Africa.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 POSTMODERNIST CRITICAL THEORY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO AFRICA

Postmodernist critical theory can provide useful tools for examining Western discourses on Africa, and for assessing the responses provided by the African Renaissance to these discourses. Although postmodernist critical theory has not often been used in application to Africa, its central tenets are easily applied to the African context. In addition, the conceptualisation of discourse provided by postmodernist critical theory is very appropriate for this discussion of Western discourses on Africa. The basic ideas which form part of critical theory, the contribution made to them by postmodernist thinkers, postmodernist critical theorist's conceptualisation of discourse, and the political nature of discourse are discussed below. This discussion indicates the appropriateness of postmodernist critical theory for this study; and also provides the background and methodology needed for a critical assessment of the African Renaissance as a response to Western political discourses on Africa.

2.1.1 An Overview of Critical Theory

2.1.1.1 The origins of critical theory

Critical theory has been defined as being 'any social theory that is at the same time explanatory, normative, practical and self-reflexive' (Bohman 1999:195). More specifically, the term critical theory usually refers to an approach to the study of society which was developed by the Frankfurt School between the years 1930 and 1970. The Frankfurt School was a group of theorists who were associated with the Institute for Social Research which was founded in 1923 in Frankfurt, Germany (Geuss 1998:722). Critical theory also describes later ideas and movements which have been established upon the foundations provided by the Frankfurt School.

While critical theory has its roots in the Frankfurt School, the Frankfurt School has its own philosophical roots. Foremost among these is the thinking of Karl Marx (Kellner 1989:1). The members of the Frankfurt School were inspired by Marx's (in West 1993:45) famous statement that while until now 'philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it'. Philosophers should look at the faults of existing society

and be involved in the struggle for society's transformation. According to Poster (1989:1), to some critical theory implies 'the use of specific Marxist concepts, such as the dialectic, or includes an insistence on framing critical discourse in relation to some stage of capitalism'. However, generally critical theory is seen as being influenced by Marx, but not wholly situated within Marxist thinking. While the thinkers who made up the Frankfurt School were inspired by Marx, they recognised the need to examine, criticise and revise some of the basic assumptions of Marxism (West 1993:45).

Influential early critical theorists included Max Horkheimer, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Their works included critical studies of modern society, critiques of positivism and discussions regarding enlightenment (Geuss 1998:723; West 1993:45-48). The deaths of the early members of the Frankfurt School did not signal the end of critical theory, and critical theory has since been articulated by thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas who enriched it with his conceptualisation of the 'lifeworld' and with his 'linguistic turn' and who saw critical theory as having a practical goal - to free life from all forms of unnecessary domination (West 1993:49-51). Recently, critical theory has been supplemented by the works of postmodernist thinkers.

2.1.1.2 The characteristics and contributions of critical theory

A number of characteristics of critical theory can be identified. One of the most important characteristics of critical theory is its critique of positivism. Positivism takes natural science as the model for all valid knowledge and aims to understand society using the methods and approaches of the natural sciences (West 1993:46). It assumes that knowledge can accurately reflect the world (Agger 1991:24). Critical theory rejects the positivist thesis that knowledge arises from the subject's neutral engagement with an objective reality, arguing instead that knowledge reflects social purposes and interests (Linklater 1996:279). Because positivism views empirical knowledge as an accurate reflection of the world, it leads to a tendency to view the *status quo* as rational and necessary, which discourages attempts to change it (Agger 1991:24). In this way positivism is seen as functioning ideologically such that it reinforces passivity and fatalism.

Geuss (1998:723-727) identifies and summarises four additional characteristics of critical theory. Firstly, critical theory rejects the general view about what theory is, refusing to see it as a set of propositions which can be used to explain and predict phenomena, and

arguing that attention should be given the social context in which theories arise. Critical theorists contend that 'traditional theory' aims at reproducing society, but that it is possible to develop another kind of theory - 'critical theory' - which aims to change existing society. Unlike traditional theory, critical theory does not aim to explain, predict and ultimately control, but rather aims to deepen critical enlightenment regarding concepts such as justice and goodness so that society can be improved (Ingram 1990:xxi). Cox (1981) clearly distinguishes between what he calls 'problem-solving theory' (other theorists, such as Max Horkheimer, have called this type of theory 'traditional theory') and critical theory. Cox (1981:128) says that 'theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose'. Problem-solving theory takes a particular perspective as a point of departure and then tries to solve the problems posed within this perspective (Cox 1981:128-130). It accepts the world as it is as the framework for action, rather than questioning the *status quo*. Critical theory, on the other hand, aims to reflect on the process of theorising itself, to be aware of the perspective which gives rise to certain questions, and also to allow for the possibility of choosing another valid perspective. Whereas problem-solving theory tries to solve a problem within a framework, critical theory calls the entire framework into question. In addition, critical theory is distinctive in that it not only criticises other ideas, but is also critical about its own assumptions.

Secondly, critical theory provides a critique of instrumental rationalism, arguing that the kind of reason that dominates today is a highly developed form of instrumental reason. As a result of positivism, reason has been identified only with the kind of reason that is used in natural science and the role of reason has been severely limited. Critical theorists seek to allow the function of reason to be extended beyond what is allowed by positivism.

Thirdly, critical theory devises a general conception of society and in the context of this conception, develops a doctrine of internal criticism. Critical theorists believe that the practices and institutions of any society are orientated towards the realisation of a socially-specified conception of the good life. This conception must be extracted so that the actual reality of any social institution or practice can be confronted with its own ideal concept, and the discrepancy between the reality and the concept can be brought to light. Critical theorists suggest that negative dialectics can be used in internal criticism. Negative dialectics is a method of moving back and forth between concept and reality in order to point out the differences between them.

Fourthly, critical theorists provide a discussion of the dialectic of enlightenment. The project of enlightenment is critically examined and its shortcomings are emphasised. The aim of critical theory's critique of enlightenment is not the rejection of enlightenment itself, but rather the furthering of enlightenment through 'enlightening enlightenment about itself'. Fairlamb (1994:239) puts it this way: '... [T]he Frankfurt School theorists hoped to escape the reductive excesses of Enlightenment progressivism while salvaging its emancipatory ideal'. It should be noted, however, that this point applies to modernist critical theorists but not to postmodernist critical theorists.

2.1.1.3 'Generations' of critical theory

Critical theory has gone through various stages and has been adapted as it moved through these stages. This adaptation is in line with critical theory's doctrine of internal criticism which argues that theories should be critical about their own assumptions. The application of this doctrine initiates changes in critical theory through the identification of shortcomings in earlier critical theory. As Agger (1992:6-7) puts it: 'Critical theory makes itself available for revision in light of its own methodological and substantive commitment to revisionism'. Thus, critical theory remains relevant through allowing the context in which it functions to rejuvenate it (Agger 1991:1).

This principle of revisionism allows the identification of three generations of critical theory (Pensky 1997:16; Agger 1991:1,19). The founders of the Frankfurt School can be seen as the first generation; Habermas and his communication-theoretic revisions of critical theory as the second generation; and current contributions to critical theory made by postmodernism and feminist theory as the third generation.

2.1.1.4 Modernism and postmodernism

Critical theory began in the modernist tradition, but moved onward into the postmodern era to avoid stagnation. Several similarities between postmodernist ideas and those of modernist critical theorists can be identified. Differences between the two are also evident, allowing for the conceptualisation of a postmodernist critical theory, which is founded upon the ideas of earlier critical thinkers, but which includes revisions and additions made by postmodernist theory.

Before conceptualising the term 'postmodernist critical theory' it is necessary to consider the meaning of postmodernism as well as the intersection between the ideas of postmodernism and those of modernist critical theory. Postmodernism is a much disputed concept. It can broadly be defined as a reaction to modernism, but this definition says more about what postmodernism is not, than about what it is. It is often defined in terms of what it opposes rather than what is supports. For example, Magnus (1999:725) described postmodern philosophy as being a 'complex cluster concept that includes ... an anti- (or post) epistemological standpoint, anti-essentialism, anti-realism, anti-foundationalism; opposition to transcendental arguments ... [and] rejection of the very idea of canonical descriptions'. From this definition, postmodernism appears to be nothing more than a negative response to modern society.

This impression of postmodernism being predominantly negative is refuted by other thinkers who identify what postmodernism stands for as well as what it is against. Louw (1995:69) lists both what postmodernism favours and what it opposes. He says that postmodernism is against imperialism, totalising ideologies, silencing or converting the other, the '"antagonism of identity" (i.e. each person exclusively concentrates on maintaining his own sovereignty)', hegemony, the universalism of the particular, and claims to finality and universality. This negativity is balanced by what postmodernism supports. Postmodernism is in favour of tolerance, critical awareness, questioning, unveiling hierarchical relationships, dialogue, differentiation, and enrichment through contact with the other.

Ermarth (1998:587) suggests that the term 'postmodernism' functions like Levi-Strauss' 'floating signifier' in that it holds open a space for something that exceeds expression, rather than itself expressing something. However, despite the difficulties in clearly conceptualising postmodernism, several broad definitions have been attempted. Gibbins & Reimer (1999:8-12) provide a definition by conducting a detailed investigation into the meaning of both 'post' and 'modern' in order to try to provide some clarity about what is meant by postmodernism. 'Post' generally means 'after' but can also be seen as meaning a 'break from', 'opposition to', 'difference to and from' and a 'response to'. Their definitions of the 'modern' include 'a particular epoch or period in history', 'the spirit of that age', 'a view of the world', 'a cultural phenomenon' and many others. The term 'modern' has related terms such as 'modernity', 'modernisation' and 'modernism'. Thus although

'postmodern' can be seen as referring to 'after the modern', this still lacks clarity, because of the lack of certainty regarding the meaning of the 'modern'.

Some substance can be given to the term 'modern' and related terms. Modernity can be seen as 'a cultural epoch and "episteme" founded in a humanistic belief that the world is One' (Ermarth 1998:587). Modernism asserts that there is a common denominator for all systems of belief and that the world can be explained by a single explanatory system. It is associated with progressive rationalisation and differentiation and with great faith in progress (Gibbins & Reimer 1999:9-10). A modern society is seen to be one which is characterised by social complexity, control of the environment, specialised adaptation, production of knowledge, and rationality (Coetzee 1996:43).

Following the meaning of modernism, a description of some of the characteristics of postmodernism is provided. Firstly, while modernism tries to explain the world using a single explanatory system, postmodernism rejects this, suggesting instead that such grand explanations (or to use Lyotard's term - *grand narratives*) are inadequate and in fact tell only 'small stories'. There are many possible 'subject positions' which can be adopted, and each has its own explanation of the world (Agger 1991:31). The totalising perspectives which characterise the modern are discarded. As part of this rejection, postmodernism opposes the modernist culture of realism, representation, humanism and empiricism as each of these can function as *grand narratives* (Ermarth 1998:588).

Ermarth (1998:588-590) looks at two other aspects of postmodernism: its approach to language and its challenge to the bases of consensus and representation. Postmodernists see language differently from modernists. Ferdinand de Saussure (in Ermarth 1998:588) developed the idea that a word does not point at the world, but rather indicates a system of meaning in which the word has a function. A linguistic sign thus acts reflexively, rather than referentially. The postmodernist conception of language was developed further by Derrida who conceived of language as being a model of organisation and developed the methodology of deconstruction (Ermarth 1998:588). Because linguistic signs are seen as specifying systems of value and meaning, postmodernist thinkers aim to discover what systems are being specified when linguistic signs are used. They attempt to reveal the way in which language helps to constitute reality and thus demonstrate the impossibility of complete objectivity (Agger 1991:35).

In terms of postmodernism's challenge to the bases of consensus and representation, postmodernism's assertion that all systems are self-referential has the implication that no system can be seen as representing the truth, and, in fact, that the truth cannot be established. No truth is seen as absolute, but rather each so-called 'truth' or 'reality' is seen as being one system's 'truth' or 'reality'. While this idea is very alarming, postmodernism should not be seen as signifying the end of meaning, but rather as signifying the end of hegemonies of meaning (Ermarth 1998:589-590).

Agger (1991:26-33) discusses the problem of trying to distinguish between post-structuralism and postmodernism. Both are opposed to the positivistic inclination to define and categorise, and bearing this in mind, perhaps it is best not to try to define and categorise them neatly. Although he is of the opinion that while certain distinguishing characteristics of each can be identified, generally the term postmodernism can be seen as broad enough to include poststructuralism. In accordance with this, this study will not attempt to identify a poststructuralist critical theory and a postmodernist critical theory, but will rather take postmodernist critical theory to include both.

Different versions of postmodernism can be identified. Rosenau (1992:14-20) divides postmodernists into two groups: 'sceptics' and 'affirmatives'. Among the 'sceptic' group are the poststructuralists and post-Marxists whose work is essentially critical and deconstructive and who are antipolitics, while on the 'affirmative' side are those who use the new ideas of postmodernism to emancipate and express themselves, and who support political participation.

Agger (1992:73-82) also discusses various forms of postmodernism. He identifies two principle subdivisions of postmodernism, one of which he feels is commendable while the other should be strongly resisted. He refers to the latter postmodernism as 'an Establishment version of postmodernism' (Agger 1992:72-74). Agger (1992:289,280,74) castigates Establishment postmodernism for being Eurocentric, for being a 'mindless vehicle of cultural production and consumption', and a 'minor cottage industry', Most importantly for this discussion, he (1992:284,75,76) rejects Establishment postmodernism for 'reject[ing] politics as a venue of meaning', having a 'thoroughgoing aversion to political discussion and contention', and 'conceal[ing] politics under a thin veneer of the rejection of politics'. This postmodernism has nothing to contribute to critical theory. While this type of postmodernism may appear to prevail, another form of postmodernism exists. Agger

(1992:74) continues to argue that a Marxist version of postmodernism can assist in the development of new critical insights and social movements. This version of postmodernism is a radical theory of society and has important theoretical and political contributions to make to critical theory (Agger 1992:278-281). It can help to repoliticise critical theory and to ground it in everyday experience. Between Agger (1992), and Gibbins and Reimer (1999), three versions of postmodernism are thus identifiable: a sceptical postmodernism; an Establishment postmodernism; and a third type - labelled affirmative by Gibbins & Reimer (1999:16-17) - that allows for political action and pushes for social and political change. It is this affirmative type of postmodernism which makes the conceptualisation of a postmodernist critical theory possible.

2.1.1.5 Postmodernist critical theory

It is possible to identify some common ground between critical theory and affirmative postmodernism. For a start, both are critical movements, standing in opposition to ideas which dominate. Both identify shortcomings with ideas and concepts that are frequently taken for granted and call into question perspectives that appear to be generally accepted as infallible. They are united in their opposition to the types of theory and practice which are predominant in modern life (Leonard 1990:254).

Both critical theory and postmodernism reject positivism and interrogate assumptions regarding the way people read and write science. Both question assumptions about how knowledge should be accumulated and undermine the idea that empiricism is an infallible technique for accumulating knowledge. Critical theory and postmodernism make an important contribution to drawing attention to the way in which empirical methods and practices conceal value positions, even in their own affirmation of their value-neutrality (Agger 1991:21,37).

A further intersection between the two is that both argue that knowledge is contextualised by history and culture, and so the possibility of 'presuppositionless representation' is rejected (Agger 1991:32). Knowledge claiming to be timelessly true, is revealed by both critical theory and postmodernism as being contingent (Leonard 1990:81). In addition, both critical theory and affirmative postmodernism use their critique in an attempt to bring about change for the better. As Fairlamb (1994:237) notes, the critique of domination by the early critical theorists 'shares the emancipatory aims of postmodern critics of

modernism'. They share the goal of emancipation although they differ on the route towards emancipation.

While critical theory and postmodernism have enough overlap to allow the development of a postmodernist critical theory, this postmodernist critical theory differs from modernist critical theory in several significant ways. As discussed above, modernism holds to ideas of comprehensive explanations for the world, or *grand narratives*, while postmodernism rejects this idea, and supports the idea of a heterogeneity of explanations. Thus modernist critical theory (as expounded by the Frankfurt School and Habermas) examines the *grand narratives* of modernism in order to illustrate the discrepancy between such *narratives'* ideal concept and their reality; without rejecting the possibility of a *grand narrative* itself. Postmodernist critical theory does not just explore such explanations' shortcomings, but also rejects the idea that the explanations truly explain what they purport to explain. An example of this is found in each's critique of Marxism (Agger 1991:25,31). The Frankfurt School accepted many of the principles of Marxism, but rejected certain aspects, such as its positivism. Postmodernist critical theory rejects the *grand narrative* of Marxism which attempts to use the idea of certain patterned relationships to explain the world. Postmodernism rejects the idea that Marxist theory can be universally accepted - it is but one 'small story from the heterogeneous "subject positions" of individuals and social groups' (Agger 1991:31).

Related to this, is modernist and postmodernist critical theory's approach to the Enlightenment. The critical theory of the Frankfurt School and Habermas criticised many of the assumptions and methodologies of modernity, but still sought to recover the promise of modernity which was reflected in the ideals of the Enlightenment. Postmodernist critical theory, on the other hand, is part of a tradition of 'rejectionist criticism of modernity' (Leonard 1990:54), which seeks 'a total break with the Enlightenment' (Fraser in Leonard 1990:54).

Another difference between modernist and postmodernist critical theory involves their conception of critical reason. Modernist critical theory accepts a universal concept of critical reason, while postmodernist critical theory rejects such a concept on principle (Leonard 1990:81). Once again, this is related to the postmodernist rejection of any kind of *grand narrative*.

Although it is possible to speak about a postmodernist critical theory, the problems with such a concept cannot be denied. Postmodernism and critical theory have common ground, and postmodernism can be seen as a way to rejuvenate critical theory and allow it to remain relevant today, but there is also some antagonism between the two concepts. This antagonism is reflected by the criticism of the Frankfurt School and Habermas by postmodernists, and, in turn, by the criticism of postmodernists by Habermas. Poster (1989:17-33) gives a comprehensive discussion of this point. He notes that postmodernists rarely refer to the Frankfurt School and that when they do, their comments are often critical. Lyotard, for example, attacks the Frankfurt School in his *Des dispositifs pulsionnels* and criticises Habermas in *The Postmodern Condition* (in Poster 1989:17). Foucault is the only postmodernist who appears to hold the Frankfurt School in some esteem (Poster 1989:17-18).

The first generation of critical theorists died before they had given comment on post-modernist thinking, but Habermas' (in Poster 1989:19) opinion of postmodernist thinking is openly hostile. He sees postmodernism as representing a retreat from the challenge of the Enlightenment.

This antagonism may appear to suggest that the idea of a postmodernist critical theory is inconceivable. However the disputes between theorists of the two schools of thought is insufficient reason to abandon the quest for a postmodernist critical theory. The arguments between Habermas and the postmodernists conceal the similarities between their ideas. Fairlamb (1994:254) notes that '[i]nsofar as postmodernists continue to argue with Habermas, they practice much of what he preaches' and Poster (1989:24) comments that 'Habermas and Lyotard appear to veer toward one another, despite their acrimonious hostility'. The common ground between the ideas of modernist critical theorists and postmodernism can be recognised, and a broad conception of a postmodernist critical theory can be sketched.

The value of conceptualising a postmodernist critical theory has been recognised by several writers. Poster (1989:33) argues that the current age necessitates a development of criticism and that critical theory can benefit from the contributions of postmodernists. Fairlamb (1994:238) suggests that dialogue between the critical theory and postmodernism is 'a useful exercise for current political and social enquiry' and Agger

(1991:2,9,42) sees postmodernism as being able to 'fortify', 'refresh' and 'fertilize' modern critical theory.

In summary, a postmodernist critical theory can be considered to be a movement which builds itself upon the foundations of the Frankfurt School accepting the idea that theory should not aim to reproduce the world and that the assumptions of dominating theories must be exposed through criticism. A positivist approach to knowledge is shown to be deficient, and knowledge is shown to be contingent upon historical and other factors. The need for social theory to be reflective is recognised, and the examination of the influence of theorists own position, beliefs and attitudes on the theories they develop, is supported. In addition to these cornerstones of critical theory, postmodernist contributions are added. Modernity's belief in the oneness of the world, and the possibility of grand explanatory schemes is rejected. The postmodernist idea of the self-referentiality or reflexivity of linguistic signs and systems is adopted, and hegemonies of meaning are revealed and rejected.

2.1.2 Situating Postmodernist Critical Theory in the Context of Political Theory

In addition to conceptualising what is meant by postmodernist critical theory, it is necessary to situate postmodernist critical theory within the broader context of political theory. When trying to do this, three important questions must be asked:

- Is postmodernist critical theory explanatory or constitutive?
- Is it foundational or anti-foundational?
- Is it rational or reflectivist?

In answering the first question, it is evident that postmodernist critical theory is a constitutive theory. Explanatory theory sees the world as external to theory, whereas constitutive theory believes that theory is part of the world and helps to construct it (Smith 1997:167-169). Clearly, postmodernist critical theory rejects the idea that theory can be stand outside of the world it explains and so this theory must be considered to be constitutive.

The distinction between foundational and anti-foundational theories refers to the distinction between theories which accept that there is an objective procedure which can be used to test all claims to knowledge, and theories which argue that there are no neutral grounds

according to which one can determine what is knowledge and what is not (Smith 1997:167-169). Postmodernist critical theory rejects the idea that there is a set of neutral, objective criteria which can be used to differentiate between competing claims to knowledge, and so postmodernist critical theory is anti-foundationalist.

Finally, postmodernist critical theory can be classified as reflectivist rather than rationalist. Rationalist theories overlap with the realist and liberalist theories which have long dominated international relations theory. Reflectivist theory is opposed to these theories, with the most notable characteristic of reflectivist theory being its post-positivist character (Smith 1997:172-183). The categorisation 'reflectivist' brings together a variety of theories which are united more by their opposition to positivism than by the perspectives they have in common. Included among reflectivist theories are normative theory, historical sociology, feminist theory, critical theory and postmodernist theory.

Postmodernist critical theory is thus constitutive, anti-foundational and reflectivist. A final important note to make with regard to how postmodernist critical theory fits into the broader framework of theory, is that by being constitutive, anti-foundational and reflectivist, postmodernist critical theory can be said to be part of a group of marginal rather than mainstream theories. While perspectives such as those of postmodernism and critical theory are becoming increasingly prominent, they remain outside of mainstream theory.

2.1.3 The Politics of Postmodernist Critical Theory

> Critical theory is meant to be a form of knowledge that can enlighten us about the roots of social and political oppression, and help us collectively transform our relations in ways that might overcome the damaging and destructive legacies we have inherited from the past.

This quote from Leonard (1990:251) gives some indication of the importance of critical theory to politics. Critical theory is capable of drawing attention to forms of oppression which may not be revealed by other approaches, and aims to bring about an improved future.

Critical theory did not develop as an overtly political movement, but its political connections and connotations are very evident. For a start, it finds its roots in Marxism,

one of the most politically influential theories of the twentieth century. Marxism's political legacy is evident in much of critical theory. Poster (1989:3) refers to critical theory as containing 'the best of what remains in the shambles of the Marxist and neo-Marxist theoretical positions'. Critical theory takes the Marxist idea of class power as social exclusion and extends it to include axes of exclusion other than class (Linklater 1996:280). It maintains the Marxist belief that humans have the ability to change their conditions and bring about a situation of greater freedom than that found within current social relations (Linklater 1996:280). This extension of Marxist principles allows for a theory that supports political action which opposes exclusion and tries to improve the current situation. In addition, critical theory's acceptance of Marx's (in West 1993:45) statement that while until now 'philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it' clearly implies political action - theory must be related to practice, and should be active in changing the world.

Critical theory's rejection of postivism has implicit political implications. Linklater (1996:279) sees critical theory's challenge to positivism as an important achievement for politics, in that it reveals how knowledge is socially constructed and can play a role in reproducing social arrangements. Positivism can function ideologically because it assumes that knowledge can represent objective reality, thus discouraging attempts to change this reality and resulting in passivity and fatalism (Agger 1991:24). The rejection of positivism implies and encourages political action with the intention of changing society.

Another way in which critical theory has political relevance is related to its rejection of traditional theory, and its suggestion that critical theory should replace traditional theory. Critical theorists see traditional theory as functioning to reproduce reality, and argue instead for a kind of theory that allows and fights for change (Geuss 1998:724). The political implications are clear - reality as it is, should be shown not to be immutable, and political action should be directed towards change.

The influence of postmodernism on critical theory has further political implications. If postmodernism rejects grand explanatory schemes and resists hegemonies of meaning (Agger 1991:31), then postmodernist critical theory will reject political schemes and theories which view political ideas, practices, and solutions developed in one political system as being universally appropriate.

Postmodernism criticises the fundamental political concepts of modernity, arguing that these concepts marginalise and denigrate whatever does not measure up to modernity's criteria for normality. Western modernity's attitude towards liberal democracy is also criticised for constructing binaries such as we/them, rational/irrational, and legitimate/illegitimate (White 1998:590-591). Postmodernism shows these boundaries to be socially constructed and reproduced. This critique of the political concepts which are part of modernity, allows for Western political ideas to be questioned, and for alternative types of political belief and action to be promoted.

Critical theory and postmodernist critical theory have had a specific influence on a variety of political concepts, some outside the scope of this dissertation. For example, critical theory has contributed to new ways of theorising about the role of the state (Agger 1991:38), has undermined realist arguments regarding the use of military power (Linklater 1996:280), has added to the debate regarding political boundaries (Linklater 1996:288-289), and has been instrumental in suggesting more radical forms of democracy (White 1998:591-592).

While critical theory clearly has political implications, it can be argued that critical theory has not reached several of its political goals. Fleming (1997:33) argues that critical theory, unlike traditional theory, attempts to establish an ethical-political relation with those it addresses, but has failed because those who would most benefit from social and political change, are not addressed by critical theory. Fleming (1997:31) argues that those who would truly be advantaged by the political change envisaged by critical theory - women, blacks, gays, lesbians, and others - are not addressed by critical theory. Other thinkers have echoed this idea by arguing for the development of a 'feminist postmodernist critical theory of public life' which will strengthen critical theory by allowing it to be more applicable to many of the social problems which have been ignored by critical theorists (Agger 1991:1-9). Critical theory may be aided in reaching its political goals through the contribution of postmodernism.

Leonard (1990:256-258) sees all three generations of critical theorists as having failed to bring about the political consequences of their theoretical positions. The Frankfurt School felt unable to endorse any particular struggle for empowerment because no particular struggle could be regarded as having a universal interest, and therefore the first generation of critical theory became a theory without a movement, succumbing to the

'politics of despair'. Habermas was less despairing, but he too was unable to unite the practical-emancipatory intentions of his theory with its political implications. Leonard (1990:257) feels that the reason for modernist critical theory's failure to translate its ideas into practice was rooted in its commitment to normative universalism. This normative universalism was rejected by postmodernists such as Foucault, but Leonard does not believe that Foucault had any more success in realising the political implications of his theory than the earlier generations of critical theorists. Foucault rejects normative universalism, escaping the pitfalls of earlier critical theorists, but his replacement of normative universalism with the idea that all norms are arbitrary, introduces problems of its own. If the idea that all norms are arbitrary is taken to its extreme, then it is impossible to identify which norms to support, and whose claims to defend, making political action impossible.

Despite Leonard's (1990:270) assertion that neither modernist nor postmodernist critical theory has thus far managed to inspire political action, he still believes that critical theory is the most important resource which can be used in order to forge a future that avoids the mistakes of the past. The ideas of critical theory have to be turned into a 'critical theory in practice'. This is a critical theory that recognises the contingency of norms and practices but avoids the mistakes of past manifestations of modernist and postmodernist critical theory by committing itself to both solidarity and plurality. Critical theory in practice would be willing to show solidarity with oppressed groups, while recognising the plurality of forms of oppression as well as the multiplicity of forms of emancipation. Critical theory in practice sees no universal emancipation that ends all domination, but rather sees each emancipation as contingent and emancipation as a whole as being a continuous process of putting an end to the dominating practices that are likely to emerge time and again (Leonard 1990:261-270).

Critical theory has clearly made a contribution to the political realm through undermining positivistic knowledge regarding politics, and arguing for theories about politics which battle for change, rather than being instrumental in reproducing the current situation. While critical theory has not yet fully achieved its implicit political goals, it clearly has the potential to be translated into a political practice which confronts forms of domination and promotes struggles for emancipation. Postmodernist theory can be instrumental in adapting modernist critical theory so that it can achieve these goals.

2.1.4 Postmodernist Critical Theory in the African Political Context

The roots of critical theory are in Europe, and postmodernist contributions to critical theory also originate in Europe. Most discussions of critical theory do not mention Africa, and little, if anything, has been written about Africa by thinkers associated with critical theory. This appears to suggest that critical theory has little relevance for Africa, and is a Western theory which should be applied to Western countries only. If this is so, critical theory could not serve as a foundation for this study.

A careful examination of each of the aspects of critical theory refutes the idea that critical theory is only relevant to the West and illustrates its applicability to the African political context. Firstly, critical theory's critique of positivism challenges the idea that knowledge can be objective. Rather, the context in which knowledge develops must be examined so that the social purposes and interests represented by knowledge can be uncovered (Linklater 1996:279). If this is applied to the African context, it is immediately clear that knowledge about Africa cannot be considered to be neutral. When this knowledge is written and distributed by Westerners, rather than Africans, it is likely that the interests of Westerners are served by this knowledge. Instead of regarding Western knowledge about Africa as being a non-negotiable reflection of reality, thus seeing this reality as immutable and political action to change it as futile; knowledge about Africa, especially knowledge produced by the West, should be interrogated in order to reveal the political context which shaped it. This will allow for alternative types of knowledge regarding Africa to be produced and can encourage political action towards change. Critical theories, which aim to change rather than explain and predict ought to be developed.

Critical theory's principle of internal criticism also has relevance for Africa. The socially-specified conception of the good life implicit in every theory needs to be extracted and the theory must be confronted with this conception to show how the reality and the concept differ (Geuss 1998:725). A critical theory of Africa, by Africans, should examine its own implicit conception of the good life and compare the reality with the concept. This exercise would be useful in rooting out incidences where Western conceptions may be implicit in a theory purporting to be African, as well as in showing the discrepancy between realities and conceptions in theories about Africa.

Postmodernist contributions to critical theory have special relevance to Africa. The rejection of *grand narratives* (Agger 1991:31) allows for Africans to assert that Africa must find its own destiny and that the destiny of Africa may be very different to that of Europe. There need not be one model of progress, one model of political development, one model of good governance, and one model of democracy. The postmodernist rejection of the idea of universal truths means that what may be true for the West is not of necessity true for Africa, and further, that what may be true for one part of Africa need not be true for the continent as a whole.

Postmodernism also draws attention to the importance of language (Ermarth 1998:588-589). Language is seen as self-reflective rather than as reflecting an objective reality outside of itself. This means that attention must be given to the language used in speaking or writing about Africa, to see what system of norms and values it reflects. This point is elaborated upon in the discussion of discourse which follows.

In conclusion, it can be said that postmodernist critical theory is applicable to the African context. In addition, it is particularly applicable to the research theme of this dissertation. An approach rooted in postmodernist critical theory allows for Western discourses of Africa to be challenged as they cannot be assumed to be neutral and objective. The absence of any challenge to Western discourses allows for Western knowledge to become hegemonic. Africa's recent history is a story of Western hegemony, and in this post-colonial era, this domination cannot be allowed to continue through the domination of Western systems of knowledge. A postmodernist critical approach to discourses about Africa produced by the West will aim to end this type of domination by questioning and challenging these discourses to see the way in which they are a reflection of Western interests and Western values, rather than a neutral reflection of an objective African reality.

A postmodernist critical approach can also be adopted towards the African Renaissance. The African Renaissance recognises that Africa's recent past has been characterised by Western domination, and seeks to end that domination, allowing for a rebirth, or revival of all that is African. If ending Western domination is a goal of the African Renaissance, then an attitude of interrogation and challenge has to be adopted by the African Renaissance when it confronts Western discourses regarding Africa. The ideal concept embedded in the African Renaissance has to be elicited, and the reality of the African Renaissance has

to be compared to this concept. A postmodernist critical approach enables an assessment of the extent to which the African Renaissance does indeed confront these discourses and thereby remain true to its goal of ending Western domination, and can reveal ways in which the African Renaissance may incorporate, rather than challenge Western discourses.

2.2 DISCOURSE AND CRITICAL THEORY

2.2.1 Various Uses of the Concept 'Discourse'

'Discourse' is a wide and flexible term that has been used to mean or imply a number of things. The term has most often been associated with linguistics, but its usefulness is not limited to this context. The word 'discourse' has its roots in the Latin word *discursus* which means running from one place to another (Blackburn 1994:107). In its broadest sense it refers to a stretch of language, consisting of more than just a sentence.

Because discourse refers to language, many analyses of discourse have been conducted by linguists, and at first glance the study of discourse may appear to have little relevance outside of the field of linguistics. Discourse analysis has frequently involved investigations into language in use in order to discover various norms and rules regarding language use in social interaction (McHoul and Grace 1993:26-31). Many discourse analyses painstakingly examine (usually verbal) language use in various social situations in order to discover these norms and rules. The focus in such analyses is frequently on the structure of spoken language. While this type of analysis of discourse assigns some social relevance to discourse, the focus is on language use rather than the broader social context in which the language use appears.

Other definitions of discourse extend its usefulness to more than just linguistics. Discourse is seen as being language practised (Lemert & Gillan 1982:129) or as language in use (Jaworski & Coupland 1999:1-3). The study of discourse is 'the study of *any* aspect of language use' (Fasold in Jaworski and Coupland 1999:1); and discourse is seen as part of 'language as an instrument of communication' (Benveniste in Jaworski and Coupland 1999:2). These definitions of discourse introduce its relevance to the field of social studies in general. Because discourse is language in use it has social roots, social restraints and social implications.

An examination of discourse thus cannot only look at language, but must also look at how and why language is used; analyses of discourse must explore 'the purposes and functions which [linguistic forms] are designed to serve in human affairs' (Brown and Yule in Jaworski and Coupland 1999:1). Discourse has to be seen as being a 'practical, social and cultural phenomenon' (Van Dijk 1997:2). Discourse occurs in context and this context has to be examined.

2.2.2 Critical and Postmodernist Uses of the Concept 'Discourse'

The variety of definitions above shows that discourse is of interest to all who study society, and that discourse cannot be taken to mean nothing more than words strung together. This idea has been elaborated upon by postmodernist critical thinkers who reject positivism and with it the implication that knowledge can arise from a subject's neutral engagement with an objective reality. This means that no discourse can be considered to be a neutral description of an objective reality. Postmodernism rejects grand explanations, and asserts that there are several possible realities rather than one objective reality. If this is related to discourse, it can be argued that it is always possible to produce a number of discourses regarding a single object, and that none of these discourses can be assumed to be true. Postmodernists have also looked in particular at the role of language in constituting reality, seeing language as part of reality, rather than as a tool to objectively reflect reality.

Included among writers who investigate discourse from a critical and/or postmodernist perspective are Ball (1987, 1988), Laclau (1993), Fairclough (1989), Macdonell (1986), Foucault (1972) and others.

Ball (1987:24-27; 1988:3-6) discusses the 'linguistic turn' or 'linguistic half-turn' which has recently taken place in philosophy and especially in political philosophy. The 'linguistic turn' refers to the recent realisation that language does not reflect an external social reality, but is in fact part of it. While philosophers have always been interested in language, recently a different approach has been taken. Language is not seen as consisting of words which can be affixed to a reality which exists independently of these words, but rather this reality is seen as being partly constituted by words (Ball 1987:24-25). The linguistic turn also refers to the realisation that no particular set of linguistic

practices, such as scientific discourse, can be regarded as more meaningful than other discourses; nor should all discourses aim to emulate scientific discourse (Ball 1988:5). However, Ball (1988:5-6) cautions that the changes in the way language is regarded may only amount to a 'half-turn' which is on its way to completion, but may not yet be complete. The new emphasis on language has tended to focus only on language in a particular age and culture and this new emphasis needs to be expanded further, and needs to be careful never to assume a single unified speaking subject.

Laclau (1993:431-432) sees Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas regarding language as an important foundation for contemporary conceptualisations of discourse. If, as De Saussure suggested, words act reflexively rather than referentially, then discourses cannot be said to be made up of neutral words referring to some objective reality, but rather, discourses refer to systems of meaning within which the discourses themselves play a part.

Fairclough (1989:22) echoes this idea by saying that discourse is not external to society, but rather part of society. Discourse is part of the social process of language, and involves social conditions of production and social conditions of interpretation (Fairclough 1989:25,41-42). This means that discourse is to some extent determined by social structures and can in turn affect society through its reproduction of social structures. Discourse is not a neutral commentary on an objective social reality, but acts to reflect and even construct a social reality.

Macdonell (1986) gives an overview of various recent discussions regarding discourse. These discussions have challenged the previously accepted hypothesis that the discourses of knowledge are neutral (Macdonell 1986:2-3). Instead, each discourse can be said to emanate from a particular position or institution. A discourse is an area of language use which can be related to a particular institution or position. No discourse is neutral, but each puts forward certain concepts while neglecting others. Discourses need to be unmasked so that the institutions or positions which they represent can be revealed. According to Macdonell (1986:7) unmasking these discourses can challenge inequalities by undermining the 'discourses and knowledges which ... claim to speak on behalf of everyone, saying in effect: "we are all the same: we speak the same language and share the same knowledge, and have always done so"'.

Michel Foucault's (1972) discussion of discourse has contributed to an alternative understanding of the concept discourse. His discussion and uses of discourse are complicated and could serve as a topic for many lengthy debates. What is clear however, is that Foucault uses discourse in such a way as to draw attention to language use and its linkages to power.

According to Foucault (1972:80), he uses discourse to mean several things:

> treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements ....

The Foucauldian concept of discourse thus refers not only to language in use in social interaction, but also to 'relatively well-bounded areas of social knowledge' (McHoul & Grace 1993:31). It is related to the idea of a scholarly discipline such as medicine or sociology, and is also associated with institutions of social control such as the prison and hospital. Discourse is related to both bodies of knowledge and to the institutions, practices and rules which control the production of knowledge.

2.2.3 Academic and Journalistic Discourses

When discussing discourse, verbal speech acts tend to come to mind immediately. This would mean that written language and other forms of communication would be excluded from a discussion of Western discourses regarding Africa. However, when it is accepted that discourse refers to bodies of knowledge, it must further be accepted that all types of communication and representation which form part of these bodies of knowledge are also part of discourse. Discourse can then refer to spoken and written language, as well as pictures, graphs and other representations which may form part of knowledge regarding a particular topic. Jaworski and Coupland (1999:7-9) discuss multi-modal discourses saying that in today's technological world, discourse is more than just language, but should be extended to include 'non-linguistic semiotic systems (systems for signalling meaning)'. This means that discourse can include language, visual images, design, music and film and that many discourses are reinforced by using several semiotic systems. Discourses regarding Africa are compiled of language, pictures, graphs and other representations, and are perpetuated in academic works, newspapers, the internet, films, music, daily

conversation and many other sources. It would be impossible to allow the scope of this study to extend to all modes of discourse, and so this dissertation will focus on written academic and journalistic discourses. While discourses produced by these media and according to the mode of writing will form the focus of the discussion, this dissertation acknowledges the multiplicity of media and modes of discourse.

Before looking at Western academic and journalistic discourses, it is necessary to briefly examine the worlds of academia and journalism in the West. Western states are frequently labelled 'liberal democracies'. This means that government is through elected representatives and that certain rights and freedoms are supposedly guaranteed. Included among these freedoms are freedom of the press, and freedom of speech. This implies that journalists and academics in Western states should be free to write whatever they choose. If this was true, it could be assumed that it would be difficult for certain ideas to dominate, given that a multiplicity of ideas could be voiced on any given topic. However, an examination of certain practices within the worlds of journalism and academia, suggest that it is possible, and in fact likely, that certain ideas will dominate. Agger (1991:89) argues that while the dominant view of American academia (and by extension, Western academia) is that there is 'an open market of competing ideas, paralleling the liberal metaphor of a market economy', in fact Western academia is more similar to a 'state-guided Keynesian economy'. Parenti (1993:33-50) describes the world of journalism in a similar way, saying that Western news organisations are closer to being militaristic than democratic and that journalists are strongly influenced by their superiors (who tend to be conservative politically), by career considerations and by the general political climate and dominant ideology (which not only influences them, but is also partly sustained by them).

With regard to the academic world, it can be argued that the requirement generally made in the West that academics publish in mainstream journals, puts pressure on academics to perpetuate certain worldviews (Agger 1991:90). Academics need to publish in order to establish and maintain careers, and they are strongly encouraged to publish in particular journals. The journals in which they are encouraged to publish are mainstream and tend to support certain ideologies and methodologies. This situation encourages academics to 'perpetuate the limiting worldviews in which they themselves are constrained' and also imposes similar constraints upon students because these academics and these journals

give students little exposure to ideas which challenge the dominant worldview (Agger 1991:90).

In this way, Agger (1991:89-105) argues that the academic world operates in a Keynesian way. In support of this argument, Agger (1991:91) discusses the ideas of Marcuse, who was an early critical theorist, and who argued in his *One-Dimensional Man* that capitalism heightened need for conformity and adherence to duty led to the 'one-dimensionalisation' of thought and experience. Other critical theorists developed this idea arguing that positivism is part of the one-dimensionalisation in that it influences academia and leads to a situation where critical thought is reduced and theories regarding society are only considered legitimate if they conform to positivistic methodology.

Thus, from a critical theory perspective, it is be argued that Western academia places certain constraints upon academics, and encourages the perpetuation of particular worldviews. Western discourses regarding Africa are produced within these constraints, and the environment of Western academia allows certain discourses to dominate.

A similar argument can be made with regard to Western journalistic discourses. Parenti (1993:33-50) asks who controls the news in the West and then sets about arguing that the news is indeed controlled, and that the control of the news operates in a conservative manner. Owners of news conglomerates are usually politically and economically conservative and place considerable pressure upon news editors to produce particular stories while suppressing others. Advertisers also have an influence upon what journalists write, often discouraging journalists from writing certain critical articles. Editors exert influence and are influenced by those who employ them. While editors often insist that they act independently, their appointment to the job, and the duration of their position, is partially dependent upon their support for the ideas favoured by the owners of the news organisations for which they work. Reporters control themselves too by exercising self-censorship as they anticipate the reaction of their superiors should they adopt a stance with which their superiors disagree.

Hollingsworth (1986:287-288) argues that editors and executives do not directly order reporters to write in a particular way and about particular topics, but that the pressure to only write certain things operates subtly in that journalists find that if they write certain stories or adopt a particular stance, their work does not get published. This encourages

self-censorship. Another controlling influence upon the Western media is dominant culture which influences journalists just like it influences everyone else. Like everyone else, journalists are exposed to socialisation through community, school, popular culture and the media (Parenti 1993:42-45). When particular opinions are expressed often enough, and little or no criticism of them is heard, it is easier to go along with these opinions than to challenge them. Thus many journalists, like other people, simply conform to the dominant culture without ever questioning the ideas and opinions which shape this culture. This last point is also relevant to academia as academics too are socialised into certain worldviews and are also likely to find it easier to conform to these beliefs than to challenge them.

A brief reference regarding the role of journalism and academia in politics should be made. If the political discourses produced by the academic and journalistic worlds had little influence on the political actions which take place, then the fact that they may both reflect certain political viewpoints would be of little concern. However, politics affects the production of academic and journalistic discourses, and the discourses produced in turn influence politics. Critical theorists argue that the academic world is not an ivory tower standing separate from the 'real world', but is an active participant in society as a whole (Agger 1991:90-91). What happens in the academic world parallels and also influences the culture and activities of the rest of society, including the political sphere. The media too plays a fundamental role in society. It reflects political realities and also acts to create new forms of action and interaction, and new ways of exercising power (Thompson 1995:4-5). Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992:8) suggest that Plato's allegory of the cave can be applied today in order to understand the role of the media in shaping the political opinions of ordinary people. This allegory 'anticipates the mass citizenry dispersed in their private homes, huddled in front of flickering television screens and trying to make sense of the world at large around them' (Neuman, Just & Crigler 1992:8). In Western liberal democracies, this mass citizenry chooses its rulers and to some extent the policies which govern them, meaning that the media which shapes their political consciousness has considerable political influence.

Western academic and journalistic political discourses about Africa have several questionable characteristics. In terms of academia, it can be noted that while there are few examples of African books or journals which analyse Western political events and situations, there are many Western books and journals which have Africa as their subject. With regard to journals, journals like *Africa Today*, *African Affairs, African Studies Review*,

Canadian Journal of African Studies, Journal of African Studies and many more are produced in the West but have Africa as their subject. There are few, if any, journals where the opposite occurs - journals in which Africans write about and analyse Western events. A similar situation is found with academic books, where it is possible to find many books written by Western authors analysing African events, but is it possible to find an African analysis of the American electoral system, or an African examination of civil society in Europe? A glance at the journals and books regarding Africa would suggest that while Western authors have the expertise and knowledge to comment on political events all over the world, African authors do not even have the authority to provide much comment on the politics of their own continent, and certainly have no authority or opportunity to comment on political events outside of their continent.

The situation is not as evident in written journalistic sources, where both Western and African newspapers have articles about political events occurring outside of their regions. However, for several reasons, there are many more Western newspapers, meaning that the volume and variety of Western journalistic sources regarding Africa exceeds the volume and variety of African journalistic sources regarding both Africa and the West. In addition, there are many general problems with Western journalistic coverage of Africa. Africa is both under-reported and badly reported (Rajab 1995:128). When Africa is covered by the Western media, the events which are reported are usually 'disaster stories': tales of earthquakes, war famine and massacres (Awa 1986:182). The focus of the reports are often very narrow, with concentration being on the leader of the country; and the events are often explained by means of 'convenient tag explanations' such as 'tribalism' (Awa 1986:182). The Western press adopts a patronising attitude towards Africa, an attitude which suggests that the West knows best and that Africa is a kind of a blank page upon which the West can write (Somerville 1995:126). Journalists who cover Africa for Western media bodies have little if any understanding of the local language and culture and little idea how African societies work (Rajab 1995:130). Chavis (1998) sums up the effect of Western journalism on Africa, saying:

> With the stroke of a journalist's pen, the African, her continent, and her descendants are pejoratively reduced to nothing: a bastion of disease, savagery, animism, pestilence, war, famine, despotism, primitivism, poverty, and ubiquitous images of children, flies in their food and faces, their stomachs distended. These ... powerfully subliminal message units,

> beamed at global television audiences, connote something not good, perennially problematic unworthiness, deplorability, black, foreboding, loathing, sub humanity, etc.

The under- and mis-reporting of Africa to other parts of the world, is not the only problem with Western journalistic discourses on Africa. Another problem involves what some have called 'media imperialism' (Awa 1986:175). Media imperialism is

> the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution and content of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial pressure from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected.
>
> (Boyd-Barret quoted in Awa 1986:175).

The argument here is that Western discourses frequently dominate Africa media, thus giving Africans themselves distorted perceptions of themselves and their continent. Much the same can be said about academic discourses - Western academic discourses on Africa are not only prominent in the West, but also in Africa, with many Africans relying on Western writers to understand their own continent.

The dominance of Western discourses in both the academic and the journalistic worlds is not likely to be advantageous to Africa. The 'knowledge' about Africa produced by Western academic and journalistic discourses cannot be seen as unrelated to the power relations between Africa and the West, and the role that these discourses play in perpetuating these power relations should not be underestimated. The African Renaissance cannot just challenge Western policy towards Africa, but should also look at the academic and journalistic discourses about Africa which are produced by the West.

2.3 THE POLITICS OF DISCOURSE - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

> 'It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together'
>
> (Foucault in Lemert & Gillan 1982:40).

As discussed in the previous section, discourse can be taken to mean a body of knowledge. This may not appear to assign any kind of political value to knowledge, but an investigation into the relationship between power and knowledge indicates that discourses

are not politically neutral. Discourses bring together knowledge and power, two seemingly unrelated concepts which are shown by postmodernist critical theorists to be closely linked.

2.3.1 Common Perceptions and Definitions of Power

Power is central to politics and exists in all political processes (Ponton & Gill 1993:22-23). It has been considered to be the most fundamental concept in the study of politics (Rothgeb 1993:18). While it may easily be accepted that power and power relationships are integral to politics, what exactly is meant by power is debatable. Power has been viewed in different ways by different thinkers.

Perhaps the most accepted definition of power is that of Dahl (in Hill 1997:38) who says that 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'. A similar definition of power sees power as 'the production of intended effects' (Russell in Tansey 1995:5). Both these definitions relate power to control. A group has power over another group if it exercises some form of control over the second group (Van Dijk 1997:17). Power is being able to control others so that they do as you would like (Rothgeb 1993:21). This can be achieved in several ways including through force, through economic power and through moral or social obligation (Danziger 1998:139). These ideas are summed up by Shively (1999:5) who suggests that power is 'the ability of one person to cause another to do what the first wishes, by whatever means.'

2.3.2 Discourse - Linking Power and Knowledge

The definitions of power given above have been shown to be inadequate in several ways. Critical and postmodernist thinkers have been instrumental in bringing these inadequacies to light. Definitions of power which see power as nothing more than one actor getting another actor to do as the first actor would like, allow for several aspects of power to be ignored and thus remain unchallenged.

Hill (1997:38-41) discusses dimensions of power which are given insufficient attention by the generally accepted definitions, but which have been highlighted by thinkers such as Bachrach and Baratz, and Lukes. Bachrach and Baratz (in Hill 1997:39-40) argue that power is not only one actor getting another to do as the first would like, but can also be

deterring an actor from doing something because of an anticipated unfavourable reaction from another actor. Lukes (in Hill 1997:41) adds another dimension of power, saying that 'A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests'. When B is disadvantaged by something A does, then A has power over B even if there is no obvious power relationship between them. Marxists and neo-Marxists contribute to the discussion of power by arguing that social and economic life may be organised in such a way as to operate in favour of certain groups and that this too is an exercise of power (Ponton & Gill 1993:25). Challenges to the conventional definitions of power allow the meaning of power to be extended and this extension allows for power to be related to knowledge.

Critical theorists have influenced the way power is perceived through their critique of positivism. Positivism insists that theories of power should be descriptive and that propositions regarding power should be empirically verifiable (Joseph 1988:85). Critical theory sees positivism as inadequate, meaning that positivist theories of power are also inadequate. Positivist understandings of power ignore important aspects of power and through ignoring these aspects positivist theories of power can even act as instruments of power. It is necessary to draw attention to other facets of power, and the critique of positivism makes contributions in this regard.

One of the facets of power which should be given attention is the relationship between power and knowledge. Does power influence the acquisition of knowledge? Does knowledge reproduce power? Do power and knowledge intersect? Are they the same thing? Critical postmodernists have examined these questions and have associated these ideas with discourse.

Habermas (in Clegg 1989:92-95), the second generation critical theorist, discusses what he calls 'the ideal speech situation'. This discussion has implications with regard to the relationship between knowledge and power. Habermas (in Clegg 1989:92-95) argues that all speech aims to present true knowledge. However, power acts as a barrier to the realisation of this true knowledge. Communication is aimed at achieving truth, but this quest is distorted by power. Thus the knowledge that is produced by communication is affected by existing power relations.

Foucault (in Painter 1995:9) argues that the way in which power is exercised has changed. In traditional societies power was exercised visibly, but today the exercise of power is more subtle. Because the exercise of power has changed, contemporary analyses of power should also change in order to acknowledge the subtlety of the exercise of power and its implications. Today, power cannot be seen as a 'single all-encompassing strategy' (Clegg 1989:154). Instead, power must be seen as a network of alliances which extends over a shifting region of practice and interests. Power is relational, it is 'not a Center, a Source, an Origin, a Truth, an Imposing Force' (Lemert & Gillan 1982:27). Power should not be seen as being only a negative force, but its positive aspects should also be recognised (Fink-Eitel 1992:50-51). It has the repressive quality of exclusion, but also the positive purpose of transforming integration and of productive discipline. In Foucault's (1980:119) words:

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.

This postmodernist conception of power relates power to knowledge and truth and can be contrasted with dominant Western notions of truth which view truth as being the product of science (McHoul & Grace 1993:58). According to these notions, knowledge is only deemed true if it is acquired through the use of scientific methods. The use of these scientific methods began with the natural sciences, but these methods have since been seen as also being appropriate for the study of humans and human society, leading to the establishment of the 'human sciences'. Postmodernist critical theory calls into questions these methods and disputes the idea that the knowledge produced by such methods is neutral and therefore unable to be challenged. Rather than being neutral, postmodernists see knowledge as related to power. Foucault (in McHoul & Grace 1993:59) declares that: 'We should admit... power produces knowledge ... power and knowledge directly imply one another...'. On the one hand power produces fields of knowledge and, on the other, knowledge constitutes power relations.

Foucault is not the only thinker to see power and knowledge as being related. As far back as the Elizabethan era, Francis Bacon (in Nola 1994:22) declared that 'the roads to human

power and to human knowledge lie close together and are nearly the same'. This Baconian idea of knowledge and power being associated can be understood in two ways (Singh 1987:227). Firstly, it can be argued that knowledge allows for control and exploitation and is thus related to power. Secondly, it can mean that knowledge itself is an exercise of power - knowing involves capturing and experimenting with the object of one's knowledge, and this is in itself an expression of power. Today, there are several intellectual movements which have argued that power and knowledge must be seen as interrelated. These movements argue that power cannot be seen as external or opposed to knowledge, but must be seen as the mark of knowledge. Power relations permeate activities geared towards knowledge production, and knowledge arises out of these power relations rather than in opposition to them (Rouse 1987:17-25).

Discourses, as bodies of knowledge, cannot then be considered to be uninfluenced by existing power relations. The knowledge they produce is not neutral and objective, but reflects existing power relations and can also serve to constitute new power relations. Foucault (1980:93) argues that in any society the relations of power 'permeate, characterise and constitute the social body' and that these relations of power 'cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse'. Thus it is discourse which is the juncture at which knowledge and power meet (Lemert & Gillan 1982:62).

2.3.3 What Makes a Discourse Dominant?

If postmodern critical conceptions of power are accepted, is it still possible to speak of 'dominant discourses'? There are some who feel that the idea of dominance belongs to modernist thought and is incompatible with postmodernist, and especially with Foucauldian, conceptualisations of power. Consider Leroke (1996:237) who states that '[f]or Foucault, discourse denies notions of power, domination or oppression ... [w]ithin discourse, therefore, there is no hierarchy of domination'. Some excerpts from Foucault seem to imply that he does indeed use the term discourse in a way which denies the possibility of dominance. For example, Foucault (quoted in Young, R. 1995:58-59) says that '[t]here is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it' and 'we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one ...'.

Nevertheless, other interpretations of Foucault and other postmodernist writers suggest that it is indeed possible to speak of a dominant discourse, while maintaining a postmodernist critical conceptualisation of power. For example, while Foucault (1980:98-99) rejects a conception of power being a sort of commodity which some individuals possess and others lack, he also emphasises that power is not fairly distributed. Power is not located at a particular point but is rather a network of relations. However, these relations are 'more-or-less organised, hierarchical, [and] co-ordinated ...' meaning that power is still hierarchically organised and that dominance is still possible (Foucault 1980:198). Dominance may be exercised more subtly, but it is still exercised! Foucault (1980:99) argues that power must be analysed from its infinitesimal mechanisms so that it becomes evident 'how these mechanisms of power have been - and continue to be - invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended etc., by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination'.

In a clear acceptance of the idea that dominance is possible, he argues that analyses of power should be based 'on the study of the techniques and tactics of domination' (Foucault 1980:102). These quotes suggest that the Foucauldian understanding of power and domination does not disallow the possibility of discourses which dominate.

Derrida, another postmodernist thinker, also allows for the idea of a dominant discourse. He argues in *Spectres of Marx* that while we may reject the Marxist concept of social classes fighting for hegemony, we can still speak of a dominant discourse using this term to refer to 'a hierarchized and conflictual field' (Derrida 1994:55). According to De Kock (2000:211) Derrida describes three points where dominant discourses are expressed: political discourse and culture; mass media; and academic culture. These three spheres cannot be dissociated from one another; all three are 'welded together' and co-operate in order to produce the 'greatest force with which to assure the hegemony or imperialism in question' (Derrida 1994:53).

Related to the idea of dominant discourses, is the idea of consensus and how it operates in a dominating way. Discourses can achieve their dominant status through consensus which allows for them to dominate in a way which is difficult to pinpoint and thus difficult to challenge. Coxian critical theory as discussed by Leysens (2000:267-269) illustrates the way in which discourses can maintain dominance through consensus. Cox (1983:170-

172) does not see dominance as just being coercion, but argues that dominance also occurs when the interests of different groups are brought in harmony and are expressed in universalistic terms. Writers in the Frankfurt School expressed similar ideas regarding consensus and dominance, arguing that capitalism maintained dominance by encouraging the integration and assimilation of proletarians (Dubiel 1985:70-71). Self-preservation in the capitalist system can only be achieved through assimilation. Thus the proletarians produce discourse in agreement with the capitalists, rather than challenging capitalist discourses, which leads to an apparent consensus. An integration of the ideas of the Frankfurt School (in Dubiel 1985:70-71) and Cox (1983), suggests that when consensus is achieved, this consensus may be the result of a dominant discourse which has been exercised in such a way that assimilation and integration into the dominant discourse resulted.

If the above is related to the context of this dissertation, it can be argued that Foucault's reconceptualisation of power may have made it impossible to identify fixed, unchanging dominant discourses and opposing discourses running counter to them, but that it is still possible to speak of dominant discourses. These discourses are fields of hierarchically organised power relations rather than rigid, clearly defined bodies of knowledge. Proponents of the African Renaissance must examine their position in the network of relations which allow particular Western discourses to dominate, in order to see how Western dominance can be challenged. The understanding of power as a network of relations indicates that the dominance of Western discourses may operate insidiously rather than in a blatant way. This makes confronting dominant Western discourses more difficult, but no less necessary than if there was an explicit distinction between dominant Western discourses, and opposing African discourses.

Derrida's (1994:51-56) conception of the way that dominant discourses are expressed suggests that discourses which dominate the academic and journalistic world will have definite political implications, and that any attempt to challenge political dominance must therefore be accompanied by challenges to the discourses expressed in academic and journalistic publications. In application to the African Renaissance, this means that the African Renaissance's political objectives are unachievable if unaccompanied by a challenge to the discourses which dominate the Western academic and journalistic world.

In terms of critical theorist's discussion of hegemony through consensus, it can be argued that when Africans agree with Western analyses of African situations, and Western prescriptions for African problems; domination may still be occurring. The achievement of consensus may be more sinister than it appears. An African Renaissance that concurs rather than disagreeing with Western discourses could be a surrender to Western dominance rather than a call for African renewal.

This dissertation involves the examination of dominant Western discourses on Africa in order to establish to what extent the African Renaissance challenges these discourses. This means that it is necessary to label particular Western discourses as dominant which is not an easy task. There are many different Western discourses on Africa and there is not always one discourse which clearly dominates. Despite this difficulty, this dissertation attempts to identify discourses which are well-represented and often articulated within the Western academic and journalistic sources. While there is a diversity of Western discourses on any particular issue of African politics, it is possible to identify particular discourses which appear to be more often articulated than others, and can thus be considered 'dominant'. This does not mean to imply that the Western discourses discussed in this dissertation are the only Western discourses being produced on a particular issue. The Western discourses that are chosen are those that dominate, but the existence of alternative Western discourses is acknowledged.

2.4 AFRICA AND THE WEST

Before embarking on a discussion of the Western discourses of Africa, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by 'the West' and what is meant by 'Africa'. This clarification is vital to the understanding of what can be considered to be a Western discourse of Africa. A brief overview of the history of the relations between the West and Africa is also useful as it provides the context for the rest of the dissertation.

2.4.1 The Concept 'the West'

'The West' is a convenient term used to describe a number of states with similar characteristics. This term refers to Western Europe, the United States and other states which are mainly populated by European settlers (McLean 1996:528). While Western Europe and North America are always included in an explanation of what is meant by 'the

West', Japan, which is most decidedly not western in terms of geography, is sometimes also included in 'the West' (Safire 1993:867).

During the Cold War there was a clear distinction between the states which embraced capitalism, and those which favoured communism. This ideological distinction was echoed by a geographical division - the countries more or less to the west were capitalist, and the countries towards the east, communist (McLean 1996:528). Although this clear ideological separation is no longer evident, the term 'the West' is still used to refer to the countries which were united against communism during the Cold War.

It is possible to use the term 'the West' to refer to nothing more than the countries forming part of Central and Western Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and possibly Japan. However, it is also possible to distinguish certain non-geographical features which characterise the Western world. The part of the world referred to as 'the West' is seen as having emerged out of Christianity, and to have become more and more secularised through the Enlightenment (Scruton 1996:585). Some thinkers, such as Spengler (in Scruton 1996:586) have identified a particular spirit and destiny associated with the Western world. Spengler (in Sullivan 1970:175) saw the emergence of Western culture as beginning around 900 AD with the birth of the 'Faustian soul' in Europe. This soul is one of adventure and experiment and has also been associated with the ability to construct and to regulate society (Scruton 1996:586). Spengler (in Sullivan 1970:175-176) believed that this spirit would passed through a spring, summer and autumn, and that the French Revolution, Napoleon, and the beginning of the nineteenth century signalled the winter of the Faustian soul and thus the winter of Western Civilisation.

In addition to these connotations, the term 'the West' is also used to refer to states with the following characteristics: the rule of law, representative government, capitalist economy, universal education, alliances with other Western states, a large nominally Christian population, secular institutions of government, religious freedom, and other liberal freedoms (Scruton 1996:586). In addition to these empirical characteristics, some core values of the Western world can be identified: consumerism, economic growth and personal liberty (McLean 1996:528). These values have led some, especially those of the Islamist faith, to criticise the Western world for being materialistic and lacking in religious fervour (Safire 1993:867).

In understanding what is meant by the term 'the West' it is also necessary to examine the related term 'westernisation'. According to Scruton (1996:586) 'westernisation' refers to two processes: the intentional adoption of particular aspects of culture or society generally seen to be characteristic of the Western world; and the unintended process whereby Western ways take root wherever they are not deliberately exterminated, and where this process while not seen as desirable, is viewed as difficult to resist. Thus people, institutions or practices in Africa, Asia and other parts of the non-Western world can be referred to as being 'westernised' in some way or another.

This dissertation takes 'the West' to mean the countries of Central and Western Europe, North America and a few others with similar characteristics. However, it also understands 'the West' to be more than just an empirical term describing a geographical reality, but also to be a term seen to be connected to a number of philosophical and ideological constructs such as capitalism, representative government, liberalism and consumerism.

2.4.2 The Concept 'Africa'

The terms 'Africa' and 'the West' do not refer to two equivalent but different entities. 'The West' originated as a term for an ideological entity which can be loosely related to certain geographical regions, while 'Africa' is primarily a geographical term, referring to a particular physical area. Nevertheless, the term 'Africa' has been invested with more than just a geographical meaning - the word has been associated with certain ideas and emotions.

In terms of the geographical meaning of 'Africa', the term refers to the continent south of the Mediterranean Sea and situated between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans (Hawkins 1988:13). Africa is frequently divided into two, with Northern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa seen as distinct from one another. In addition, Egypt, which is geographically part of Africa, is also considered part of the Middle East (Hawkins 1988:516). These classificatory distinctions are based on more than just geography: the people of Northern and sub-Saharan Africa are often considered to be distinct from one another, with Northern Africans referred to as Arabs and sub-Saharan Africans as Africans or Blacks. The fact that Egypt, despite its geographical location, is frequently not considered to be part of Africa, but rather part of the Middle East, or culturally and historically part of Europe

or Asia has been related to an unwillingness on the part of Western scholars to allow the ancient Egyptian civilisation to be considered part of African history (Clarke 1986:111).

Just as certain features and values have been attached to the West, certain characteristics and values have been labelled 'African'. The first people to see Africa as a single entity with particular characteristics and values were the Europeans, rather than the Africans. The name 'Africa' orginates from a name Romans gave to their North African province (Mamdani 1999:52). It is only later that Africans themselves see their continent as having some kind of a common spirit akin to the idea of a spirit associated with Western civilisation. The labels the Western world has attached to Africa and those attached by Africans themselves differ greatly.

Western history has built a number of myths and stereotypes about African history, and has made it difficult for an alternative history of Africa to emerge (Harris 1998:1). These myths and stereotypes still pervade the consciousness of many, both Western and African, when they consider what is meant by the concept 'Africa'. Western conceptions of what 'Africa' means have been so dominant that Mudimbe (1988) has spoken of 'the invention of Africa' implying that what is seen as being 'African' is largely an invention of the Western world and that Western distortions make it difficult for both Westerners and Africans themselves to understand Africa.

Nederveen Pieterse (1992:23-29) discusses several of the images that the West has constructed of Africa over the years of contact between the two. He notes that the meaning attached to Africa by the Western world has to do with the self-image of Europe, rather than with Africa itself. According to Nederveen Pieterse (1992:29), Western images of Africa from antiquity to the early Middle Ages gradually changed from being fairly positive to being predominantly negative. During the Middle Ages, connotations of Africa became more favourable once again, but later developments led to very negative ideas being associated with Africa once again. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries images of Africa became increasingly condescending and denigrating (Nederveen Pieterse 1992:29). Africa was associated with savagery and 'beastliness', and Africans were seen as 'Children of Ham' - servants to the rest of mankind (Nederveen Pieterse 1992:34-51). The ideas associated with the term 'Africa' saw Africans as 'strange, barbarous, and subhuman' (Harris 1998:3). Africa was described as being 'filled with burning sands, savage beasts and almost uninhabited deserts' (Hallett in Harris 1998:9).

The meanings assigned to Africa by the Western world have changed, but much of the legacy of these negative connotations remain, with Africa today being perceived as 'a basket case' and a place of 'perennial famine, recurrent economic crisis, dictatorship, blatant violations of human rights and carnage' (Adedeji 1993:3). Are these images all that different to earlier discourses? Still today the word 'Africa' conjures up images in Western minds of a dark and primitive place with uncivilised 'tribes' fighting each other, and wild animals stalking around (Hickey & Wylie 1993:1). Even though the academic and journalistic discourses of Africa no longer blatantly propogate the mythological view of Africa as the place of the savage, the strange and the uncivilised, 'the mythic Africa ... lingers at the edge of consciousness' (Hickey & Wylie 1993:1).

Africans and people of African descent have given Africa another set of connotations. While not all Africans see Africa as having the same kind of unity of spirit as that of the West, some Africans identify several features which they believe characterise Africa. An example of an African thinker who has identified features which are common to all of Africa and thus characterise Africa, is Cheikh Anta Diop, the prominent Senegalese philosopher. Diop believed that Africa should be united and that through a rewriting of Africa's history, it is possible to identify certain characterising features of Africa (Jeffries 1989:147-160). Movements such as Pan-Africanism and Negritude have also attempted to establish the idea of a common African spirit, one which is favourable to Africa and which negates the image of Africa created by the West (Harris 1998:18-19). Some characteristics which are seen to be common to the whole of Africa are communal solidarity with the focus upon the community rather than the individual (Mulemfo 2000:52); *ubuntu*, which is related to communal solidarity and is a principle stating that one achieves one's humanity through other people (Pityana 1999:144); religiousness, and a life centred around a belief system (Pityana 1999:138); and a kind of African humanism which values justice, tolerance, compassion, and obedience to authority (Teffo 1999:153-159). While these and other characteristics of Africa have been identified by Africans, there is still much dispute among Africans as to what the term 'Africa' means.

There are also some problems in defining what is meant by the term 'African' and in distinguishing between 'Westerners' and 'Africans'. Are white South Africans African or Western? What about black people living in the West? There are a number of potential solutions to this definitional problem, but each has its own difficulties. Geographical location can be used to determine who is African and who is not, but this excludes the

large number of black descendants of slaves, who consider themselves African. Alternatively, race can be used to distinguish between Africans and Westerners, but this suggests that being African is as superficial as skin colour and facial features, and ignores the possibility of the Westernisation of black people living in the West and the Africanisation of white people living in Africa. Another possible way to distinguish between Africans and Westerners can be according to how people describe themselves, but this allows for a multiplicity of definitions of what it is to be Africa. This dissertation will generally accept the latter way of distinguishing between Africans and Westerners, allowing for people who identify themselves as African to be considered African, but will also critically examine the writings of those calling themselves Africans in order to reveal ways in which their ideas may reflect Western rather than African discourses.

An attempt to define the term 'Africa' seems at the outset very easy - Africa is a continent, south of Europe, East of the Americas and west of India and China. However, the meanings and connotations which have been associated with Africa are so various that it is difficult to sum up what the term means. What is clear though, is that Africa as a geographical entity, has had and still has many emotive meanings attached to it. The Western discourses on Africa discussed in this dissertation reflect some of these meanings, and the African Renaissance reflects others. The dissertation investigates to what extent the meanings assigned to Africa by the African Renaissance provide a challenge to those of the West. Africa will be taken to mean the geographical entity and while several of the meanings attached to this entity will be examined, none will automatically be regarded as valid or invalid.

2.4.3 Brief Overview of Relations between Africa and the West

Relations between Africa and the West predate colonialism. For centuries there has been contact between the two regions, but the nature of this contact has changed several times over the years. The history of relations between Europe and Africa go back a few centuries before Christ. In some ways these relations can be considered to be the first between the West and Africa, but it should be noted that the West, as described above, can only be seen to have come into existence later. This discussion will however, look at the history of the countries now forming the West, and Africa.

The colonial era was not the only era during which the West dominated parts of Africa. The first Westerners to control a part of Africa were the Romans who ruled Northern Africa in the first century BC (Akinrinade & Falola 1986:1). The Roman rulers conquered a large part of northern Africa (stretching from Mauritania to the first cataract of the Nile) and also had some contact with sub-Saharan Africa through trans-Saharan trade (Nothling 1989:85-56). Roman rule lasted until the third century AD when the Romans were displaced by other Europeans, known in history as the Vandals (Akinrinade & Falola 1986:2). European rule in North Africa declined and by the seventh century there was little trace of it, and Europe lost interest in Africa for a few centuries. During these centuries there was still some contact between Europeans and Africans through slave trade and through warfare (Bennet 1975:25).

European interests in Africa were renewed with the explorations of Portuguese mariners (Akinrinade & Falola 1986:2). The Portuguese had both material and spiritual interest in Africa, and established small cities along the Atlantic coast (Bennet 1975:27-28). The Portuguese extended their presence to other parts of Africa, but their influence remained limited (Bennet 1975:30-42). Gradually, other European countries became interested in Africa, mainly for commercial reasons (Bennet 1975:42-43). When the British colonies in the Americas was established, the need for labour was boosted and so the slave trade intensified, which also intensified the colonial efforts of the European powers (Akinrinade & Falola 1986:4-5). It is estimated that over 10 million Africans were removed from Africa as part of the slave trade (Freund 1998:43).

During the nineteenth century European trade in Africa increased, but it was only at the end of the nineteenth century that the colonial conquest of Africa truly came about (Freund 1998:63-65). The quest for colonies became so intense that it has been referred to as the 'scramble for Africa'. The reasons given for this increased interest are varied. Some see the scramble for colonies as being motivated by the economic reasons as part of capitalism (Akinrinade & Falola 1986:13). Others argue that strategic concerns were most important, and still others relate it to the European balance of power at the time (Bennet 1975:84-87). At the Berlin conference in 1884-1885, Africa was divided up into 'spheres of interest' and the European powers then set about conquering their respective spheres (Davidson 1994:5). By the beginning of the twentieth century, the partition of Africa was more or less complete.

The colonial powers followed different strategies in their governance of the conquered regions. The French followed an assimilation policy - Africans were encouraged to adopt French culture and religion, in exchange for which they could be given the rights accorded to Frenchmen, and could even gain French citizenship (Bennet 1975:125-126). However, fewer than 100 000 Africans actually became 'assimilated' according to this policy (Davidson 1994:38). The Spanish, Portuguese and Italians had a similar approach, but they had even less success than the French in assimilating their subjects, and were very brutal towards the unassimilated majority (Davidson 1994:39). The British approach was one of indirect rule - Africans were governed through African rulers, although ultimately it was the British who were in control (Bennet 1975:144-145). The Belgian colonial policy was one of strict dictatorship (Davidson 1994:39). Belgian rule was so brutal that even the other colonial powers criticised them for their 'serious excesses' against the Congolese (Bennet 1975:160).

Colonialism could not be sustained. The two most important events in Western twentieth century history, the depression and the World Wars, while having little to do with Africa, ultimately signalled the end of colonialism. Along with these events in the West, the development of Pan-African patriotism, the success of Asian nationalism, the increasing anti-colonial sentiments among educated Africans, and the emergence of militant trade unions and inspirational political leaders, ensured that colonialism could not endure (Davidson 1994:93). The era of blatant Western dominance over the entire African continent had to end.

Most African states achieved their independence between 1955 and 1975, which was a period dominated by the Cold War (Thomson 2000:143). The Cold War saw the dawning of American interest in Africa (Clough 1992:193). During the Cold War, Africa had some strategic significance. While it was peripheral geographically, economically and politically, it held at least some importance, in that neither side wanted to see the other side increase in size and so both the capitalists and communists sought allies in Africa (Harbeson 1995:4-5). During this period the former colonial powers also had some influence in Africa. Britain intervened to help the newly independent governments of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda against rebel forces, but was otherwise reluctant to be actively involved in post-colonial Africa (Thomson 2000:146). Since the 1970s, Britain's role in Africa has been minimal (Young, C. 1995:29-20). France on the other hand, maintained close relationships with its former colonies (Thomson 2000:147). Much of this involvement

centred upon a French desire to export what it saw as its rich civilisation to Africa. Belgium played a stable and fairly important role in Rwanda and Burundi, but its post-colonial relationship with Zaire was characterised by crisis (Young, C. 1995:28). Italy, Portugal and the other minor colonial powers, played relatively minor roles in post-colonial Africa (Young, C. 1995:28-29).

The end of the Cold War saw a change in the relations between the West and Africa with Africa being downgraded strategically (Thomson 2000:151). There is a so-called 'new world order' (or some would say 'new world *dis*order') in which Africa may find itself more marginalised than before (Cheru 1996:44-72). The characteristics of the 'new world order' include ideological consensus, advancement in technology, increasing differentiation in and between countries, globalisation, the emergence of new states, and an increase in the number and influence of transnational organisations (Cheru 1996:45; Harbeson 1995:14-15). The relations between the West and Africa in these circumstances are likely to be very different to those of the past. Some analysts, such as Cheru (1996:44-72) feel that the consequences of the new world order are overwhelming negative for Africa. The trends associated with the new world order will result in Africa as a whole attracting less foreign investment, and some African states attracting almost all the investment flowing to Africa, leading to greater regional disparities (Cheru 1996:48-49). In addition, African states will receive less aid, as much of the aid previously directed to Africa may now be used to benefit Eastern Europe. According to Cheru (1996:49-50), Africa will receive a smaller share of world trade, Africa will be marginalised in the diplomatic arena, and the global consensus regarding liberalisation will disadvantage developing countries. These negative sentiments are echoed by Callaghy (1995:42-45) who sees Africa's position in the new world order as being one of increased political and economic marginalisation, with Africa being downgraded strategically and receiving a declining share in trade and investment. However, in other ways the new world order may mean that Africa is more tightly linked to the world economy, because of its dependence upon external actors in the determination of the economic policies of African countries, and because of the new economic policy conditionality, which pushes Africa towards integration with the world economy (Callaghy 1995:45).

Africa emerged from the colonial period in which it was dominated by Western powers, entered into the Cold War period in which it had some influence in relations with the West, and is now just beginning to experience the 'new world order'. In this order it seems

unlikely that overt Western domination of Africa will continue; however, the West still yields considerable power over Africa in that it determines the conditions upon which Africa interacts with the rest of the world, in an era where isolation from the rest of the world seems impossible. In reflecting upon the definitions of power discussed earlier, it is evident that the West still exercises power over Africa in several ways. As a result of Africa's debt and Africa's dependence upon the West for aid, the West can influence Africa to act in particular ways - thus the West exercises power over Africa. In addition, the network of relations operating in the post Cold War era are ordered in a way that allows the West to maintain dominance.

As discussed above, postmodernists have argued that the way in which power is exercised has changed, with power being exercised more subtly today. If this is applied to power relations between Africa and the West, it is clear that while the power relations in operation during the colonial era were clearly evident, the way that the West exercises power over Africa today is more subtle. Power relations between Africa and the West today operate as a network of alliances which not only prohibits, but also produces and encourages. Western discourses regarding Africa are part of this power network, and thus an attempt to reorganise the power relations described above (which would clearly be a goal of the African Renaissance), requires an examination of Western discourses of Africa and a careful scrutinisation of the nature of African responses to these discourses.

2.4.4 Decolonisation of the Mind and Discourse

In assessing the impact that colonialism has had upon Africa society, Boahen (1987:107), a leading African historian, concludes that 'the most serious negative impact of colonialism was psychological'. Colonialism resulted in the development of a 'colonial mentality', a mentality which condemns what belongs to African traditions, and mimics the West, a mentality which generates a feeling of inferiority and a loss of human dignity among Africans (Boahen 1987:107-108). Sogolo (1995:135) contributes to this argument saying that the most severe damage done by colonialism was on the intellectual life of Africans. Africa may have won political independence, but it 'remains under the influence of Western values and ideological biases that tend to undervalue the people's sense of self-esteem' (Sogolo 1995:137). What worsens this situation is the fact that this 'affliction is not recognised for what it is, and has therefore remained unchecked' (Sogolo 1995:135). The prominent African writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:1-3) concurs, saying that the

biggest weapons of imperialism was the 'cultural bomb' which destroyed people's belief in their past, in their heritage, in their abilities, in themselves. This 'cultural bomb' makes Africans want to identify with what is Western and makes them shrink away from what is African. Because of this, Ngugi (1986) advocates a 'decolonisation of the mind'.

Decolonisation and discourse can be related. Socio-political events like colonisation cannot be separated from their impact on knowledge (De Beer 1995:38). Colonisation did not only bring people, soldiers and systems of rule to Africa, but also brought to Africa discourses about why Africa should be colonised and why Europeans were entitled to rule over Africans. Colonial discourses changed the way Africans thought about themselves and their futures (Cooper 1996:9). The Western colonisers 'taught lessons of power' and societies in Africa were 'bent and shaped along the lines of colonial imaginaries' (Nederveen Pieterse & Parekh 1995:3). Colonisation institutionalised certain knowledges and certain practices. It involved strategies of subjection which persuaded people to accept particular truths about themselves (Hattingh 1995:43). To decolonise the mind is to try to identify the ways in which African minds have been affected by Western discourses, and to try to undo the damage that the Western colonisation of African minds has brought about. Decolonising the mind means thinking locally, it means discrediting ideas purporting to be universal (Van Staden 1995:150). It is 'an act of exorcism .. a process of liberation' (Mahrez in Nederveen Pieterse & Parekh 1995:4).

Postmodernist critical theory has a significant contribution to make to this idea of decolonising the mind. Both decolonisation and postmodernism are about revolting against hegemony (Louw 1995:69). Although European postmodernists appeared to focus their attention on the West, their ideas, especially those of Foucault, have been applied to the colonial context by other thinkers writing from a postmodernist perspective. Hattingh (1995:43) argues that Foucault shows that colonisation of people takes place through a colonisation of their minds and that the emancipation of a group of people takes place when this group rejects the identities placed upon them by others and creates their own ideas. Thus, even though Foucault had little to say directly about the colonisation of Africa, his ideas can be effectively applied to the colonial context. Edward Said (1978) adapts Foucault's ideas to make them relevant to the colonial contest. In *Orientalism*, he uses the Foucauldian concept of discourse in order to analyse the way in which the West developed a discourse regarding the East, and to examine the consequences of this discourse (Young, R. 1995:57-58). Said (in Young, R. 1995:57-58) argues that

Orientalism produced a discourse rather than a body of objective knowledge, and that this discourse was the cultural equivalent of colonialism. While Said's (1978) analysis focuses on Asia, he says that he hopes that his study will show how formidable the structure of cultural domination is and will indicate to formerly colonised people the 'dangers and temptations of employing this structure upon themselves or upon others' (Said 1978:25). Said's *Orientalism* can easily be applied to the African context allowing for the argument that the discourses that the West produced and still produces about Africa, colonise African minds and African cultures in much the same way as European imperialists colonised African lands. Mudimbe (1988) is another thinker who has used the ideas of postmodernist critical thinkers in discussing what he calls 'the invention of Africa'. According to Hattingh (1995:43), Mudimbe's work emphasises that forms of Western domination and 'bits of power/knowledge' as described by Foucault, must be identified and contested in the African context. Mudimbe (1988:5) argues that colonialism is accompanied by modes of thinking which impose themselves upon the dominated nations. Western discourses have not been entirely thrown off by African thinkers and many African thinkers, supposing themselves to be rejecting the colonial project write a 'literature that flatters condescending Western ears' in which they try to prove that Africans are intelligent and have achieved things which the West would consider great and worthwhile (Mudimbe 1988:36-37). The path to true knowledge is still a Western path, and the rules which decide what is true and what is good are still Western imposed (Mudimbe 1988:41).

The project of decolonising the mind recognises that the impact of colonialism lives on in African minds. Colonialism imposed certain values and norms upon Africa and even today there is a tendency among many Africans to overvalue Western institutions and to undervalue their own traditions and ways of doing things (Sogolo 1995:137). Western discourses have been accepted by African minds and decolonisation remains incomplete until these discourses are recognised and challenged. In addition, the colonisation of the African mind continues in many ways. Sogolo (1995: 135) argues that the new world order being championed by the West represents a new form of colonisation. Contemporary Western discourses continue the colonisation of African minds in that knowledge about Africa is still to a large extent produced by the West, and is often accepted unquestioningly by Africans who have not yet rid themselves of the belief that Western ideas, Western knowledge, and Western ways of doing things are superior to African equivalents (Van Staden 1995:147-148). In order to decolonise the African mind

and prevent its continued recolonisation, Africans must develop a critical attitude that discourages the acceptance of Western discourses and develops alternative African discourses (Sogolo 1995:139).

2.5 CONCLUSION: WHY CHALLENGE WESTERN DISCOURSES?

The discussion above leads to the conclusion that Western discourses of Africa exist, are related to power, and dominate; but does this necessarily mean that they should be challenged? Should the African Renaissance accede to these discourses and promote the rebirth of Africa within their confines, or should the African Renaissance try to challenge these discourses? This dissertation argues that the African Renaissance certainly should challenge these discourses.

Africa has been dominated by the West. This domination has taken many forms, including political, social, intellectual and cultural forms. Western discourses on Africa have been part of this domination. From the perspective of postmodernist critical theory, it can be argued that this Western domination of Africa through discourse must end if the African Renaissance is to succeed. Two broad reasons can be given for this argument.

Firstly, postmodernist critical theory argues that all forms of dominance should be challenged. Dominance is an attempt to establish consensus or hegemony . Dominance involves the assertion of one *grand narrative* at the expense of others. Postmodernism resists all forms of totalisation or attempts at establishing hegemony, and suggests that a plurality of 'truths' and 'realities' exist at any given time (Ermarth 1998:589). Rather than trying to suppress pluralities as modernism does, postmodernism celebrates these pluralities (Louw 1995:68-69). Thus the fact that Western discourses dominate is enough reason to resist them and confront them with alternatives.

A second reason why the challenge of Western discourses is necessary, is directly related to the goals of the African Renaissance. When drawing up an inventory of some of the key elements of the African Renaissance, Botha (2000a:12) identifies 'the need to break neo-colonial relations between Africa and the world's economic powers' as one of these key elements. The preceding discussion regarding the intersection of power and knowledge in discourse, leads to the realisation that these neo-colonial relations cannot be broken if no attention is given to the role played by discourse in reflecting and perpetuating

a relationship between the West and Africa in which the West is dominant. Thus an analysis of discourse is indispensible if the African Renaissance is to succeed. In addition, the African Renaissance has been explicitly linked with the project of decolonisation. Ntuli (1998:18) states 'The African Renaissance discourse is a process towards the decolonisation of the mind. We, as African 'intellectuals', have been produced and reproduced within Eurocentric incubators'. He adds that the African Renaissance 'must unleash a thorough interrogation of ... Eurocentric scholarship, to shake it from its contented hegemonic pose into an arena of meaningful contestation' (Ntuli 1998:18). These quotes indicate that a goal of the African Renaissance is the critical examination of Western discourses and the challenge of these discourses through the production of alternative African discourses. Decolonisation will remain incomplete until this process of interrogation and challenge has taken place.

Although it can safely be maintained that for the African Renaissance to achieve its goals, Western discourses need to be challenged and alternatives put forward; a cautionary observation with regard to this project need to be recognised. The wholesale rejection of Western discourses and an unquestioning adoption of discourses produced by the African Renaissance or another African movement is not an appropriate solution if the whole question of Western discourses on Africa is approached from the perspective of postmodernist critical theory. In tackling the problem of responding to Western discourses about Africa, it is tempting to speak of 'true' and 'false' discourses. This would involve identifying certain bodies of knowledge that are 'false' and in their place suggesting different bodies of knowledge that could be said to be 'true'. Discussions of discourse from a postmodernist critical theory indicate the danger of this. Discourses do provide representations of reality, but the term 'discourse' also refers to the conditions which both limit and enable the production of these representations of reality (McHoul & Grace 1993:34). Postmodernist critical theory suggests that different representations can occur under the same conditions and that these representations can compete for dominance, but that no particular representation 'truthfully' represents reality, while the others represent a 'false' reality. In order to determine which reality was 'true', it would be necessary to compare each discourse with the 'real' object, but this 'real' object is not available outside its discursive construction (McHoul and Grace 1993:35). In terms of the topic of the dissertation, this means that rather than denying the 'truth' of a particular Western discourse and positing in its place a 'truer' African discourse; the differing discourses and the conditions of their appearance should be examined and any discourse

which is posited as being undeniably true should be challenged by the presentation of alternatives. In accordance with this, this dissertation does not mean to suggest that Western discourses are all erroneous and should be replaced by discourses produced by the African Renaissance or any other movement, but rather questions the often automatic acceptance of Western discourses as unequivocal truths, arguing that Western discourses must not be assumed to be 'true', and should be contested by other discourses.

Whether they are 'true' or not, Western discourses dominate. Western discourses dominate because they bring together knowledge and power, allowing the powerful to produce discourses which in turn reinforce their position of power. Western discourses dominate because the West is dominant in the hierarchised networks of power in existence today. Western discourses dominate by encouraging consensus - when the oppressed are made to agree with the discourses of their oppressors, dominance has truly been achieved. This dominance cannot go unchallenged.

This Chapter has argued from the perspective of postmodernist critical theory, that Western discourses on Africa need to be challenged. Building upon this foundation, the next Chapter explores selected Western discourses found in recent academic and journalistic sources. These discourses are critically examined and a brief discussion of their role in the power relations between Africa and the West is given. This discussion is followed by an analysis of the meaning, intentions and assumptions of the African Renaissance. Finally, the extent to which the African Renaissance challenges Western discourses by providing alternative discourses on Africa, is assessed.

CHAPTER 3: DOMINANT WESTERN DISCOURSES ON AFRICA

3.1 WESTERN DISCOURSES ON THE AFRICAN SITUATION

Western discourses identify Africa's problems, diagnose the nature of these problems and suggest solutions to these problems. The approach adopted is analogous to a doctor visiting an ailing patient and from a position of authority and superior knowledge, diagnosing an illness and recommending a remedy for the illness. The previous Chapter argued that Western discourses ought to be challenged by the African Renaissance. In order to be able to assess the extent to which the African Renaissance challenges Western discourses, it is necessary to briefly examine various selected Western discourses on Africa. This needs to be done in order to illustrate why these discourses need to be challenged and to provide and overview of the type of discourses that need challenging. This Chapter provides the necessary overview of Western discourses. While it is impossible to comprehensively examine all (or even a significant number of) Western discourses on Africa, an attempt will be made to briefly sketch a few of these discourses and to closely examine them to determine why it is that these discourses in particular, and Western discourses on Africa in general, should be challenged by the African Renaissance. Firstly, the dominant Western discourses regarding the African situation are sketched - the diagnosis of Africa's 'illness'. Subsequent to this, the implications of these discourses are analysed from the perspective of postmodernist critical theory. Secondly, this discussion of the Western diagnosis of Africa's 'illness' leads to the description and analysis of Western discourses regarding the West's proposed remedy for Africa's 'illness'.

3.1.1 Ailing Africa

There is consensus in the West that something is wrong with Africa. While there may be disagreement regarding the exact nature of Africa's 'illness' or the way to remedy this 'illness', Western writers such as those discussed below have no doubt that the current situation in Africa is not a model of healthy political, economic or social conditions.

Many Western writers clearly draw a parallel between illness and the African situation. An overview of a variety of articles written in dominant Western publications illustrates this. For example, Salopek (2000) describes Africa as the 'ailing continent' and speaks of the 'sickening of Africa'. Baker (2000:9) declares that many young democracies in Africa

'show signs of ill health' with some 'hav[ing] been wounded, perhaps fatally ...'. Simon (1995:319) speaks about 'diagnosis and prescriptions for Africa's ills', and Minney (1996) refers to Africa as a 'patient' whose 'economic health' is 'grim'. Sada (2000) speaks of *'cette Afrique qui meurt'* - this dying Africa, and Anderson (1997) describes Africa as a continent which seems 'to be dying from a combination of disease, ethnic hatred and corruption'. Africa is described by Westerners as suffering from 'economic malaise' (May 2000:178) and corruption in Africa is said to be 'like an advanced form of cancer, [which] has taken over the whole body' (The Economist 2000a:25). Africa is described as suffering from a 'continent-wide plague of economic crisis, political decay and incipient "anarchy"' (Green 1998:185). This type of description clearly shows the African situation to be one of serious ill-health.

The frequent use of the term 'basket case' in recent analyses of Africa adds to the impression of Africa being sick. The term basket case is a slang term that originally was used to describe someone who had lost all four limbs (Oxford English Dictionary 1989:987). The term developed the connotation of one unable to function as a result of stress or anxiety (Random House 1983:174) or one who was in a state of emotional or mental ill-health (Oxford English Dictionary 1989:987). Clearly the use of the term by Western writers commenting on Africa creates the impression of a continent which is incapacitated in every way. Examples of Western writers using the term 'basket case' to describe Africa include Morrow (1992:26) who speaks of Africa as having become 'the basket case of the planet' and says that Africa is 'hurting' and that mystical powers will be needed if Africa is to recover; Russel (1996) who speaks of Africa as 'a basket case of civil wars and suffering' and DeYoung (1999) who warns that Africa's basket cases must not 'be allowed to fester'. These and other writers clearly view Africa as being in a serious condition, in need of much assistance in order to recover from its serious physical and psychological malady.

Another word frequently used when describing Africa is 'nightmare'. Michaels (1993:93) says that a 'nightmare scenario may be building' in Africa and Westlake (1989:10) argues that Africa has to try to avert the 'nightmare scenario'. Robert (1999a) speaks about an *'Afrique-cauchemar'* - a nightmare Africa. These allusions to Africa as a nightmare call to mind the now discredited idea of the 'Dark Continent' or the 'Heart of Darkness' - a place of darkness and horror.

There are a number of related Western discourses of Africa which also imply that Africa is stricken with some terrible disorder and needs to be doctored to good health. Such discourses describe Africa as being 'Job's continent' (Michaels 1993:94), a 'voracious sinkhole' (Callaghy 1994:209), the 'festering ghetto' of the global village (Shillinger 2000), and as the *'laissée-pour-compte de la globalisation'* - the misfit or reject of globalisation (Robert 1999b). Africa is seen as 'a sort of neo-post-colonial breakdown' (Morrow 1992:26). It is a *'continent ravagé'* - a ravaged continent (Marin & Rekacevicz 2000), and a 'shattered continent' (Apter & Rosberg 1994:43) with 'battered states' (Clapham 1993:434). Western discourses further describe Africa as an 'unhappy continent' (Hoar 1992:48), the most miserable continent (Morrow 1992:25), a continent which is 'losing the battle' (The Economist 2000a:23), and a continent descending into 'hell and squalor' (Fatton 1990:455) or sinking into an 'abyss' (Dynes 2000). These descriptions add to the impression that Africa is stricken with some terrible debility.

3.1.2 The Continent of Chaos

Western writers paint a picture of chaos, turmoil and anarchy when describing Africa. Rather than describing the changes taking place in Africa as dynamic or exciting, change in Africa is seen as chaotic, uncontrolled and terrifying. Consider Morrow (1992:25) who declares that Africa 'has begun to look like an immense illustration of chaos theory'. Descriptions of Africa as being chaotic or in turmoil crop up all over Western sources commenting on Africa. The IISS (1999:244) declares Africa to be 'in turmoil' and Santoro (1999) speaks about 'churning Africa'. Deedes (1999) speaks about Africa 'slip[ping] into anarchy' and the *Electronic Telegraph* (1997) observes that recent news out of Africa paints 'a familiar picture of a continent in chaos'. Kent (1999:8) speaks about the 'disaster theme park image' of Africa and the 'perpetual turmoil and uncertainties that are Africa'. Van de Walle (1995:128) notes that recent commentaries on Africa are profoundly pessimistic and describes thinkers such as Thomas Callaghy as suggesting that Africa will be haunted indefinitely by anarchy and that many African states will ultimately succumb to chaos.

3.1.3 The Continent where Hope is Shattered by Despair

According to the West, in Africa for every glimmer of hope, there is an ocean of despair. Western discourses generally (although there are exceptions) stop short of labelling the

continent as completely hopeless, but imply that what little hope there is, is likely to be overwhelmed with despair.

Some Western writers see no hope for Africa. *The Economist* (2000b:17) recently ran the headline 'Hopeless Africa'. The article focuses on Sierra Leone, describing it as manifesting all of Africa's worst characteristics and declares that 'the world might just give up on the entire continent'. Dowden (1993:611) speaks of how Western writers such as Patrick Marnham have described Africa as 'a hopeless and inexplicable disaster area without a glimmer of hope'. Dynes (2000) also provides a bleak picture of Africa's future declaring that 'the entire continent is drifting into perdition — if it isn't already irredeemable.'

Many Western writers speak about the battle between hope and despair on the continent. It is suggested that hopeful signs in Africa have to fight their way through the overwhelming despair experienced on the continent. Generally, the conclusion is that currently despair is winning the battle. For example, an article by David Fox (2000) is headed '*Conflict, despair linger in Africa*' and reports that 'the continent remains a brutal, dangerous place that is frequently the scene of conflict and despair and rarely one of peace or hope.' Similarly, an article by Gilbert Lewthwaite (2000) in *The Sun (Baltimore)* is headed '*In Africa, perils threaten gains; Challenges: Natural disasters, AIDS and political problems deepen the continent's long struggle between hope and despair.*'

Most Western writers stop short of condemning Africa to a future of complete despair. Western analyses of Africa spend much time on Africa's problems, but several do suggest that there is some hope for Africa. For example Wright (1996) comments that '[s]ome people even think that Africa - at least parts of it - may be getting its act together and starting to pull itself off the mat'. He tempers this statement with a warning, noting that '[w]ith Africa, however, little is certain.' Morrow (1992:25) argues that while Africa has become a 'battleground for contending dooms', there is 'some hope forming on the margins'. Pythian (1998) analyses the African situation on the verge of the new millennium and comments that 'despite the setbacks, 1998 brought hope as well as horror' to the African continent. In a similar vein, Oliver and Atmore (1994:289) comment that at the beginning of the 90s the situation in Africa 'though still full of difficulties and dangers, did not quite respond with the pictures of unalloyed disaster fed by the aid charities to the media of the developed countries'. The *Chicago Tribune*'s foreign correspondent, Hugh

Dellios (1998) heads his analysis of Africa at the time of former US President Bill Clinton's visit to Africa with *'In Africa, seeds of hope take root'*. Evidently, Western writers feel that the African situation is not without hope, but that the overall picture is still one of gloom - '[t]here are some bright spots, no doubt ... but in general the picture today is a gloomy one' (Hodder 1992:347).

3.1.4 Africa's 'Problems'

As demonstrated above, Western writers agree that there is something seriously wrong with Africa. In terms of exactly what Africa's 'problems' are, there is less consensus. However, there are recurring themes in Western discourses discussing the African situation. These themes draw up a list of the nature of Africa's 'illness' as diagnosed by the West.

Firstly, it should be noted that many Western writers regard Africa's problems as being inherent rather than a result of external pressures or situations. Western writers tend to acknowledge external factors influencing Africa's situation, but lay most of the 'blame' for Africa's situation on Africa or Africans. Consider *The Economist* (2000a:23) which asks 'Does Africa have some inherent flaw that keeps it backward and incapable of development? Some think so.' The article continues on this theme commenting that 'Africa was weak before the Europeans touched its coasts' and that African societies 'are distrustful and bad at organisation'. Another *The Economist* (2000b:17) article also implies that Africa has an inherent flaw by saying 'brutality, despotism and corruption exist everywhere - but African societies, for reasons buried in their cultures seem especially susceptible to them'. In a similar line of thinking, Hodder (1992:351) notes that 'there is much in the nature of African ethnicity and social structure which, according to some writers, makes any adaptation to modern economic activity particularly difficult'. Simpson (2000) comments:

> [W]e [Westerners] are often tempted to assume that all these things are in some way linked: that Africa is inherently incapable of running its own affairs in peace and prosperity, that it is a continent-wide basket case; and that the only answer to its problems is for us to dig deeper into our pockets and bail it out yet again.

This idea that Africa is somehow inherently weaker or inferior is usually implied rather than said outright, possibly because this once popular idea has been discredited by other writers. Recent pessimism regarding South Africa's prospects for 'success' (as defined by the West) can be considered as an example of this inference that Africa is inherently inferior to the West. Post-apartheid South Africa is now considered by the West to be a truly African state as it is now ruled by black African rulers. This has led several Western writers to begin questioning whether or not South Africa will become 'just like the rest of Africa'. It is very difficult to avoid the implication that now that South Africa is ruled by black Africans, it must follow the same route (one seen as undesirable) as other African states because all African states are inherently the same. An example of this type of thinking is Thompson (1999:94) who describes South Africa's future as uncertain and warns that 'the country may be following the downward trajectory of tropical Africa'. *The Economist* (1996:21) has a very similar comment to make with regard to South Africa. In an article headed *South Africa: how wrong is it going?*, the writer describes some of the problems in South Africa and asks if these problems represent a 'blip' or if they 'represent the first skid down the slippery African slope, one which has oiled the failure of so many other countries ...'. Kenny (1999) speaks about South Africa 'going down the drain like the rest of Africa'. Such ideas imply that there is something inherently wrong with Africa and that all African states appear to have the same awful and unavoidable destiny.

It is important that this implication that Africa is inherently inferior is kept in mind when examining Western discourses on Africa's problems. Western discourses identify several problems in Africa. Three of these problems will be focused upon here: poverty, war and poor leadership. According to the West, poverty is one of the most serious problems in Africa. Africa is portrayed as suffering from abject and debilitating poverty. Wiseman (1990:13) comments that '[m]ost of the world's poor states are African and the bulk of its people are among the most poverty stricken. Standards of living ... are extremely low.' Pfaff (1995:2) speaks of the 'destitution of Africa' and Wright (1996) describes Africa as '[m]ired in poverty'. Almost every article examining the African situation mentions poverty as one of Africa's most serious problems.

A second problem in Africa as identified by the West is war. Western discourses suggest that in contrast to the peaceful West, Africa is ravaged by war. *The Economist* (1998:51-52) comments that Africa is a 'fiery continent' and that '[w]ar now consumes Africa from the Horn to Namibia'. In describing Africa, Carter (2000) says that '[t]here are wars and

rumors of wars in at least 20 countries. And much of the population - as many as 3.5 million people - are refugees fleeing famine, disease or armed conflict'. Fletcher and Mufson (2000) point out that Africa is ' is home to half of the world's civil wars' and Jensen (1999) says that '[m]ore than a third of the continent is in constant conflict'.

Africa's leaders are a third 'problem' frequently found in Western discourses of Africa. It is felt that African leaders are 'big men' presiding over 'little people' and exploiting these 'little people' as well as well-meaning Western donors in order to enrich themselves. There is an idea that all African leaders are similar and that leaders in Africa too easily become 'African leaders' even when they show promise of being different. Rotberg (2000:47) says that '[v]enal leaders are the curse of Africa' and Johnson (2001) says that 'the failure of political leadership is, in Africa, a phenomenon of continental proportions' and that African leaders are 'Lords of misrule who condemn Africa to war, famine and tyranny'. Buckley (1998) describes Africa's leaders saying that earlier African leaders such as Nkrumah and Nyerere were 'Cold War pawns who masterfully manipulated their suitors' and says that new African leaders are not much different - they 'have close relations with their major donors, drawing hundreds of millions of dollars in aid annually. They say they despise corruption. They woo the Western media, using grace and charm to spin reporters relentlessly'.

Western discourses suggest that leadership in Africa is different from the leadership in the West. African leaders are selfish and tyrannical unlike Western leaders who are presumably wise and benevolent.

A further theme with regard to Western discourses on the African situation is that of the intersection of problems on the African continent. Africa's problem is not so much that there is war or poverty or bad leadership, but that all of these and other negative situations co-exist in Africa. Their joint impact is what is most worrying. Many Western discourses give depressing lists of these intersecting problems. For example, the IISS (2000:242) speaks of Africa's 'unending litany of political upheaval, ethnic resentment, social breakdown, economic deprivation and warfare' and Clark (1993:529) tells of Africa's 'unspeakable poverty, ethnic strife, corrupt political classes, deeply-rooted authoritarian habits, and so on'. Gordon (1996:84) says that in Africa '[i]lliteracy and disease abound, unemployment and poverty continue unabated, and inequalities between classes are worse than at independence'. Salopek (2000) lists '[c]hronic wars, unrelieved poverty,

rapid urbanization and corruption' as some of Africa's problems and Sada (2000) tells of *'L'Afrique des guerres et des massacres, des dictateurs et de la corruption, de la famine et du sous-développement'* (the Africa of wars and massacres, of dictators and corruption, of famine and under-development). By listing all of these afflictions, the picture painted of Africa is certainly a dismal one.

3.1.5 The West Reluctantly to the Rescue

According to Western discourses, healing for Africa will only come about if Africa takes the medicine prescribed by the West. As demonstrated above, Western discourses clearly diagnose Africa as being 'ill'. In addition to this, Western discourses suggest that Africa needs help and that the only way that Africa will be able to be 'healed' is through help from the West.

Discourses discussing Africa's need for help are numerous and various. Consider Westlake (1989:10) who insists: 'Help will be needed [in Africa] from the international community on a large scale' and Jaycox (1992:94) who says that Africa 'needs increased support from the international community'. Spence (1997:7) says that Western governments 'have a role to play in helping Africa' and Wright (1996) states that 'with some help, Africa looks to a better future' and discusses the role of international institutions in efforts to 'aid Africa on the long journey to peace and prosperity'. Rotberg (2000:61) says that it is 'now more necessary than ever to help elected African leaders'. Spence (1997:7-11) lists various ways in which the West can help Africa: the West can help build institutional capacity, train technocrats and peacekeepers, and provide logistic support and appropriate weapons systems. Morrow (1992:28) asks: 'What are we to do with black Africa ... Should the industrialized, moneyed nations allow Africa to drift further and further into the margins, into poverty, starvation, disease, war...?' The implication is that Africa will indeed drift further into poverty, starvation and all sorts of other atrocities, if the West does not step in and help. Africa is seen as lacking the expertise to doctor itself back to health and Western help is seen as essential if Africa is to be healed.

Many journalistic discourses on Africa include reports of leaders of Western countries expressing views along the line that Africa needs the West's help. The arrogance reflected in many of the statements of Western leaders is astounding. Former US President Bill Clinton is reported by Russel (1998) as having said: 'It is time for Americans

to put a new Africa on our map'. Clinton adds: 'By coming and going, a bird builds a nest. We will come and go and do all we can to help you build a new Africa'. It would seemthat the project of transforming Africa is a benevolent American hobby. Jensen (1999) reports Clinton as also having promised to forge 'a new partnership with Africa, one that will establish lifelines of commerce and investment to reduce poverty, raise living standards and equip Africans with 21st-century skills'. French prime minister, Jospin, is apparently also interested in this project - he pledged that France 'would remain the "advocate for Africa" on the world stage' (Maligorne 1997).

The extracts above overtly illustrate the idea that a solution to Africa's problems can only come about with Western help. This idea is subtly supported by other discourses that indicate that Africa is 'worse off' than it was at independence - implying that Africa would be a better place if ruled by outsiders. Examples of this kind of discourse include Jensen (1999) who says that 'Africa is the only continent that will enter the new millennium worse off than it was in colonial times' and that 'black Africa is worse off today than it was under European colonial rule'. What exactly he means by 'worse off' he does not say. Kenny (1999) implies the same idea of Africa being 'worse off' than before independence when he informs his readers that 'African countries go through three phases after white rule: euphoria, silence, destitution'. Hoar (1992:41) says that after three decades of independence, 'Africa is worse off economically than ever' and Dynes (2000) says that if Africa continues its 'downward spiral' it will soon be poorer than it was 'in David Livingstone's time'. Simpson (2000) says that Africa 'is living up to the worst expectations Europeans habitually have of it' and that this negative picture has been building up throughout the post-colonial era. Simpson (2000) blames Africa's problems on either 'bad and irresponsible government' or 'ethnic ferocities that were only silenced, not ended, by a few decades of occasionally perfunctory colonial rule' - he seems to see colonialism as having temporarily subdued African savagery only to have it gradually return after colonialism! Such statements dismiss the suffering of African people under colonialism and suggest that Africa would be better off if it were still colonised and thus that the best solution to Africa's problems can come from outside.

Some such discourses go so far as to suggest that Africa should be recolonised. In an article entitled "A New Colonialism: Europe must go back into Africa", Pfaff (1995:2) insists that what Africa needs is what he calls a 'disinterested neo-colonialism'. He describes Africa's current situation as one of 'destitution' and blames this on the colonisers

having not 'stay[ed] in Africa long enough' resulting in the failure of their project which involved attempts at the 'salvation' of Africans so that 'they could be remade culturally as European'. Pfaff theorises that the European colonisers destroyed African institutions and systems, but did not stay long enough to put anything in their place. He suggests that Africa should be recolonised in order to finish this project off. Michaels (1993:104) provides a less extreme version of this argument saying that some policymakers have out of frustration suggested that the best solution would be 'to fence off Africa, regionalize its various economies, and oversee its government structures for the next fifty years'. He records an American diplomat as having said 'In five years time, Africans will be begging to be recolonised'. This comment is ironic when read today given that it was made almost a decade ago.

Western discourses openly advocating recolonisation are not common, but many Western discourses suggest that the West should place pressure on Africa to make certain changes and to move in a particular direction. Thus the West should exert influence in Africa in order to strongly encourage (some might say coerce) Africans to move in a specified direction. Recently, many Western donors have decided to tie aid to certain political and economic conditions. Wiseman (1993:441) says that major Western donors have now decided that future aid 'will be tied to issues of human rights, civil rights, "good governance", political pluralism, and democracy'. Dowden (1993:610) notes that new United States foreign aid guidelines suggest that foreign aid will be given in accordance with political and economic reform and Riley (1992:542) also informs his readers that since the early 1990s political reform has been a necessary condition for assistance to Africa. The idea of tying aid to economic and political conditions has been supported by many academics and journalists. Rotberg (2000:61) says that good leadership in Africa 'should be rewarded'. Simpson (2000) reports that the West should put pressure on African autocrats 'to make them fall into line with the dictates of good government' and Diamond (1999:277) advises that aid should be conditioned on 'economic liberalization, political freedom and accountability, and redirection of budgetary priorities'. Mair (1996:185) says that the international community 'continues to play in important role in Africa's search for its own identity' and says that the international community should discourage non-democratic regimes through the 'discontinuation of development aid, diplomatic isolation, economic sanctions, and the freezing of foreign assets'. The idea appears to be that Africa should be helped to find its own identity by being coerced into a particular direction by Western donors. All these statements imply the same thing: the

West should help Africa in a particular direction – towards becoming more like the West. Aid should be given only if the current political and economic policies and trends meet with the West's approval.

At the same time, it is widely recognised that aid to Africa is decreasing. Van de Walle (1996:232) notes this decrease and blames the decline in aid to Africa on the end of the Cold War and economic recession. DeYoung (1999) reports:

> While America has enjoyed one of its most prosperous decades ever in the 1990s, it also has set a record for stinginess. For as long as people have kept track, never has the United States given a smaller share of its money to the world's poorest.

Shearer (1999:98) speaks of 'the West's growing indifference to Africa' and Wright (1996) speaks about African countries as having 'dropped off the map' and as Africa being the 'forgotten continent' because the international community no longer has any interest in it. Wiseman (1993:441) quotes Samuel Decalo as having commented 'African states were transformed from Cold War pawns into irrelevant international clutter'. This decline in Western interest in Africa is not only reflected by a decline in aid, but also a decline in military intervention in Africa.

Thus while Western discourses insist that Africa needs the West's help, they also acknowledge that the West is increasingly reluctant to be involved in Africa. Putting together the various Western discourses on Africa described above, a disturbing picture is created: one of a seriously ill, chaotic, despairing and desperate continent which cannot be saved without the help of a set of countries who give hardly any of this much needed help and who attach many conditions to the little assistance they give. This is the African situation according to Western discourses. The following quote from an article by Randolph Kent (1999:8) in *The World Today* sums up this picture:

> ... the policy assumptions that underlie the prescriptions of many major governments spell one grim message: international disengagement. There is growing concern that ... non-African governments and international organisations [may] abandon any commitment to the seemingly perpetual turmoil and uncertainties that are Africa. To that extent, some suggest, African will be abandoned to its forlorn fate, and with the decline of international interest, millions will have only emergency assistance to define their futures.

Clearly, Western writers see no hope for the ailing continent of Africa if the West 'abandons' Africa, and this abandonment is seen as a likely scenario.

3.1.6 An Analysis of Western Discourses on the African Situation

The Western discourses on the African situation have been summarised above. When they are examined from the perspective of postmodernist critical theory, some interesting observations can be made.

3.1.6.1 Examining words and phrases from the perspective of postmodernist critical theory

According to postmodernist critical theory as previously discussed discourses are not neutral reflections of an objective reality. Rather discourses form part of reality and even function to construct a reality to a certain extent. Words are not impartial labels attached to real objects, but rather words form part of a system of value and meaning and help to constitute reality. Given this approach, of what system of value and meaning do the words and discourses used by Western writers form part? When examining Western discourses regarding the African situation certain words and phrases cropped up time and again. One discourse that appeared in several articles and books by Western writers is the idea of illness and how Africa as a continent is ill. Illness is always seen as being contrasted with wellness and thus the description of Africa as being ill, carries with it an implied description of the West as well and healthy. In discourses of illness and health, health is seen as the usual and desired state and illness as an undesirable state that must as quickly as possible be replaced by health. Thus Western discourses labelling Africa as sick, suggest that Africa must become more like the West in order to be considered well, in order to be considered normal and healthy. In aspiring to be healthy, Africa must aspire to be Westernised as the West is healthy and Africa not. The labelling of Africa as sick forms part of a value system which sees the characteristics of the West as being the characteristics of health. Descriptions of Africa as sick are not neutral reflections of an African reality, but rather reflect a system of value that views the Western lifestyle and situation as ideal.

The word chaotic and words associated with the idea of chaos, such as turmoil, upheaval, and anarchy are also frequently used in Western descriptions of Africa. Chaotic means

confused, disordered, out of control. When looking at the West it is clear that the values of order, control, and predictability are seen as being of the utmost importance. From a Western perspective, Africa does not conform to this value as it lacks control and predictability. Thus the description of Africa as chaotic must be seen in the context of a Western value system which places much importance upon order, control and predictability.

The labelling of Africa as hopeless and despairing is indicative of Western pessimism regarding the African situation. From a Western perspective the African situation is one of misery and Africa's future is bleak. As previously discussed, discourses function in part to construct a reality. By declaring Africa hopeless, the West excuses itself from any blame for the African situation and implies cynicism for any African attempt to change the African situation. If Africa is understood to be hopeless then African attempts to end Africa's domination will be viewed by the West as futile, allowing the West to dismiss these attempts and thereby obstruct the realisation of change in Africa.

When Western writers discuss Africa's problems, they describe Africa as being a victim of poverty, war, and poor leadership. On the surface, these claims appear to be accurate descriptions of an undeniable reality, but on closer inspection several Western assumptions can be shown to be active in applying these labels to Africa. The empirical bias in Western thought allows for these concepts to seem unable to be challenged - who can deny that Africa is a victim of poverty, war, ethnic conflict and poor leadership? Yet, there are some problems with the automatic acceptance of the applicability of these concepts to the African situation.

Africa is poor. This statement appears to be indisputable. And yet what is poverty? Poverty, of course, is poverty as defined by the West. According to a Western dictionary, poverty is a lack or deficiency of something (Kirkpatrick 1981:125). Poverty is considered by the West to be a case of economic deficiency - for the West the word poverty is rarely used to describe a deficiency in the social or spiritual realm. Western writers tend to define poverty using empirical measures. Poverty is having to live on less than a certain number of dollars a day, it is not having running water and electricity, it is living in houses considered inferior by Western standards. Escobar (1995:21-54) speaks about what he calls the 'problematization of poverty'. He analyses the origin of the conception of poverty as a measurable entity, tracing it back to the 1940s and sees the conceptualisation of

poverty as taking place within a particular context of capitalism and consumerism. Escobar (1995:24) notes that in 1948 the World Bank defined as poor all countries with an annual *per capita* income that fell below US$100. More recently the World Bank (in Hanmer et al. 1999:797) has defined poor people as being those whose 'standard of living falls below the poverty line, that is the amount of income (or consumption) associated with a minimum acceptable level of nutrition and other necessities of everyday life'.

What an 'acceptable level of nutrition' and a 'necessity' are, is also defined by the West. Various empirical measures of poverty have been constructed. These range from very simplistic measures which look at *per capita* income, to more complicated indicators which take into account basic needs, political rights, assets and calorie consumption (Hanmer *et al.* 1999:798-801). A Human Poverty Index (HPI) has been developed in order to 'measure' poverty and rank countries in accordance with their scores on the index (UNDP 1998:25-26). While it cannot be disputed that there are people in Africa who are starving and who live in conditions they themselves describe as unacceptable, the idea that poverty in Africa is nothing more than the lack of something the West sees as vital, must be challenged. When the West labels Africa as poor, it is describing certain empirical, material conditions, but it does not take into account other understandings of poverty. In addition, the emphasis placed on deficiency in terms of material things as being a serious problem in Africa, reflects Western materialistic bias. A lack of material wealth is automatically assumed to be a serious problem, whereas deficiency or abundance in terms of the social, spiritual, cultural or emotional do not even enter the discussion (possibly because it may then be the West which would be described as poor).

In terms of war, there are some similar problems. When Africa is described as war-torn there is an implicit comparison with the peaceful West. War is generally understood to mean some kind of militant armed conflict. Such conflict is viewed as undesirable and the West is held up as a group of peaceful countries, in contrast to war-torn Africa. There is much pride in what has been labelled the democratic peace - the idea that democratic countries do not go to war with each other, making them more peaceful than the rest of the world (Lynn-Jones 1996:ix). But the Western understanding of peace and war has empirical biases. Is peace nothing more than the absence of armed conflict? The Cold War has shown that war can be fought without the exchange of any gunfire and that the silence of weapons does not in itself mean peace. Armed conflict can be measured and empirically observed, while silent hostilities and oppression through subtle exclusion

cannot. If the hostilities of the Cold War are included in the definition of war, then the West has been at war for much of the last century, and has little to teach Africa about peace.

Western discourses on Africa's other problem, that of poor leadership, also include Western assumptions. What makes a good leader? What is poor leadership? The history of relations between Western and African leaders illustrates the arbitrary nature of this labelling of some leaders as good and others as bad. Leaders described by current discourses as being despotic and tyrannical, were praised and protected by the West during the Cold War. Mobutu Sese Seko of the former Zaire serves as an excellent example here. Very few recent and contemporary African leaders are portrayed in Western discourses as being good leaders - former South African president Nelson Mandela being a notable exception. It seems that it is impossible for African rulers to maintain the respect and approval of Westerners, and that those who lose Western approval face dire consequences.

3.1.6.2 How do these discourses reflect and perpetuate power relations?

According to postmodernist critical theory, discourses both reflect and perpetuate existing power relations. An examination of the discourses on the African situation described above illustrates this. Broadly, the discourses on the African situation present the reader with a continent with several serious problems and suggest a saviour for this continent - the West, and a route to salvation - Western prescriptions. Clearly, this idea reflects current power relations. The West is powerful, and Africa is weak. Western discourses describe the West as occupying an advantageous position in comparison to the ailing, disadvantaged and despairing Africa.

Not only do Western discourses reflect current power relations between the West and Africa, but they also serve to perpetuate them. By indicating that Africa's only hope for an acceptable future, will be through Western aid and through following Western prescriptions, these discourses clearly present a future where Africa (depicted as lowly and humble) learns from the West (depicted as almighty and knowledgeable). Such discourses obviously perpetuate the current power relations between Africa and the West.

3.1.6.3 Helping as an elegant exercise of power

Western discourses on the African situation sketch a picture of an ailing Africa in need of doctoring by the West. Western discourses suggest that Africa cannot be healed without Western help, although it is also acknowledged that aid from the West to Africa is currently declining. This illustration of Africa being in dire need of Western help appears at first glance to have to do with charity rather than power relations. But a closer examination reveals that charity is not always altruistic and that helping can also be an exercise of power.

The motivation for 'helping' Africa does not originate solely in a humanitarian desire to reduce human misery, but is often rooted in a self-interested desire to prevent Africa's problems from having serious global implications. While many Western writers focus on Africa's need for help and the West's moral duty to provide this help, some discourses do acknowledge that 'helping' Africa may have more to do with protecting the West. For example, Hempstone (1998:89-90) says that aid is vital and supports this statement by saying that aid:

> may not encourage development, [but it] enables us [Americans] to dispense food surpluses, salve our consciences, and provide some employment for Americans, while also saving lives. Development aid can help to create healthier societies abroad, contribute to the overseas sale of American products, and again create at least a few jobs at home.

Spence (1997:11) also highlights Western interests in aiding Africa, speaking of how Africa is a potential emerging market and has valuable fossil fuels and minerals. Such statements suggest that aid is more beneficial for the helper than the recipient of help. Thus helping Africa is sometimes more focused on helping the West.

Even where this is not the case, there are certain implications that accompany helping, especially the kind of help the West is eager to provide to Africa. Gronemeyer (1992:53-69) draws attention to the way that helping can sometimes be an exercise of what she calls 'elegant power'. This kind of power is inconspicuous and unrecognisable, making it the perfect exercise of power. Traditionally, help was an unconditional response to a stated need (Gronemeyer 1992:53-54). However, the kind of help given today by the

West to Africa, is tied to many conditions and is often a result of the Western identification of a particular deficit, rather than a response to a need first articulated by Africans themselves. This kind of help becomes a strategy rather than charitable response. When Western powers help Africa to become more like the West, the West maintains its position of dominance and perpetuates the existing power relations between the West and Africa. This kind of helping turns Africa into a humble patient, reliant on the doctor to aid it to the position of health that the doctor already enjoys. Both the health that is aspired to and the medicine that must be taken to reach this goal are decided upon by the doctor. Thus the West presents itself as a model on which Africa must try to base itself, and provides suggestions as to how Africa can do this. This practice obviously maintains the West's position of dominance.

3.2 WESTERN PRESCRIPTIONS FOR AFRICA'S ILLNESS

In addition to diagnosing Africa as suffering from a serious debility, the West provides several suggestions on what Africa needs to do if it is to have at least some chance of ending its situation of ill-health. These Western prescriptions include suggestions regarding state-building, democratisation, development, the strengthening of civil society, integration into the global economy and many more. It would not be possible here to closely analyse all of these, but the rest of this Chapter will devote some attention to Western prescriptions for the African situation with regard to democratisation and development. Discourses on democratisation and development dominate many discussions on how the African situation can be improved, and an examination of these discourses from the perspective of postmodernist critical theory is useful.

3.2.1 Africa must Democratise

Democracy must be one of the most popular concepts today. It has hardly any negative connotations and is used by almost every politician in trying to defend his or her policies. Democracy is hailed as the solution to an astounding variety of ills and is used to mean all sorts of often-incompatible things. Western discourses on the African situation almost all promote democratisation as a solution to Africa's problems.

3.2.1.1 Democracy as the cure for Africa's ills

Western discourses present democracy as the way to cure Africa of its poor leadership and ineffective governance. Democracy is shown to be an undoubtedly good and desirable form of government for Africa. Consider, for example, the promotion of democracy by Larry Diamond, one of the most prominent Western authors on democratisation in Africa. Diamond (1999:2) argues that 'democratisation is generally a good thing and that democracy is the best form of government'. Wiseman (1996:130) concurs saying that there is no alternative to democracy in Africa. He argues that while this does not mean that no other forms of government are likely to come about in Africa's future, only democracy can provide the basis for sustainable government in Africa. Clapham (1993:429) argues that while democracy in Africa has 'survived only in somewhat attenuated forms', it is necessary for African governments to become progressively more democratic. He argues that 'any effective system of government [in Africa] must be more democratic than in the past' saying that the ability for alternative forms of government to exist has been eroded because of changes in internal aspirations and in the policies of external powers. Van de Walle (1995:128-131) describes democratisation in Africa as a 'golden opportunity to break out of persistent patterns of stagnation and crisis', and says that it leads to improved governmental accountability and transparency which in turn should have a positive effect on policy-making in Africa. While acknowledging that democracy carries with it certain costs, he concludes that 'on balance, the benefits of democratisation in Africa will outweigh the costs'.

3.2.1.2 Democracy according to the West

Western discourses clearly portray democracy as the ideal form of government for Africa. But what exactly is democracy? The concept of democracy can be disputed, and different ideas can be attached to this popular concept. The word democracy comes from the Greek language. In Greek *demos* means 'the people' and *kratos* means 'rule' or 'authority' (Magill 1996:355). Thus democracy is 'rule by the people'. The term was first used to describe the form of government in Athens. In the Athenian system, the citizens of the state (excluding women and slaves) gathered in the plains or in the city squares in order to make decisions collectively with regard to how the city-state would be run.

Obviously, the concept democracy no longer has the same meaning as it did in Athens. When Western writers promote democracy as the cure for Africa's ills, they do not mean to suggest that all the male citizens, excluding slaves, should regularly meet in order to collectively make decisions regarding the running of the state! What do Western writers mean then, when they speak about democratisation in Africa?

Democracy as promoted by the West, is clearly representative rather than direct democracy. Wiseman (1990:1) states this clearly, saying 'representative democracy, where the state is governed by the representatives of the people at large, is the only realistically applicable notion of democracy for the large-scale states of modern Africa'. Western writers promoting democracy are thus promoting a particular form of democracy - representative democracy.

In addition to being representative democracy, rather than direct democracy, the type of democracy promoted by the West also has other characteristics. It is a democracy that includes multiparty elections and that holds to certain liberal principles. While there is some dispute among Western writers regarding these additional characteristics, most Western discourses on democracy in Africa promote a form of democracy that includes these characteristics.

In terms of elections, there is agreement among Western writers that elections are vital for democracy in Africa. Bratton (1997:69) says that 'the most basic requirement for democracy is that citizens are empowered to choose and remove leaders' and that:

> no other democratic institution precedes elections, either in timing or importance, they are the sine qua non of democracy, a necessary condition without which democracy cannot otherwise be born.

Gasionorowski and Power (1998:742-743) also support the necessity of elections for democracy, arguing that the conditions needed for democracy to exist 'can only be met through the regular conduct of free, fair, universal elections'. Discussions on democratisation in Africa tend to focus on elections - when they are being held, what their outcome is, and what the consequences of the elections will be. Connected with the discussion on elections, is the promotion of multiparty competitions. Elections where competition is intra-party or where there is little real competition as the one party

dominates, are not considered to be truly democratic. An article in *The Economist* (2000a:24) speaks about elections in Africa, noting the lack of multiparty competition in many African states, and concluding that 'there are elections in Africa, but little democracy'. The multiparty nature of elections is seen as vitally important. There is debate among Western writers on Africa regarding whether or not multiparty elections are a sufficient condition for democracy, but their necessity is not disputed.

While some Western writers see African countries which hold regular, relatively fair elections, as being democratic, other writers suggest that there are other conditions that must be met before such countries can truly be seen as democratic. One of the common concepts associated with the type of democracy promoted by the West, is that of liberalism. When Western writers promote democracy, they tend to mean liberal democracy. Diamond (1999:2) argues that democracy is the best form of government, but that the freedom associated with democracy must be constrained to some extent and that this constraint takes place through liberalism. Plattner (1998:171-180) entitles his article on democracy in Africa 'Liberalism and democracy: can't have one without the other', and Spence (1997:6) says that an African version of democracy should include 'values which are - by and large - "deemed to be self-evident"' after which he lists a number of liberal values. Clearly, liberal values are viewed by many Western writers to be an essential ingredient in African democracies.

The linking of liberalism and multiparty competition with democracy by Western writers is often subtle rather than direct. While writers may not blatantly declare that the absence of liberalism or multiparty competition suggests the absence of democracy, Western discourses imply this in several ways. For example Mair (1996:179) speaks about setbacks for democratisation in Africa and identifies the cause of these setbacks as being the inability of African states to develop the social differentiation upon which the Western liberal party-political system is based - thus democracy in Africa is seen as failing because of the absence of Western style liberalism and party competition. Apter and Rosberg (1994:28) speak about Africa's democratisation as being characterised by 'greater openness and market-driven growth, liberalization of trade, and multiparty elections'. Schuettler (1999) warns about a 'worrying trend' in African elections - 'ruling parties scored bigger parliamentary majorities in four of five polls, while the opposition either treaded water or sank into political oblivion'. Shattuck and Atwood (1998:170) speak about Western promotion of democracy arguing that is should include attempts to promote 'basic

freedoms' and 'the rule of law'. Such discourses imply that multiparty competition and liberalism are essential for African democracy. Some Western writers have, however, cautioned against this. For example, Jeffries (1993:20) calls the identification of good government as being multiparty democracy as being 'questionable' and Richard Joseph (1997:377) cautions that democracy has become 'overwhelmed by liberalism'.

The association of democratisation in Africa with multiparty competition and liberalism, leads into a further debate. Western forms of democracy are characterised by liberal representative democracy with multiparty competition. This same form of democracy is being promoted by the West as a solution for Africa's ills. It is also being promoted as the solution to the political problems in other regions of the world. The West presents its own form of democracy as a universal cure-all. This Western-style democracy is displayed as an ideal to which the whole world should aspire and the principles implicit to it are used to assess how democratic other systems are. This promotion of Western-style democracy as universally desirable is open to accusations of cultural imperialism. Van Binsbergen (1995:4) speaks about the issue of culture imperialism posing two alternatives related to the universality of Western-style democracy. Western-style democracy can be considered to be a cultural import and its spread in Africa a submission to an alien form of government; or alternatively Western-style democracy can be considered to be a universal construct and its increased popularity in Africa the result of 'the awakening to the universal heritage of mankind' - Africans adopting this form of democracy are then 'coming into their own' rather than submitting to foreign domination.

Western discourses on democratisation in Africa reflect both of these perspectives to some extent. Samuel Huntington and his supporters agree with the first option - that Western-style democracy is a cultural import, but believe that this does not mean that it should not be adopted in Africa. Huntington (1997:6-9) calls modern democracy 'a product of the West' and gives support to Arthur Schlesinger's argument that the West is the unique source of liberal democracy, and that these ideas are not African except by adoption. He nevertheless does not decry the increasing popularity of liberal democracy in Africa, but rather sees the success of the Third Wave of democratisation as being the way in which it has ensured the universality of democracy in the Western world and the way it has promoted the development of democracy elsewhere in the world. According to him, the extent to which non-Western societies are receptive to democracy is dependent upon the extent to which they have been influenced by the West. From this perspective,

democracy is a Western product, which can be adopted throughout the world only through the adaptation of other cultures to the Western culture that produced liberal democracy in the first place.

Other Western writers promote the idea of Western-style democracy being universally applicable whether or not it is a cultural import. Oliver and Atmore (1994:297) speak about how democratisation and market-orientated economies have been the 'prevailing ideology of the last decade of the twentieth century' and how this ideology has now gained widespread acceptance in Africa. This statement indicates how the ideas which have recently been dominant in the West, are now beginning to dominate globally, and how Western-style democracy and other popular Western concepts are gaining universal acceptance. Barkan (in Joseph, R. 1997:367) adds to this argument saying that 'today the western concept of democracy is more or less accepted throughout the world'.

Other writers see democracy as being based on universal principles and therefore being universally applicable. Wright (1997) speaks about how the United States' Office on Democracy came up with five universal principles which could be used to assess the success of democracies throughout the world. The former director of the Office of Democracy Morton H. Halperin, declared that these principles 'are not a Western invention or culturally bound. . . . They're understood as well by Mongolians and Albanians and Cambodians' (Wright 1997). Peterson (1994:130-131) also dismisses the idea that democracy is a Western import as a myth, arguing that democracy is as African as it is Western.

When defining democracy, many Western writers suggest that democracy can be measured. Empirical indicators of democracy are drawn up, and these are used to measure how democratic some states are in comparison with others. Gasionorowski and Power (1998:745) identify several indicators of democracy, operationalise them and then set about using these indicators to measure how consolidated various democracies are. Bratton (1998:54-59) also uses empirical measures to evaluate the quality of second elections in Africa. He draws up tables and calculates percentages in order to assess how consolidated these democracies are. In another article in which he assesses African states' transitions to democracy, he also makes use of empirical criteria to assess democratisation, drawing up tables and graphs to illustrate democratisation in Africa (Bratton 1997:67-93). Samuel Huntington's (1991:266-267) 'two turnover test' of

democratic consolidation is another example of the use of empirical methods to measure African democratic consolidation. The two turnover test says that a country has consolidated its democracy once there have been two post-transition elections in which the incumbents were voted out and allowed their opponents to take office (Bratton 1997:92-93). Along similar lines, Clapham (1993:429) speaks about the 'acid test' for democratic government as being the peaceful replacement of one regime by another through elections. Other attempts to measure African democratisation include Crawford Young (1996:53-68) who draws up a 'balance sheet' on democratisation in Africa and Baker (1999:273-286) who uses a 'democratic audit' to measure African democracy. While the latter two examples do not use strictly empirical indicators in order to assess democracy, these articles still indicate a belief that democracy can indeed be measured.

It can be concluded that when Western writers promote democracy in Africa, they are promoting multiparty elections and liberalism. In addition, Western writers believe that democracy is universally applicable (although they disagree about whether it has universal origins) and that the level of democracy in Africa can be measured so that the democratisation process in Africa can be assessed.

3.2.1.3 Western guidelines on democratisation

As shown above, when the West prescribes democracy for Africa, it is promoting a particular form of democracy, rather then a vague principle that is expected to have diverse manifestations. This promotion of liberal multiparty democracy is tied to various guidelines given by the West regarding how Africa can democratise. Certain steps are seen as vital and the whole process of democratisation is presented as being a linear process with various stages, with Africa having to try to progress rather than regress along these stages.

Many Western writers discuss the idea of there being several preconditions that ought to precede democratisation. According to such theories, Africa does not present very fertile ground for democratisation as it lacks many of these preconditions. Africa is described as being a 'hostile environment' (Young, C. 1996:60) and 'infertile terrain' for democracy (Joseph, R. 1997:363) because of the absence of these preconditions. Lancaster (1993:47) discusses Western democratic scholars' belief in these preconditions, listing some of the preconditions as being relatively high levels of income and literacy, the

existence of a middle class, and little ethnic diversity. Mair (1996:179) discusses the difficulties experienced by African countries in democratisation, blaming these on structural deficits and arguing that the absence of 'functionally orientated, horizontal social differentiation' hampers the emergence of democracy in Africa. Richard Joseph (1997:363) begins his article on democratisation in Africa by saying 'Democratization was not supposed to happen in Africa'. He explains this statement by saying that Africa had little of what were understood to be the preconditions for democratisation and lists some of these preconditions as being economic development, cultural unity, capitalism, western-style Christianity, and civic culture. In his discussion on the Third Wave of democratisation, Huntington (1997:4) says democracy grew out of social pluralism, the class system, civil society, belief in the rule of law, the separation of spiritual and temporal authority, and individualism, implying that these characteristics need to be manifest in a society before the society can democratise.

Some Western writers disagree with the idea of there being preconditions to democracy. For example, Lancaster (1993) discusses the theory that preconditions such as those mentioned above might be the effects rather than the causes of democracy. Such writers emphasise the importance of developing these characteristics in order to consolidate the democracy which has begun to take root. For example, Van de Walle (1995:136-139) describes some of the necessary steps that must be followed if Africa is to consolidate its democracy as being the improvement of administrative capacity, the promotion of the rule of law, and the establishment of economic stability. Thus whether these characteristics are seen to precede or follow democracy, there is consensus that conditions such as economic development, class divisions with a growing middle class, individualism, the rule of the law, capitalism and the separation of temporal and spiritual authority are in some way associated with democracy.

Western discourses suggest that there is a particular path that must be followed if democracy it to be attained. Along this path are a number of other milestones, each of which must be achieved if democracy is to be consolidated in Africa. What is notable, is that these milestones are all characteristic of Western societies, resulting in the implication that African states must become more like Western states if they are to achieve what is seen by the West as genuine democracy. Lewis (1992:39-40) says that there may be variations in transitions to democracy, but says:

> it is useful to emphasize, however, that the structural continuities evident from the course of European development have subsequently been reflected in the experience of democratizing countries in other areas.

He notes that all recent political transformations have included similar elements as did earlier transitions, implying that there is some kind of universal path towards democracy.

Several Western writers acknowledge that democratisation in Africa may not follow a linear path, but interestingly, offer only two options to Africa: moving forward or moving backward - moving sideways into some kind of alternative political set-up is not given as an option. For example, Diamond (1999:64) says that if newly established democracies 'do not move forward' in the direction of liberal Western-style democracy, 'they are likely to move backward' until they are no longer democratic. Bratton (1997:68) speaks about how David Peterson has pointed out that democratisation will not be a linear process, but that it will 'unfold with occasional steps back for every step forward' - thus the direction is once again along only one path, with the only choice presented being the choice to progress or regress. The sketching of this idea of a path along which Africa can either move forward or backward, creates the image of a long line of democratic progress along which all the world is moving with Western countries leading the way and trying to encourage crippled African states to reach the excellent heights they have already reached. This image is only enhanced by the arrogance of writers such as Diamond (in Shaw & MacLean 1996:247) who declares:

> As in 1919 and 1945, democracy enjoys renewed momentum and possibilities in the world, but it also faces great uncertainties ... Now as in 1945, only one nation stands capable of leading and organizing the world towards these ends: the United States.

This kind of discourse suggests that all Africa needs to do is humbly follow the West's 'bright star', the United States, in order to achieve the virtually perfect democratic government that has already been achieved elsewhere.

3.2.2 Africa must Develop

Along with prescribing democracy as a cure for Africa's ills, dominant Western discourses also describes development as vital if Africa is to be healed from its debilitating disease.

Like democracy, development has become a term that is almost completely free of negative connotations, and is associated with everything good and desirable.

3.2.2.1 Development as the cure for Africa's ills

The meaning of the word development implies something good - change in a positive direction. While some Western writers take time to defend democracy as an appropriate solution to Africa's problems of governance, development is seen as so undeniably positive that such a defence is usually deemed unnecessary. An overview of some definitions of development demonstrates the wealth of positive connotations attached to development. Development can be defined as 'a multidimensional process that normally connotes change from a less to a more desirable state' (McLean 1996:137) or as '[p]rocesses leading to a higher quality of life for a given population' (Fry & Martin 1991:98). Thomas (1992:6) says that development is 'a positive word that is almost synonymous with "progress"' and that it implies 'the achievement of whatever is regarded as a general good for society at large'. Todaro (1997:16) echoes this idea saying that development:

> must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system ... moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better.

With understandings such as these, it is no wonder that development is regarded as a cure to Africa's illness. Development appears to be positive change, movement in the right direction, improvement, progress. Thus almost every Western discourse on Africa, mentions development as being desirable for Africa. Obstacles to development are identified, directions in development are suggested, and strategies for speeding up development are given. The impression created is that development is such a recommendable thing that every other aspect of the African situation should be examined in terms of how it will impact on development.

3.2.2.2 Development according to the West

When Western writers indicate that development is desirable for Africa, and indeed for any region in the world, what exactly do they mean? What is meant by development, other

than positive change or improvement or progress? What makes the changes associated with development good and why is development seen as movement in the right direction? To answer these questions it is necessary to closely examine Western definitions of development. The ideas of two prominent Western development scholars, Todaro (1997) and Thirlwall (1999), are scrutinised in order to assess what 'development' is generally understood to mean in the West.

Todaro (1997:13-18) attempts to provide a comprehensive definition of the meaning(s) of development. He starts by speaking about the traditional economic meaning of development which saw development to be fundamentally about the capacity of the national economy to produce and sustain growth in terms of its gross national product or GNP. This understanding of development dominated during the 1950s and 1960s but has since been challenged because it was realised that an increase in GNP did not always translate into any change in the day to day life of most of the people in what has been called the 'developing world'. More and more writers argued that attention had to be given to poverty, unemployment and other social indicators when assessing the development of a particular country or region. Thirlwall (1999:12) provides a similar assessment of early approaches to development concluding that '[a] concept of development is required that embraces the major economic and social objectives and values that societies strive for'. Both Thirlwall (1999:12-13) and Todaro (1997:16-18) then refer to Goulet's identification of three core values which constitute development: life-sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. The conceptualisation of development according to these three values aims to move the focus away from purely economic indicators, in order to include other factors too when assessing what is meant by development.

These three values are central to what is understood as development today. The first, life-sustenance, is related to the concept of basic needs (Thirlwall 1999:12). Certain needs are identified as being 'basic' and it is then understood that development aims to provide all people with these basic needs. Included among these basic needs are the need for food, shelter, health, clothing, and education (Todaro 1997:16; Thirlwall 1999:12). Of course, what is seen as basic health, basic education, basic shelter and so on, is decided by the West, not by the communities concerned. Furthermore, access to food, shelter, health and the other basic needs is basically dependent upon wealth. The wealthy can easily satisfy their basic needs, while the poor are unable to do so. This first core value of development can thus be reduced to individual material well-being.

The second value identified by Goulet is self-esteem (Thirlwall 1999:12). Development is said to be about improving people's feelings of self-worth and respect. What should be noted is the explanation of how self-esteem is achieved. The argument given is that in contemporary society, feelings of self-worth are related to material well-being and prosperity. Todaro (1997:17) says that 'national prosperity has become an almost universal measure of worth' and that 'worthiness and esteem are nowadays increasingly conferred only on countries that possess economic wealth and technological power'. Thus self-esteem as a value for development does not mean that development should aim to improve people's self-esteem, but rather suggests that development should improve people's material well-being because this is ultimately what will improve their self-esteem. Self-esteem as a value for development is therefore really material well-being as a value for development.

The third core value of development is freedom. Freedom is seen as being freedom from 'the three evils of "want, ignorance and squalor"' (Thirlwall 1999:13). This points back to the first value - meeting basic needs - as it appears that freedom is basically freedom from the problems stemming from the absence of these basic needs. The evils of 'want' and 'squalor' occur in the absence of the basic needs of food, clothing, housing and so on, the evil of 'ignorance' occurs in the absence of the basic need of education. The third core value and the first core value are basically two sides of the same coin, and both can be said to be solved by increased material wealth. In addition to defining freedom as being free from the evils of want, ignorance and squalor, Todaro (1997:17) describes freedom as being about having choices and says that wealth increases the range of choice. Wealth allows people more control over their environment and gives them the freedom to choose increased leisure or to have more possessions, or to reject leisure and possessions in favour of something else. Todaro (1997:17-18) warns that wealth does not automatically mean a broadening of choices, pointing to countries like Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Singapore which experienced great economic growth during the 1970s, but limited people's freedom of choice in other ways. The argument is not, therefore, that wealth always leads to increased freedom, but that increased freedom is only possible with increased wealth. Once again, it then becomes possible to reduce the core value of freedom to material well-being as it is material well-being that frees a person from the evils associated with the absence of basic needs, and it is material well-being which increases the choices people can make in their lives.

The above examination of the three core values of development as identified by Goulet and discussed in Todaro (1997) and Thirlwall (1999), indicates that while the identification of these core values attempts to move the concept of development away from a focus on economic well-being as measured by economic indicators such as GNP *per capita*, these core values can be reduced to economic well-being and thus do not completely transcend the 'development is economic growth' thesis. The core values approach does however alter the 'development is economic growth' thesis to some extent because it suggests that economic growth can only be considered to be development if the wealth generated by this growth is used to meet basic needs, increase self-esteem and broaden choices. Therefore, it presents the argument that economic growth is essential to development, but that economic growth alone does not constitute development.

Another attempt to move the emphasis of development away from economic growth, has been the introduction of the concept 'human development'. The concept 'human development' has been most often promoted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and it could be said that this prevents it from being considered as part of a discussion on *Western* discourses, as the UNDP is broader than just a Western organisation. However, the concept 'human development' and ideas related to it have influenced Western discourses on development in Africa and this means that a brief examination of human development is relevant to this discussion.

Proponents of human development argue that people should be at the centre of development and that development should empower individuals and groups (UNDP 1993:1). Human development is defined in the UNDP's Human Development Report as being 'a process of enlarging people's choices' and three essential 'capabilities for human development' are identified: the ability to lead a long, healthy life; the ability to be knowledgeable; and access to the resources needed to ensure a decent standard of living - health, knowledge and wealth (UNDP 1998:14). These three capabilities are operationalised in order to allow a Human Development Index (HDI) to be drawn up. The HDI measures the three capabilities by looking at longevity, educational achievement, and adjusted income *per capita*. This Index allows countries to be ranked according to their levels of human development. The Index has been criticised for only appearing to include several variables in measuring human development, because an examination of the HDI reveals that there is significant correlation between the three variables used (Sagar &

Najam 1999:744). This means that the countries where people are healthiest and have the most education are with only a few exceptions also the countries where people are the wealthiest. This observation calls into question the ability of the concept of human development to completely transcend measures of development which focus only on economic growth.

There have also been other changes in Western discourses of development. Concepts such as alternative development, reflexive development, and sustainable development have also attempted to move the focus of development from economic growth. The success of these attempts is debatable, but their existence does indicate a belief that development must be more than economic growth.

Whichever definition of development is used in Western discourses, African countries inevitably end up labelled as 'less-developed' or 'under-developed'. Whether using empirical indicators such as economic growth, life expectancy, levels of education, and spending power; or whether using qualitative assessments of self-esteem, freedom or other values, all Western discourses indicate that the African continent is the continent that is most in need of development.

3.2.2.3 Western guidelines on development

Western discourses do not only identify Africa as the least developed region in the world, but also provide a number of suggestions with regard to how Africa should go about developing. Development is seen as imperative for the African continent and the West provides Africa with a number of guidelines on how development should be stimulated.

Western discourses take development to mean a process of change that moves along a certain path in a particular direction. The West is seen as having progressed further along this path and Africa is encouraged to 'catch up' with the West as it moves along the same path of development. Consider Collier (1991:112) who describes the process of development as a 'natural social process'. African states will thus gradually become more developed as development is natural. Comments by Jeffries (1993:30) also assume development to be a natural process, and indicate that development in Africa will occur in a similar manner to the way that development occurred in other states. Jeffries (1993:30) says:

> There seems little reason to doubt that economic and political development in African states, if they are to take place, will have to go through something like the same historical stages [as those gone through by other states].

Gleave (1992:2-19) also describes development as being a process which takes a state through various stages. He discusses Carol's stages of technology model, saying that this model draws attention to important features of the development process. This model describes five stages of development and Gleave identifies the position of African countries along these five stages of development. Of course, African countries are shown to be at an earlier stage in the development process than Western countries, and 'progress' is assumed to be in the direction of the stages already attained by the West. Other writers also assume that development is change in the direction of the West allowing them to lament that Africa is not 'making even slow progress in the right direction' (Wiseman 1990:13) and to speak about Africa's 'regression' and 'slide into underdevelopment' (Hawthorne 1992:35). Africa is described as having 'lagged behind' other regions (Griffiths 1999:11) and hopes are expressed that macroeconomic policies will be introduced in order to help Africa 'catch up' (World Bank 1994:35). Even discourses which allow for the possibility that African development could differ considerably from Western development, do not discard the idea of development as a process passing through stages. The UNDP's Human Development Report of 1998 suggests that Africa can repeat the development process which other regions have already completed or it can 'leapfrog' to growth patterns being practised by more 'advanced' regions today (UNDP 1998:7). Development is still shown to be a process whereby countries or regions move along a particular path in a particular direction - even if a little 'leapfrogging' is allowed! Africa is thus encouraged to move along the same path of development towards the same goal, following eagerly in the footsteps of the more advanced West.

This idea is reinforced by discourses proclaiming the West to be a model for African development and by discourses that view Africa as a child and the West as the mature adult who must lead the immature child to adulthood. Piel (1993:26) says that 'developing' countries 'all aspire to the Western model' and that they 'progressively embrace "Western ideas"'. Alderman (in Simon 1995:321) implies that Africa is immature and must learn from the mature West when he speaks about Ghana as being 'Adjustment's Star Pupil'.

Despite the acknowledgement that development is more than economic growth, Western guidelines on development still have a strongly economic focus. African countries are encouraged to make particular changes to their macroeconomic policies in order to develop. Even though Western writers have given attention to the importance of other factors such as basic needs, education and health in defining development, guidelines on how to develop tend to only address the economic changes that must be made. Ravenhill (1998:400) says that there is 'a measure of agreement on a solution for Africa's malaise'. This solution is said to be 'Adjustment with Growth' which involves various changes in economic policies. In order to develop, Western discourses advice Africa to restore 'sustainable fiscal equilibrium' (Van de Walle 1995:134), to introduce 'rigorous economic management' (Young, C. 1996:65), to achieve a 'sound macroeconomic policy stance' (World Bank 1994:1), and to establish a 'new international economic order' (Tordoff 1997:311). Other writers emphasise the importance of a 'policy of sound money, self-reliance and transparent accounting' (Pythian 1998) and the pursuit of 'liberalisation and restrictive monetary and fiscal policy' (Dale 1999:45).

Western discourses clearly show economic reforms to be the 'medicine' that can cure Africa of its ills and stimulate its development. Minney (1996) says that while Africa's economic health 'is usually grim ... the continent's new and emerging stock markets could help revive the patient'; C. Young (1996:65) describes 'macroeconomic management' as the key to restoring Africa's 'economic health' and Michaels (1993:98) describes structural adjustment as 'necessary medicine' for Africa.

It seems that when the West speaks about development as the cure for Africa's ills, it is referring exclusively to changes in the *economic* policies of African countries. Western writers may acknowledge that development is more than economic growth, but their advice to Africa on how to develop is advice on how Africa should stimulate economic growth and generate wealth, not on how Africa should improve the quality of life of its citizens, provide basic education for all, build up people's self-esteem or find ways to lengthen the lives of its people. Either it is assumed that economic growth will be accompanied by an improvement in all of the above factors, or mention of the other aspects of development are only rhetoric and development as promoted by the West really is only about economic growth.

3.2.3 An Analysis of Western Discourses on Democratisation and Development

A probing analysis of Western discourses on development and democratisation reveals the way that these discourses perpetuate current power relations. The empiricism, universalism and materialism implicit in these discourses and the way they serve to sustain Western dominance, is discussed below. Several writers, both from the West and from other parts of the world, have written excellent analyses of the way in which Western discourses ensure the continued dominance of the West and act to oppress other parts of the world, including Africa. Most of these writers address the dominance of Western discourses with specificially in respect of development, but their arguments have wider relevance and are used here to support the argument that Western discourses on development and democracy should be challenged. Examples of such writers are Said (1978), Nederveen Pieterse (1991), Parajuli (1991), Esteva (1992), Watts (1993), Brohman (1995), Crush (1995), Escobar (1995), Leroke (1996), and Thompson and Tapscott (2000). Their analyses are comprehensive and imply support for the argument advanced below: that a challenge of Western discourses on Africa is urgently needed. While it is not possible to include the insights given by these writers in the discussion below, the conclusion reached at the end of the Chapter is based upon the findings of these writers as well as the comments below.

3.2.3.1 Empiricism: measuring democracy and development

Western discourses on democracy and development in Africa aim to measure levels of democracy and development. This is often done through the construction of empirical indicators of democracy or development and the operationalisation of factors deemed to be central to democracy or development.

Democracy and development are both based upon principles. Democracy is based on the principle that the people should govern and development on the principle of improvement. Both of these principles are not easily quantified. However, Western discourses attempt to construct tests of democracy and indices of development. As discussed earlier, Western discourses attempt to measure democracy by empirically examining electoral politics in Africa, and development through the indicators of economic growth and indices

such as the Human Development Index (HDI) . The problems with the construction of empirical measures of democracy and development will now be addressed.

The use of empirical indicators creates the illusion of neutrality. The use of these indicators allows for tests of democratisation and development to be done, allowing Western writers to label some countries as democratic, others not; some as developed and others as developing. This labelling process appears to be devoid of bias because the tests appear scientific and scientific tests are presented by the West as being incontestable. However, the choice of indicators and the method of operationalisation are both open to Western bias. Thus, the empiricism evident in many Western discourses disguises bias rather than eliminating it.

A few examples are needed to illustrate the way in which bias exists in empirical measures. In terms of democracy, the empirical analysis of elections allows the procedural understanding of democracy to dominate. Richard Joseph (1997:364-365) discusses this when he speaks about 'Schumpeter's triumph'. He quotes J. Peter Euben as having said that the 'contemporary consensus view' of democracy is that 'democracy is largely a matter of choosing among élites in periodic elections'. Other aspects of democracy are overshadowed by elections and one of the reasons for the dominance of elections in understandings of democracy is surely the ease with which elections can be empirically analysed.

In terms of development, the problem of empirical analysis is even more evident. A brief discussion of the HDI demonstrates the dangers of empiricism. The HDI reduces human development to three essential 'capabilities' - health, wealth and knowledge. The reduction of human development to these three capabilities is questionable. Two of the three are to do with physical or material well-being and no capability with regard to spiritual or emotional health is included. Surely human development is not just about how long you live, how much you spend and how much formal education you gain along the way? What about how happy you are, whether or not you find spiritual fulfilment, whether or not you are psychologically healthy, how compassionate and altruistic you are and whether or not you develop meaningful relationships with other people and God? The way in which the capabilities used by the HDI are operationalised is even more objectionable. Health becomes longevity, wealth becomes purchasing power and knowledge is operationalised as literacy and enrolment in formal academic institutions. The

operationalisation of knowledge is particularly unsatisfactory as it suggests that prior to the arrival of Westerners in Africa, Africans had no knowledge as most Africans were illiterate and had no formal educational qualifications. But an illiterate African person without any formal education has knowledge - knowledge of how to live in his or her environment, knowledge of cultural norms and values, knowledge of the supernatural, knowledge of cultural and personal history, and the list continues. To operationalise knowledge as being formal Western-style education is to insult all indigenous African knowledge.

To be fair, the UNDP does recognise the incomprehensiveness of the HDI (UNDP 1998:14), but this recognition does not excuse the problems associated with the selection and operationalisation of particular capabilities. The capabilities chosen allow the West to appear far more developed than Africa, but the choice of other capabilities, such as spiritual well-being or altruism, or a different operationalisation of the capabilities, could produce very different results. Thus what appears to be a neutral index of human development can be shown to have several biases.

In conclusion, Western empiricism promotes the construction of measures of two concepts, democracy and development, which are ultimately immeasurable. These empirical measures give the illusion of neutrality and accuracy, but can be shown to have several biases and inaccuracies.

3.2.3.2 Universalism: democratisation and development as Westernisation

Western discourses present democracy and development as universal ideals that are as desirable and applicable in Africa as in the West. They present a particular form of democracy, and a particular understanding of development as being universal.

As discussed earlier, Western discourses on democracy promote multiparty liberal representative democracy. An understanding of democracy that sees it as being associated with liberalism, indirect rule through representation, elections and multiparty competition has gained prominence in the West. This understanding of democracy is then presented by Western writers as the only acceptable model of democracy. This is an example of the universalism of the particular that is condemned by postmodernist critical theorists.

This universalism of the particular is not only oppressive in that it stifles the development of alternative ideas, but is also oppressive in that it prevents change that would benefit African people. Richard Joseph (1997:365) quotes Joel Barkan as having said that 'western programmes to support democratization are welcomed by all save those who would dislodge the process'. Viewpoints such as this one lead to the oppression of those Africans who support alternative forms of democracy as well as those who support forms of government other than democracy. In addition, Western-style liberal democracy has been shown, both by those who favour it and those who oppose it, to protect the powerful and prevent radical change. Przerowski (in Joseph, R. 1997:374) is said to have seen the 'genius of liberal democracy' as being its ability to create the appearance of uncertainty, while protecting vested interests and promoting the deferment of substantive demands.

The promotion of Western-style democracy thus marginalises those Africans who reject this Western model, maintains current power relations, and carries with it the suggestion of a superior Western model which should be aspired to by Africa. Van Binsbergen (1995:5) states this argument succinctly:

> [G]iven the distribution of economic and military power in the modern world ... could members of a relatively powerful nation-state resist the temptation of claiming that their culture-specific institutions have in fact supra-local, global relevance and truth? ... If [democratisation in Africa] amounts to furthering the *North Atlantic* model of formal democracy (disguised as universal), does it not at the same time imply the superiority of the north, and reinforce the relations of subordination which have existed between north and south since the 19th century?

A similar argument can be presented with regard to development. Development too is seen as a universal process headed towards the same universally desirable goals. Development is presented by Western discourses as change in the direction of becoming more like the West and this change is seen as undeniably good. Thompson and Tapscott (2000:92) say that the development establishment 'has at its core the mantra "be like us or sink"'. What is presented as help from the West is not very different from coercion. This practice cannot be separated from power. This is pointed out by Brohman (1995:128) who explicitly links Western discourses and power when he says:

> As Western hegemony has expanded, so has the power of the universal concepts of the West's main intellectual frameworks - invariably at the expense of alternative frameworks that do not accord with Western interests.

Western discourses on development present only one way forward for Africa and present the West as the model to which Africa should aspire. This assumption of leadership in a project of upliftment, both reflects and perpetuates current power relations between the West and Africa.

The arguments above lead into an argument about Westernisation: if Western discourses on democracy and development encourage Africa to become more and more like the West, then it can be argued that democratisation and development basically amount to Westernisation. Harrison (1993:48) observes that every capital city in the world is beginning to look more or less like every other, but he notes that 'the style is exclusively western. And not just in consumer fashions: the mimicry extends to architecture, industrial technology, approaches to health care, education and housing'. This observation acknowledges that African cities which are labelled 'developed' are those that have become Westernised - that have Western-style buildings, Western-style clothing, Western day-to-day practices and attitudes. Consider the assumptions that motivate Coll (2000) to note in his description of Freetown:

> [I]nevitably, there is a functioning cyber-cafe, and the streets pulse with battery-powered hip-hop music and generator-operated satellite news and the buying power of Western Union money transfers sent by the tens of thousands who have made it to Europe and America. A progressive generation of young and ambitious Africans, you might say admiringly ....

He goes on to lament that not all young Africans are like this. The 'good' Africans are those who imitate the Western way of life.

Democracy in Africa is only viewed as genuine when it is similar to democracy in the West, development in Africa is seen as positive because it will make Africa more like the West. The conclusion is that the solution to Africa's ills is to Westernise and that Africa will only be described by Western writers as democratic and developed when life in Africa is much the same as life in the West. In summary, Western discourses on both democracy and development present a picture of an inferior Africa, a superior West and a

universal path along which both are moving, with the West leading the way. Western discourses assume that Western-style life is universally preferable and use their position of relative dominance to try to convince Africans of the superiority of the Western way of life. These discourses smother alternatives, discourage diversity and entrench Western hegemony.

3.2.3.3 One value system for all

Related to Western assumptions of universalism, is the promotion of the Western value system as appropriate and preferable for all. This is especially evident in Western discourses on development. These discourses have at their roots particular Western values and the appropriateness of these values for Africa is assumed. Leroke (1996:226) believes that the idea of development is based upon the values of the Enlightenment which he lists as being progress, emancipation, equality, improvement of living conditions, justice and liberty. These ideals are then assumed by Western development theorists to be universal.

When examining Western discourses on development and the values implicit in these discourse, one Western value is very evident - that of economism. Economism can be described as being a syndrome characterised by a focus on material satisfaction through goods and services, that sees the individual as the unit to be satisfied, and that uses cost-benefit analysis as a guide to individual choices (Galtung 1996:403). Western discourses on development assume that increased material wealth is beneficial and desirable, and that individual material well-being indicates development. Earlier, the centrality of the concept of economic growth in Western definitions of development was discussed. This preoccupation with economic growth originates in the Western value of economism upon which Western discourses on development are founded.

The assumption of economism is not always immediately evident in Western discourses, but a critical assessment of any Western discourse on development generally reveals economism lurking beneath. Consider Dynes (2000) who in discussing development in Africa says:

> Most African leaders recoil at the idea of introducing private property rights. They fear that freehold tenure would destroy Africa's ancient "communal cultural system", which lies at the root of their own power base. They are right. It would.
>
> But it would also liberate Africans from the grinding poverty to which they have been condemned in their millions.

This statement assumes that an end to poverty (in other words increased material wealth) is more important and valuable than a communal solidarty. Wealth is assumed to be more important to Africans than tradition or culture. Private property ownership is compatible with the individualism and materialism at the root of economism, but not with the traditional values of many African communities. Thus development discourses such as this one are premised upon a Western value system and are opposed to African value systems.

Writers such as Dynes (2000) assume that Western values are superior and implicitly promote Western values in discussing development. Other writers, like Granato, Inglehart and Leblang (1998:195-208) openly advocate the destruction of certain African values and their replacement with Western values, defending this process by arguing that it is necessary for development. Granato, Inglehart and Leblang (1998:195-208) advance the hypothesis that African cultural values need to be eroded if Africa is to develop. In their analysis of culture and economic growth, African countries are shown to value obedience and religious faith more than values such thrift and determination - two values associated with economism (Granato et al. 1998:199). This is shown to inhibit economic growth, which is seen as vital for development. The writers conclude that while a society's entire culture need not be obliterated in order to promote development, certain aspects of particular society's culture (such as a value system emphasising obedience and religious faith) must change if development is to take place (Granato et al. 1998:205).

Brohman (1995:125) acknowledges the Western values upon which Western development discourses are premised and discusses how this assumption of Western values is oppressive to Africa. He says:

> In a highly normative and ethnocentric manner, Western values were universalised and linked with progress, while the values of traditional Third World societies were denigrated and tied to stagnation and underdevelopment.

An examination of the value of economism and how Western understandings of development are based on values such as economism, demonstrates the way in which Western discourses on development subtly promote the destruction of African values and their replacement with Western values such as economism. This entails the hegemonisation of Western values and should be challenged because it is a continuation of Western domination of Africa, because it obstructs the appearance and development of alternative value systems, and because it promotes the homogenisation of the world and the end of diversity.

3.3 CONCLUSION: THE NECESSITY OF AN AFRICAN CHALLENGE TO DOMINANT WESTERN DISCOURSES

It was previously argued that the dominance of Western discourses is contrary to the interests of Africa and should thus be challenged by the African Renaissance. An analysis of a few dominant Western discourses on Africa strengthens this argument. Western discourses have been shown to reflect and perpetuate current power relations between the West and Africa. Discourses on the African situation suggest that Africa, unlike the West, is suffering from ill-health, and that this situation can only be amended with the help and advice of the West. This clearly reflects the West's position of dominance in global politics and perpetuates this position of dominance by suggesting that Africa can only become well through listening to and mimicking the West.

Western discourses on democracy posit definitions of democracy that favour Western conceptualisations of democracy and suggest that Africa can only become democratic through following the path along which the West has already advanced. Western discourses on democracy present Western-style democracy as universally applicable and imply the superiority of the West and the desirability of Westernisation for Africa.

Western discourses on development also paint a picture of a superior West leading the way to an improved existence, with Africa struggling on behind. Western discourses on development imply that there is only one type of change that can be called progress and that for Africa progress is basically Westernisation. Discourses on development subtly promote Western values at the expense of other values and in this way obstruct the flourishing of alternative value systems and alternative world views.

The aforesaid analysis of selected dominant Western discourses provides only a very brief overview. Western discourses on other aspects of African politics, such as statehood, ethnicity, civil society, and Africa's position in a globalising world should also be examined in order to reveal the Western assumptions implicit in these discourses and to indicate whether or not these discourses also perpetuate current power relations between the West and Africa. It is acknowledged that only a very brief critique of Western discourses on democracy and development is provided here and that there are several other aspects of these discourses which are also interesting and pertinent. However, the overview provides enough support for the argument that the African Renaissance should both assess and challenge Western discourses if it is ever to achieve its goals. Clearly, Western discourses on Africa are not neutral, objective assessments of the African situation. Alternatives are vital if the goals of the African Renaissance are to be achieved and if Africa is to be emancipated from its position of relative powerlessness. Western discourses cannot be allowed to remain hegemonic: the destruction of existing alternative discourses and the obstruction of the elaboration of new alternatives must be ended.

CHAPTER 4: AN EXAMINATION OF THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

4.1 CONCEPTUALISING THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

On the adoption of the new South African Constitution, then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki (1996) declared:

> This thing that we have done today, in this small corner of a great continent that has contributed so decisively to the evolution of humanity says that Africa reaffirms that she is continuing her rise from the ashes.
>
> Whatever the setbacks of the moment, nothing can stop us now!
> Whatever the difficulties, Africa shall be at peace!
> However improbable it may sound to the sceptics, Africa will prosper!

From the mid-1990s onward, the idea of Africa rising up and overcoming any obstacles in its way became a common theme in the speeches and writings of many African leaders and academics. The term 'African Renaissance' began emerging in a variety of different contexts and from a variety of sources. But what is this African Renaissance? What is it generally taken to mean and what does it entail?

As has been shown, there are many Western discourses on Africa. These discourses present a picture of Africa that is informed by Western assumptions and that reinforces the current power relations between the West and Africa. It has been shown that some kind of challenge to these Western discourses is necessary, and it has been suggested that any movement which calls itself an 'African Renaissance' ought to provide such a challenge. Having made the above clear, it is now necessary to closely examine the concept of an African Renaissance in order to try to bring some kind of conceptual clarity to this concept so that it will be possible to assess the challenge provided by the African Renaissance to dominant Western political discourses. No attempt is made to provide a exact or stipulative definition of the concept of an African Renaissance as there is no means of deciding which is the 'right' definition among the various competing conceptualisations of the African Renaissance. However, an indication is given of the ideas and perspectives that are generally associated with the African Renaissance.

4.1.1 The Emergence of the Idea

The idea of the revival or renewal of Africa is certainly not new, but has been articulated over and over again ever since the colonial era. The historical foundations of this concept, as will be discussed, show that the current articulation of an African Renaissance borrows extensively from several earlier calls for African revival. What is clear, though, is that the idea of African renewal has fairly recently become a point of discussion among African leaders, academics, and even to some extent, among ordinary African men and women. The contemporary call for African renewal and revival has most often been articulated as a call for an 'African Renaissance'.

The current popularity of the concept 'African Renaissance' is frequently attributed to South Africa's transition and to the ideas and speeches of South African President Thabo Mbeki, but Cornwell (1998:9) notes that it was Nelson Mandela who first invoked the vision of an African Renaissance in June 1994 at an OAU summit. In this speech Mandela (1994) declared:

> One epoch with its historic tasks has come to an end. Surely, another must commence with its own challenges. Africa cries out for a new birth, Carthage awaits the restoration of its glory ... We know it is a matter of fact that we have it in ourselves as Africans to change all this. We must, in action, assert our will to do so. We must, in action, say that there is no obstacle big enough to stop us from bringing about a new African renaissance.

The African Renaissance vision was later popularised by Thabo Mbeki whose speech on the adoption of the South African Constitution in May 1996, is considered to be one of the most moving calls for an African Renaissance. Since mid-1996, the vision of an African Renaissance has featured prominently in the speeches of Thabo Mbeki and other members of the African National Congress (ANC). The term has also been used by other African leaders and by many African academics. The visit of then US President Bill Clinton to Africa in 1998 contributed to the popularisation of the concept globally as Clinton repeatedly referred to the African Renaissance and pledged his support for it (Bankie 1998:15).

While supporters of an African Renaissance do not claim that the vision of a revival of Africa is new, they do claim that current circumstances in Africa are conducive to the realisation of this revival that has for so long been a recurring dream with little hope of being actualised. Mbeki (1999a) argues that conditions now exist for the renaissance of Africa to begin. He describes these conditions as being:

- the finalisation of decolonisation with South Africa's liberation;
- the 'recognition of the bankruptcy of neo-colonialism by the masses of the people throughout the continent'
- the end of the Cold War; and
- globalisation.

The rise of a new leadership in Africa has been identified as another condition conducive to the realisation of an African Renaissance at this time in history (United Nations University 2001). These leaders are committed to democracy and to the integration of Africa with the rest of the world. Then Southern African Development Community (SADC) executive secretary, Kaire Mbuende (in PANA 1998), concurs that conditions for the realisation of a renaissance are favourable at the moment and makes mention of globalisation and the nurturing of democratic culture in Africa as being related to the creation of favourable conditions for an African Renaissance.

Maloka (1999) also believes that current circumstances are more conducive to the renaissance of Africa than the circumstances at the time of earlier calls for renewal. According to him, some of these improved conditions are political unity, regional economic integration and the improved capacity to handle intra- and inter-state conflicts.

Changes in Africa and the rest of the world have thus allowed for the hope that the time has finally come for Africa to shed its image of being a basket case and rise up to take its rightful position in the world. South Africa's transition is one of the changes which can be considered conducive to the realisation of an African Renaissance, which could explain why South African leaders, most notably Thabo Mbeki, have been at the forefront of the proclamation of an African Renaissance.

4.1.2 The Meaning of 'Renaissance'

The term 'Renaissance' is not a new one, but has usually been used to refer to a series of occurrences in Europe rather than in Africa. The word comes from the French and its literal meaning is 'rebirth'. When used to describe an era in Europe, Renaissance means the 'revival of art and literature (influenced by classical forms) in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries' (Hawkins 1988:684). It refers to the period of renewal and rebirth that followed the era that has been called the 'Dark Ages' in Europe. It involved the revival of certain elements of the Greco-Roman civilisation (Magubane 1999:13). While the European Renaissance is more often associated with cultural and artistic change and revival, it also involved social, political and economic transformation. Social transformation occurred through scientific advances, voyages of exploration around the world, changes in the organisation of life, new inventions, and increased freedom of thought (Mulemfo 2000:46; Napier 2000:77-78). Economic transformation occurred through the increase in trade and through the search for new markets that ultimately led to the colonisation of many regions of the world (Mulemfo 2000:46). Political transformation was stimulated through investigation into the nature of political authority (Napier 2000:78).

The European Renaissance is considered to be an example of the transformation of a society, based on the rediscovery of past achievements. It is in this sense that the term 'Renaissance' is seen as being an appropriate name for a vision of the transformation of Africa. Certain similarities between Europe at the beginning of the Renaissance and contemporary Africa are drawn. Like Africa today, Europe in the fourteenth century was emerging from an era of social and intellectual decay and neglect and was experiencing great upheaval and uncertainty. The European Renaissance involved a rediscovery of past achievements and the African Renaissance looks to do the same. It is hoped that Africa, like Europe a few centuries ago, will be able to build upon its historical legacy to bring about a transformation of Africa.

The term 'Renaissance' has not only been used to describe Europe during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, although this has been its most common usage. Reference has been made to an Asian Renaissance which is defined as the growth, development and flowering of Asian societies and 'the transformation of [Asian] cultures and societies from [Asia's] capitulation to Atlantic Powers to the position of self-confidence and its reflowering at the dawn of a new millennium' (Bankie 1998:17). The term 'Renaissance' has also

been used to speak of the Harlem Renaissance which was a literary and intellectual movement which took place in the 1920s and which involved an awakening of black culture in the United States (Wintz 1988:1-2). The idea of a Black Renaissance, referring to 'the insertion of the voice of the African diaspora into changing international relations' (Vale & Maseko 1998:281) is another example of the use of the term 'Renaissance' without reference to Europe. Talk of an African Renaissance is thus not the first time that the term 'renaissance' has been used to speak about some kind of revival other than that which occurred in Europe after the European Dark Ages.

The use of the term 'Renaissance' in the declaration of a period of renewal and transformation in Africa is not without its problems. Various writers have pointed out that using a term that is generally taken to refer to a specific era in Europe is problematic in several ways. Firstly, the first reference to a European Renaissance occurred in the nineteenth century - three centuries after this renaissance was said to have occurred (Barrell 1998). It was a retrospective characterisation of a historical era. While the European period of renewal was characterised *a posteriori*, the vision of an African Renaissance is an *a priori* wish rather than an *a posteriori* assessment (M'Baye 2000:69).

A second problem with the use of the term 'Renaissance' is the fact that it is a European word. Why use a European word to describe the revival of Africa? If the African Renaissance is about rediscovering Africa's past, then surely the use of a European word is inappropriate. In addition, the European Renaissance can be understood to have had many negative implications for the African continent, which also makes the use of the term 'Renaissance' inappropriate. Mulemfo (2000:46) points out that the European Renaissance led to a search for new economic markets and ultimately to the invasion of the African continent by European colonisers. Many of the discoveries and inventions of the Europeans were used to dominate and exploit Africans. Thus the word could be considered to have exploitative and imperialistic connotations (Mulemfo 2000:47). The origins and the connotations of the word 'Renaissance' suggest that an African word may have been more appropriate. Ramose (2000:47-61) feels strongly that the term 'Renaissance' is not appropriate in reference to Africa. According to him, the term 'Renaissance' is a historical concept referring to a particular era in European history and its use to describe Africa is unnatural and a continuation of the tendency to look to the North (or West) to explain African phenomenon. It is also inappropriate in that it implies a linear conception of history according to which Africa is several centuries behind Europe -

Europe has already had its Renaissance and we are now hoping to have our own. Claims that there is no African word suitable to describe what is meant by the African Renaissance are easily disputed. Ramose suggests the term *Makoko-Hungwe* as a better word to describe contemporary African history and politics. This term has many references and thus implies a number of things simultaneously. *Makoko* is the Sotho word for cock and thus refers to the early morning cock-crow which signifies the dawning of a new day. *Hungwe* is the Shona name for a Zimbabwean bird which is regarded as sacred by the Shona and which is said to sing for the end of injustice on the African continent and the restoration of law, humanity and morality. The word *Mayibuye* which comes from *isiXhosa* and means 'let it return' has also been suggested as a suitable African word to replace 'Renaissance' (Pritvorov & Shubin 2000:82).

A third problem relates to the appropriateness of the term given the content of the African Renaissance. The content and various aspects of the African Renaissance will only be discussed later, so it is inappropriate to fully explain this problem here, but it is clear that certain writers feel that the content of the African Renaissance focuses on establishing something new in Africa, rather than about rediscovering something from the past. For example, Kirby (1998) points out that the term 'Renaissance' 'does not describe social reconstruction, political reform, balanced economic cadences, industrial and technical interlinkings, better telephone lines, medical services' and so on. The African Renaissance is frequently linked to improvements in technology, to economic development, to modernisation and to other changes that seem to have nothing to do with a rediscovery of the past.

A fourth shortcoming of the term 'Renaissance' relates to the fact that the European Renaissance was not just a marvellous period of cultural renewal and scientific improvement, but was also a period of violence, war and political instability (Van Aswegen 1998:8). To associate the aspiration that Africa will be transformed into a peaceful, prosperous region with the European Renaissance is thus not altogether correct.

The shortcomings discussed above relate to the terminology used to describe this vision of a transformed Africa, not to the vision itself. The content of the African Renaissance is more important than the words used to describe this vision. However, the terminology used is not without significance and there is undoubtedly a degree of irony in the use of a European term to describe the revival of Africa.

4.1.3 The Multiple Conceptualisations of the African Renaissance

When trying to define the African Renaissance, it may be better to speak of the meanings of the term, rather than to try to find one single conceptualisation of the African Renaissance. This term has been used in a variety of ways and appears to refer to all sorts of sometimes incompatible things. It is not possible to provide a single comprehensive conceptualisation of the African Renaissance, and so it is necessary instead, to examine the different conceptualisations of the African Renaissance which have been put forward by various scholars.

Vale and Maseko (1998:278-283) discuss two distinct interpretations of the African Renaissance which they label the globalist and Africanist interpretations. According to them, the globalist interpretation refers to a South African-led continental project involving economic globalisation and political liberalisation. It promotes Africa as an expanding market and would like to see the African equivalent of the Asian Tigers emerging. The globalist interpretation of the African Renaissance encourages modernisation, free markets, privatisation, and the like. This interpretation has been eagerly accepted by wealthy South Africans and South Africa's role in leading Africa's renewal is not questioned by this understanding of the African Renaissance.

The Africanist interpretation of the African Renaissance differs significantly from the globalist interpretation. It is post-structural and critical of the idea of embracing modernisation and globalisation (Vale & Maseko 1998:280 - 281). The Africanist interpretation calls for a rediscovery and reinterpretation of Africa's past and challenges dominant narratives within international relations. This interpretation is less quick to give South Africa a leading role in the African Renaissance and calls for African alternatives to globally accepted philosophies and ways of life.

Maloka (2000:3-6) discusses Vale and Maseko's two-fold division of the African Renaissance debate, and adds two more interpretations of the African Renaissance: a Pan-Africanist interpretation and a culturalist interpretation. The Pan-Africanist interpretation is a revival of Pan-Africanism and an attempt to realise the vision of Pan-Africanism in the 21st century. The culturalist interpretation of the 'African Renaissance' sees the African Renaissance as a movement that calls for a return to 'roots'. This

interpretation involves the promotion of African philosophical constructs, such as *ubuntu*, of African ethics and of African languages. The culturalist perspective resists any imitation of the West and asserts that Africans must develop institutions and structures that are products of Africa rather than poor copies of Western institutions and structures.

These four conceptualisations of the African Renaissance illustrate the impossibility of providing a clear definition of what the African Renaissance means. It means different things to different people, and some interpretations of the African Renaissance contradict other interpretations - for example, while the globalist interpretation accepts internationally dominant economic doctrines such as liberalisation and globalisation; the Africanist and culturalist interpretations challenge these doctrines.

4.1.4 Components of the African Renaissance

Given the impossibility of providing a single definition for the African Renaissance, it is useful to examine certain dominant themes that appear again and again in discussions of an African Renaissance. All of these themes do not occur in all discussions of the African Renaissance, and some may even appear to be incompatible, but the themes discussed below are ideas which are frequently seen as related to the vision of an African Renaissance. The discussion below identifies and briefly discusses these dominant themes.

4.1.4.1 The rediscovery of African history and culture

> Through research we can retrieve history that was obliterated by colonialism. We are trying to restore the dignity of people whose history has been denied them.
>
> - Pitika Ntuli (in Prabhakaran 1998)

To speak of a renaissance is to speak of something being reborn, and so to speak of an African Renaissance implies that there is something in Africa's past that can be reborn today. This means that the African Renaissance does not just predict and plan for a prosperous future for Africa, but also looks back into Africa's past in order to build the future upon a rediscovered past. A reinterpretation of Africa's history and culture is needed so that the colonial construction of African history and culture can be rejected and the wealth of African history and culture can be recognised (Vale & Maseko 1998:280).

Advocates of an African Renaissance believe that Africa has a proud history. They challenge those who have denied that Africa has any history, and argue that Africa's history must be re-examined from an Afrocentric perspective. Mbeki (in Legum 1999:71) makes this clear when he says that talk of an African Renaissance projects into both the past and future. He speaks of Africa's proud past, mentioning the achievements of the Nubians and the Egyptians; the artistic accomplishments of the Makonde people in Tanzania and Mozambique; and the contributions made to religious thought by Ethiopian Christians and Nigerian Muslims. Mbeki (2000) argues that Africans must use this proud history to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of African development, and that this can only be done if ordinary Africans are made aware of Africa's proud history.

Part of the rediscovery and re-examination of African history, is the re-evaluation of African culture. Mbeki (1999a) identifies 'the rediscovery of Africa's creative past to recapture the peoples' cultures' as being one of the important tasks which must be achieved by the African Renaissance. Kwaa Prah (1999:60) draws attention to the importance of culture arguing that the African Renaissance cannot be built on 'cultural borrowings from outside' but must rather be based on a rediscovery of Africa's own culture and history.

In the South African context, this rediscovery of African culture is often associated with the promotion of *ubuntu* - which is usually described as being the principle that declares *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* - a person is a person because of the people (Ntuli 1999:193). In explaining *ubuntu* Mulemfo (2000:57-58) quotes the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu who says:

> We believe that a person is person through another person, that my humanity is caught up, bound up and inextricable in your humanity. When I dehumanise you, I inexorably dehumanise myself.

Sindane and Liebenberg (2000:38-41) give a comprehensive definition of *ubuntu* relating it to humanism, to universal brotherhood and sisterhood, and to the affirmation of the humanity of the individual in reciprocity of fellow-humans. The revival and promotion of *ubuntu* is seen as an important part of the African Renaissance. Ntuli (1998:17) draws parallels between the humanism that was developed during the European Renaissance and *ubuntu* suggesting that *ubuntu* can play the role in the African Renaissance that

humanism played in the European Renaissance. Ntuli (1999:184) believes that Africa has experienced a moral and cultural collapse which has allowed for the spirit of *ubuntu* to disappear, but that the African Renaissance must involve its revival. This idea of *ubuntu* as part of the African Renaissance appears again and again, allowing Mangcu (2001:22) to conclude that while there should be multiple ways of pursuing an African Renaissance, these ways should occur within a common framework that should include *ubuntu*.

This theme of the rediscovery of history and culture is one that asserts that Africa can only move forward if it examines its past and that this past is one of which Africans can be proud. However, advocates of the African Renaissance are quick to point out that the African Renaissance is more than just a rediscovery of Africa's culture and history. This reinterpretation of the past is not a call for a return to the pre-colonial way of life, but rather an attempt to restore the dignity of Africans and to urge them to add to this worthy heritage. Mbeki (2000) sees the reclaiming of Africa's history and culture as important because it will give Africans the confidence to change their current circumstances and bring about a better future. The promotion of the study of African history and African culture is not the focus of the African Renaissance, but is part of the restoration of the self-worth of Africans which is necessary if Africa is to be reborn.

4.1.4.2 Self-definition and self-determination

> The African renaissance is a unique opportunity for Africans to define ourselves and our agenda according to our own realities and taking into account the realities of the world around us. It is about Africans being agents of our own history and masters of our own destiny.
>
> - Malegapuru Makgoba (in Makgoba, Shope & Mazwai 1999:xii)

The African Renaissance acknowledges that Africa's recent history has been one in which Africa's destiny was determined by outsiders and in which Africans were defined and described by Westerners rather than by themselves.

The theme of self-definition and self-determination is part of the response to colonisation and the continuing process of decolonisation. In terms of self-definition, the vision of an African Renaissance recognises that Africans need to transform the way they see themselves and the way they are seen by others. Mazrui (2000) addresses this when he

identifies one of the pillars of the African Renaissance as being 'The Dignity Imperative' which is the 'recognition of Africanity as one dignified face of humanity'. Ntuli (1998:16) makes it clear that self-definition is part of the Renaissance when he says that the African Renaissance is:

> about the redress of knowledge, of correcting negative images inculcated into [African] people; a people made to believe by systematic Eurocentric education that they had no history (Hegel), or at best they were noble savages (Rousseau).

The African Renaissance calls on Africans to challenge the many existing prejudices regarding Africans and for Africans to redefine themselves in preparation for the revival of their continent (Shilowa 2000).

The calls for a redefinition of what it means to be African and an assertion of the dignity of Africans, emerge from the realisation that colonisation and other forms of Western exploitation of Africa did not only damage Africa economically and politically, but also destroyed Africans' self-esteem by treating Africans as lesser humans or as animals. This is why, when addressing the United Nations University, Mbeki (1998a) felt it necessary to emphasise that as part of the Renaissance Africa must 'rebel, [and] assert the principality of her humanity - the fact that she, in the first instance, is not a beast of burden, but a human and African being'. This self-definition and affirmation of dignity is seen as essential if the revival of Africa is to take place.

Related to self-definition is self-determination. Africans have for too long allowed external powers to determine their destiny. The African Renaissance proclaims an end to this era and the beginning of an era in which Africans will determine their own destiny. When speaking about the African Renaissance, Reuel Khoza (1999:279), chairman of Eskom and Co-ordinated Network Investment (South Africa), declared that the heart of his entire message on the African Renaissance could be summed up as 'Be master of your own destiny!' This message is also seen as a key element of the African Renaissance in the ANC's 1997 *Strategy and Tactics* document (ANC 1997a:27). Proponents of the African Renaissance recognise that Africa has already begun to take its destiny into its own hands through the victorious struggle against colonialism. Formal decolonisation has been completed, but now Africans need to oppose neo-colonialism and ensure that Africa's future is determined by Africans.

4.1.4.3 Pan-Africanism and African unity

> An Africa united, in spite of the poverty that we face today, would immediately be a force in world affairs to be treated with respect and equality. An Africa divided along the lines we have today would forever be at the mercy of external power and influence.
>
> - Kwezi Kwaa Prah (1999:60)

Many discussions on the African Renaissance emphasise the importance of African unity and stress that the African Renaissance is supposed to be a continental movement which is driven by and benefits the whole of the African continent.

Landsberg and Hlope (2001:29) see the African Renaissance as a call for solidarity on the African continent. It is rooted in the anti-colonialist and Pan-African movements of the past. In discussing the African Renaissance, Sémou Pathé Guèye (1999:262) describes African unity as the greatest challenge for the African Renaissance, saying that the destiny of the peoples of Africa is the same - they will either survive together or disappear together.

Mbeki (1999a) has also drawn attention to the importance of African unity in his speeches, arguing that Africa shares a common destiny and encouraging greater co-operation and integration on the African continent. It must, however, be noted that there are several thinkers who criticise the African Renaissance, especially as conceptualised by Thabo Mbeki, as being more about the promotion of South Africa than about the promotion of Africa. If the African Renaissance is to be about the revival of Africa as a continent, then this will naturally require greater continental co-operation and solidarity. African Renaissance supporters recognise this and are thus encouraged by the establishment of the African Union and by displays of African unity at recent global discussion arenas.

4.1.4.4 The empowerment of Africa in the global arena

> The African Renaissance is more than a rebirth. It is a renewal of our determination to be global partners rather than afterthoughts at the dinner tables of other nations.
>
> - Pitika Ntuli (1998:17)

Africa's role in the global arena has been a marginal one. African countries have been low on the agenda at global discussions, and African leaders have had little influence on decisions made at such discussions. The African Renaissance proclaims an end to this situation. It promotes the empowerment of Africa so that Africa can influence rather than just be influenced, so that Africa's role can be that of an active decision maker in the global arena rather than that of a passive spectator who suffers as a result of decisions made by others.

This vision is evident in many analyses of the African Renaissance. Egan (1999) sums up the entire African Renaissance vision as being a movement that aims to revitalise Africa and improve its global position. Le Père (1997:3) concurs, saying that 'the renaissance idea seeks to move Africa from the perilous margins of its contingent and uncertain past to becoming a full and active participant in the global arena'. In its 1997 *Strategy and Tactics* document, the ANC discusses how the African Renaissance needs to be part of the fight to improve the standing of the African continent in global affairs (ANC 1997a).

In Mbeki's speech on the African Renaissance to the United Nations University in 1998 he addressed this issue arguing that there were periods in world history where Africa had been an influential continent and that Africans need to be confident that this position of influence can be restored (Mbeki 1998a). He repeated this vision in 1999 when speaking to Parliament, saying, 'No longer sliding towards a slow and painful death at the margins of an advancing global community, Africa must regain her place as an equal among the continents' (Mbeki 1999b).

The African Renaissance recognises that the current era is one of globalisation and that this means that the destinies of all regions of the world are interrelated. This means that decisions made by global powers deeply influence the African continent. As a result of this situation advocates of the African Renaissance include the end of Africa's marginalisation in the global arena as a key goal of the African Renaissance.

4.1.4.5 Economic development

> At its core, African Renaissance is an economic and social development agenda for Africa. It is a comprehensive and far-reaching global plan of action to tackle poverty and the developmental needs of Africa.
>
> - Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa (2001a)

Sub-Saharan Africa has been identified as the most important development challenge of the twenty first century (Kritzinger-van Niekerk 2000:14). Economic indicators suggesting Africa's need for development abound, and there are few who deny that there is a need for some kind of economic renewal on the African continent. In his identification of the key elements of the African Renaissance, Botha (2000a:12) identifies several elements that are economic in nature: the economic recovery of Africa; rapid economic growth; people-centred economic growth; co-ordination regarding poverty alleviation and debt relief; and interdependence, co-operation and co-ordination of economic development in the SADC region. South African Deputy President, Jacob Zuma (2000a), described the African Renaissance as being 'economic growth and a better life for our citizens' and South African President Thabo Mbeki (1999a) described one of the fundamental tasks of the African Renaissance as being the achievement of sustainable economic development which results in the improvement of the standards of living and quality of life of the masses.

The theme of economic development is frequently discusses in conjunction with a discussion on globalisation and an appropriate response to globalisation. Sipho Shezi (1998) stresses that the African Renaissance cannot be conceptualised outside of the global economic context. Taking this into account, many discussions of the African Renaissance give suggestions regarding Africa's economic response to globalisation. Viewpoints differ greatly with some (for example Kritzinger-van Niekerk 2000) regarding the African Renaissance to be primarily about establishing Africa in the global economic arena without trying to challenge or change the rules and philosophies which currently dominate the global economic arena, while others argue that the African Renaissance must confront these rules and philosophies and posit alternatives. An example of the latter perspective is the ANC's 1997 *Developing a Strategic Perspective on SA Foreign Policy* which states that 'the success of the Renaissance depends on the depth of and extent to which it challenges globalisation' (ANC 1997b). This tension between

supporters and critics of globalisation is discussed later, and at this point it is only necessary to point out that some kind of economic response to globalisation is seen as essential to the African Renaissance.

Clearly, economic development is viewed by key thinkers as central to the African Renaissance. The form that this economic development should take is much debated, but most interpretations of the African Renaissance do at least consider economic development as a relevant topic for debate when discussing what the Renaissance is and how it is to be realised.

4.1.4.6 Governance and democracy

> What is it which makes up that genuine liberation?
>
> The first of these (elements) is that we must bring to an end the practices as a result of which many throughout the world have the view that as Africans, we are incapable of establishing and maintaining systems of good governance.
>
> - Thabo Mbeki (1998a)

The African continent is home to a variety of political regimes and forms of governments. Many of the governments in Africa are not considered to be governing according to internationally accepted norms. The African Renaissance tries to change this perception by encouraging democratic forms of government, but at the same time it is stressed that African governments must govern according to African realities and not just copy the effective forms of government from other regions in the world. Botha (2000a:12) sums up this aspect of the Renaissance by saying that a key element of the African Renaissance is 'establishing political democracy on the continent, though taking into full consideration African specific conditions'. Discussions of an African Renaissance are filled with references to democracy and good governance, with the consolidation of democratic governance often seen as one of the defining characteristics of the African Renaissance. Stremlau (1999:101) gives a prime position to democracy in the African Renaissance vision, saying that the Renaissance is about 'convey[ing] a positive vision for Africa as a peaceful, democratic and market-orientated region'. Fraser-Moleketi (2001) also emphasises the importance of democracy, speaking about the African Renaissance as a vision of an 'Africa in which human rights, peace, stability and democracy thrives'.

In Mbeki's address to the United Nations University in 1998 he discussed what good governance is and declared that an African Renaissance rejects military coups and one party states and supports elected multi-party governments (Mbeki 1998a). The African Renaissance has also been related to democracy by leaders such as former executive secretary of SADC, Kaire Mbuende (PANA 1998); and former South African President Nelson Mandela (1994).

4.1.4.7 Other themes

The six themes discussed above are not the only recurring themes in discussions about the African Renaissance, but they certainly appear to be dominant. Other themes that regularly appear in discussions on the African Renaissance are education, language issues, gender and youth.

Discussions of the African Renaissance that mention education usually indicate that education in Africa needs to be changed if the African Renaissance is to be realised. The argument usually made is that education in Africa has been Eurocentric in orientation and that a distorted picture of African history and culture has been presented to Africans through educational systems. This necessitates the development of curricula that teach African history and culture from an Afrocentric viewpoint. Afrocentric education is seen as vital for the realisation of an African Renaissance. Examples of these arguments can be found in Ntuli (1998:15-18; 1999:184-199); Dladla (1997); and Mzamane (1999:173-183).

The issue of language is sometimes also related to the African Renaissance and it is argued that the suppression of African languages and the promotion of European languages need to be examined in the context of African revival. It is argued that new respect must be given to African languages and that instead of being seen as unsuitable for scientific and technological discourse, African languages should be adapted and standardised. Makgoba, Shope and Mazwai (1999:xi) note that language is a vehicle for identity and culture and that it is questionable whether an African Renaissance can be championed in foreign languages. Other examples of discussions relating the African Renaissance and the revival of African languages are Mazrui (2000); and Kwaa Prah (1999:60-61).

The promotion of gender and youth issues is also often associated with the African Renaissance. Discussions on an African Renaissance do not usually put forward any radical ideas regarding how women or young people should be treated, but emphasise that women and the youth must be part of the African Renaissance. The inclusion of women in the project of the African Renaissance is mentioned in many discussion of the African Renaissance, including Shilowa (2000), Mbeki (1998b, 1999a), Vale & Maseko (1998:274), ANC (1997a:27) and Mulemfo (2000:72-81). Examples of sources mentioning the importance of including the youth in the African Renaissance are Ntuli (1998:198), Mulemfo (2000:82-86), Vale and Maseko (1998:274) and Mbeki (1998b, 1999a).

No doubt there are several other themes that could also be identified and discussed, but the themes briefly discussed above provide some idea of the ideas that are usually associated with the African Renaissance.

4.2 THABO MBEKI, SOUTH AFRICA AND THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

The African Renaissance debate has been dominated by the ideas of Thabo Mbeki and much of the debate about an African Renaissance has taken place in South Africa. This South African dominance has provoked mixed feelings, with some feeling that South African leadership of an African Renaissance is necessary and desirable, while others feeling that South Africa's assumption of leadership is arrogant.

4.2.1 Thabo Mbeki - Renaissance Man

It is difficult to find an article on the African Renaissance that does not mention Thabo Mbeki. He is credited with initiating the call for an African Renaissance and his ideas are seen as forming the intellectual core of the African Renaissance. Botha (2000a:4) speaks of the African Renaissance as 'Thabo Mbeki's vision' and Esterhuyse (1997:16) calls the African Renaissance 'Mbeki se Afrika visie' [Mbeki's Africa vision]. Mulemfo's (2000) book on the African Renaissance is entitled 'Thabo Mbeki and the African Renaissance'. Kornegay and Landsberg (1998:30) refer to Thabo Mbeki as the 'architect' of the African Renaissance, Christianson (1997:27) calls the African Renaissance Mbeki's 'catchphrase' and Vale and Maseko (1998:286) say that 'no appreciation of the place of the African Renaissance in current policy can be formed without considering Mbeki's standing in the country's politics and his goals for South Africa'.

These and other discussions on the African Renaissance show that Mbeki is clearly understood to be at the forefront of the African Renaissance. It is he who is seen to have first called for an African Renaissance - although Mandela (1994) used the term before Mbeki - and Mbeki's perspectives on the African Renaissance form the core of the African Renaissance as it is understood by most people. The dominance of Thabo Mbeki in the conceptualisation can be seen as advantageous or harmful. Because Mbeki is fairly well-known respected internationally, he may be considered to be an effective leader for the idea of an African Renaissance because he can more easily popularise the concept outside of the African continent. Indeed, former US President Clinton's support for the concept could be said to be due to Mbeki. However, Mbeki is not universally liked in Africa, and his relative popularity with Western leaders may actually make him less popular on the African continent and thus make the acceptance of the African Renaissance by Africans less likely. Consider Bankie (1998:16) who criticises the Mbeki leadership of the African Renaissance, remarking acidly: 'Today we are offered Renaissance as an alternative [to Pan-Africanist nationalism] *by the United States and its friends'* (emphasis added).

4.2.2 Support for South African Leadership of the Renaissance

There are many advocates of South Africa as the leader of the African Renaissance. Many people appear to assume that South Africa will lead any Renaissance, without even giving the implications of such leadership much thought. Some discussions on the African Renaissance, especially those written by South African academics or politicians, appear to discuss the concept as if it was only relevant to South Africa, as if it is about changing South Africa, rather than changing the whole continent.

Maloka (1997:39) says that South Africa is 'well placed' to lead the Renaissance because of its 'moral authority' and strong economy. Urquart (2000) echoes this saying that 'it is South Africa, once the pariah of the entire planet, which appears best equipped to lead an African Renaissance' and Shillinger (2000) says that while the African Renaissance is a continent-wide phenomenon, South Africa is its 'moral and intellectual midwife'. Pritvorov and Shubin (2000:80-92) appear to regard South African leadership as inevitable given South Africa's size and strength, but hope that the role will be adopted with 'humility and responsibility'. South African government officials have also suggested that South Africa

should lead the African Renaissance. When addressing the German Chamber for Industry and Trade, South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma (2001a) said that because of its economy, South Africa 'has an obligation to lead' the process of African recovery.

Cleary (1998:21-26) discusses South Africa's role in the African Renaissance in an article entitled *African Renaissance: Challenges for South Africa.* He argues that South Africa will not be able to achieve a national rebirth in isolation and so a continental renaissance is necessary for South Africa's own prosperity. According to Cleary (1998:26) the success of the Renaissance depends upon South Africa's ability to build the necessary economic and political values in Africa. Cleary obviously assigns South Africa a hegemonic role in the African Renaissance.

The timing of this call for Renaissance is one of the reasons why South Africa has been dominant. It seems that South Africa's liberation was inspiration for the pronouncement of an African Renaissance and that the idea behind the Renaissance was to some extent to transform Africa just as South Africa had been transformed. Cornwell (1998:9) clearly interprets the Renaissance this way, saying that Mandela invoked the vision of an African Renaissance in 1994 by promising that the newly liberated South Africa would do all in its power to transform Africa.

Some commentators appear to see the African Renaissance as something occurring in South Africa and make hardly any reference to renewal outside of South Africa. Vil-Nkomo and Myburgh (1999:266-278) are an example of this way of thinking. Their discussion on the African Renaissance is dominated by the South African context and they speak of a 'renaissance in South Africa' and 'the South African renaissance' as if they are synonymous with the vision of an African Renaissance. Other commentators appear to support South African leadership, but to have reservations about the exact nature of that leadership. Kornegay and Landsberg (1998:29-47) ask the question: 'Can South Africa lead an African Renaissance?'. They discuss a number of different scenarios and conclude that South African leadership of the African Renaissance cannot be automatically assumed. Rather, South Africa has to be careful not to come across as hegemonic, but still assume leadership - a very tricky endeavour.

4.2.3 Resistance to South African Leadership of the Renaissance

Several analysts of the African Renaissance do not feel that South African leadership of this Renaissance is desirable. Vale and Maseko (1998:283-287) vehemently oppose a South African led Renaissance. According to Vale and Maseko, South Africa's relative economic and military strength are reasons why South Africa should *not* lead the African Renaissance rather than being reasons why Africa should assume leadership. South Africa's power as well as South Africa's history makes it difficult to believe that South Africa will be able to lead without placing South African interests above the interests of the continent as a whole. Moyo (1998:10) also believes it is unlikely that South Africa will place the interests of the continent above its own national interest. He criticises the South African articulation of an African Renaissance for equating South African interests with African interests and points out that what is good for South Africa is not necessarily good for African and *vice versa*.

Moeletsi Mbeki (1998:215) notes that an ironic situation has developed with regard to South Africa's leadership of the African Renaissance. While South Africa regards the African Renaissance as the key to its foreign policy, other African countries demonstrate reluctance to accept South African leadership of an African Renaissance fearing that South Africa will abuse its dominance and not be sensitive to the needs of other African countries. Moeletsi Mbeki says that this reluctance is reflected in the lack of African support for South African endeavours such as Cape Town's bid to host the 2004 Olympics, and by the disagreements regarding South Africa's role in SADC. Kobokoane (1998) also comments on this situation, saying that there is some cynicism with regard to the idea of an African Renaissance with some people wondering if the idea is just another 'unwanted South African concept foisted on the rest of the continent'. Africans outside of South Africa are suspicious about South African leadership and their suspicions are not without foundation. South African intervention in Lesotho and the way in which trade on the African continent is skewed in South Africa's favour have made some Africans sceptical about South Africa's commitment to the good of the continent. Karithi (2000:41-45) remarks that some of South Africa's actions since 1994 have been detrimental to other African countries. For example, the South African-EU trade pact benefits South Africa and Europe, but has had a destructive influence on other African economies. In addition, the post-1994 period in South Africa has seen what Karithi calls the 'corporate invasion' of Africa by South Africa. South African companies have benefited greatly in their relations

with the rest of the continent. This situation is not likely to make African countries eager to support South Africa's vision for Africa's future.

South Africa's eagerness to be part of Africa after many years of isolation may have led to South Africa being somewhat insensitive about its role in Africa. Botha (2000a:11) analyses ANC documentation and concludes that the African Renaissance vision is the cornerstone of South Africa's foreign policy, and that the African Renaissance is not a national policy, but a continental policy. He notes that the African Renaissance has at times been equated with the national interest. This commitment to the African Renaissance as part of foreign policy, can be read two ways. On the one hand, it can be welcomed as a sign that South Africa will no longer neglect Africa in its foreign policy and will promote the whole continent, not just its southern-most tip. But on the other hand, the projection of a vision that has been mostly articulated by South Africans, on the rest of Africa is a little presumptuous. In addition, there is an implied arrogance in the suggestion that the liberation of South Africa will allow for the long awaited renewal of Africa to finally be realised. Africa is depicted as being a helpless victim awaiting South Africa's saving leadership. Unsurprisingly, many Africans do not perceive South Africa's leadership as any more desirable than the leadership of Western powers or international financial institutions. While South Africa's economic dominance and position of relative international influence may suggest that it is the ideal leader of an African Renaissance, if South Africa comes across as a bully promoting South African interests disguised by the vision of an African Renaissance, then the renewal of Africa will not succeed.

4.3 TENSIONS IN THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF AN AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

A close examination of the African Renaissance reveals several tensions. The multiplicity of discussions relating to an African Renaissance may be an explanation for these tensions: different people conceive of the Renaissance in different ways, leading to incompatible ideas being associated with the African Renaissance.

4.3.1 Vision for the Future or Identification of a Current Process?

Is the African Renaissance already happening? Is it a process already occurring or a vision for future success? Napier (2000) notices this tension and points out that whenever the African Renaissance is spoken of, it is not clear whether it 'embraces a process

already underway or a vision or a wish for the future'. An examination of various documents on the African Renaissance indicates this tension.

Some thinkers clearly believe that the African Renaissance is not yet underway. For example, Howard Barrell (1998) writes in an article in the *Mail & Guardian* that as he understands the Renaissance, it is not something already underway, but rather a call for a commitment to renewal to be made. In a later article, Barrell (2000:9) notes that many discussions on the African Renaissance have implied that the Renaissance has already begun, but that 'there was no evidence whatsoever to support such a suggestion'. Moeletsi Mbeki (1998:211) examines ANC documents introducing the idea of a Renaissance and concludes that these documents describe a 'coming epoch in Africa's history' rather than a present reality. Many discussions on the African Renaissance discuss the need to transform this vision into reality - implying that the African Renaissance is only a vision at present, but may become a real process later. Consider Cornwell (1998:9) who describes Mbeki as having pledged to transform the 'vision [of an African Renaissance] into a reality' and Seepe (2001) who says that the African Renaissance invokes 'an idyllic future' for Africa.

The use of the future tense when discussing the Renaissance contributes to the impression that the African Renaissance refers to a vision for the future, rather than a present reality. When speaking or writing about the African Renaissance, its supporters frequently speak about what must be done rather than what is being done, and about what will happen rather than what is happening.

Other discussions on the African Renaissance appear to suggest that the African Renaissance is already underway. Former United States Ambassador to South Africa, James Joseph (1997) serves as an example - he discusses changes on the African continent, saying: 'Whether you call it an African renaissance as Thabo Mbeki does or a third wave as Kofi Annan does, there is no question that something new and something different is happening in Africa'. Thabo Mbeki also appears to regard the African Renaissance as something already underway. When speaking at the United Nations University in 1998 he declared that 'the African Renaissance has begun' (Mbeki 1998a) and when addressing the Ghana-South Africa Friendship Association in October 2000, Mbeki (2000) said:

> I would like to make bold to say that the African Renaissance is not just a dream whose realisation lies in some dim and distant future. We are already seeing the seeds of this renewal being planted everyday, by many brave and pioneering ordinary people as well as leaders in business, politics, culture and other fronts.

Perhaps there is a way to resolve this tension. Perhaps this Renaissance is like a child that has been conceived, but not yet born - its existence has already begun, but its birth is still to come. This idea is suggested by several writers. For example, James Joseph (1997) speaks about Africans today living 'between two worlds, an old order that is dying but not yet dead and a new order that is conceived but not yet born'. Cleary (1998:26) warns that care must be taken to ensure that the African Renaissance is not aborted, and Oppelt (1999) says the African Renaissance must be prevented from being a stillborn child. This image of the Renaissance as something that already exists and is about to be born is perhaps the most appropriate way of resolving the tension between the Renaissance as a vision for the future or as a process underway.

4.3.2 An Élite Process or a Mass Movement?

Some have accused the African Renaissance of being an élite process while others have declared that the Renaissance is all about mobilising the masses. While it is unlikely that any advocate of the African Renaissance would support the complete exclusion of either élites or the masses, either the one or the other may be subtly marginalised in some discussions of the African Renaissance. There is also tension with regard to the leadership of the African Renaissance - is it to be led by élites or by the masses, is it to be a top-down process or a bottom-up process?

There has been commitment on behalf of the South African government to include the masses in the African Renaissance. Mbeki (1999a) speaks about how the masses and all their organisations must be drawn into the process of realising an African Renaissance. Mbeki (1998b) speaks about building a mass army to fight for the renewal of the African continent and says that this army should include:

> workers and the peasants, business people, artisans and intellectuals, religious groups, the women and the youth, sportspeople and workers in the field of culture, writers and media workers, political organisations and governments.

Other South African leaders also emphasise the importance of mass mobilisation for the African Renaissance. Joel Netshitenzhe (1999), CEO of the South African Government Communications and Information Systems (GCIS), speaks about how it is vital that the idea of an African Renaissance captures the minds of the masses on the African continent. A report on the African Renaissance issued by the South African Minister of Transport, Dullah Omar, shares this vision, saying that the African Renaissance must 'grip the imagination of the masses before it can become a truly potent force in our society' (Office of the Minister, Department of Transport 2000). In an ANC (1997b) discussion document on foreign policy, the idea that the Renaissance should be led by the masses rather than an élite is affirmed:

> For an African renaissance to be a reality requires that this process be led by the most progressive sectors of African society. This bloc of forces represents an alliance of the working class, the peasants, the poor, the middle classes and progressive sectors of an emerging African bourgeoisie.

Support for the African Renaissance as a mass movement is also evidenced in the writings of intellectuals. Ntuli (1998:15) and Maloka (1999) both warn that the Renaissance cannot be a process of élites and Maloka (1999) adds that the failure of earlier attempts at African renewal can be ascribed to the fact that these movements were confined to intellectual and political élites.

However, despite support for the mass mobilisation of African people as part of the Renaissance, some commentators on the African Renaissance believe that the African Renaissance is at present a process of élites and functions to marginalise rather than include the masses. For example, Harvey (1999) describes the Renaissance as being 'an elitist project which soothes the conscience of our leaders' and says that it needs to develop into a powerful mass movement if it is to achieve its goals. Egan (1999) warns that while the Renaissance could be something great, it may also be nothing more than 'a comfortable and comforting discourse to plaster over socioeconomic cracks' and to defend the position of the new élite at the expense of ordinary people. Maloka (1997) notes that there is a perception amongst some left-wing intellectuals that the African Renaissance is a movement of the new African bourgeoisie which is using the concept to advance its own interests. Liebenberg (1998:45) asks if the Renaissance is not perhaps an 'élite plot' designed to fool the masses while pursuing the interests of the élites.

These concerns may appear unfounded at first glance. Calls for a Renaissance appear to be calls for the whole of Africa, not just élite groups, to rise up and become a powerful, prosperous continent. However, deeper analysis does reveal some tendencies which may be motivation for critics of the African Renaissance to argue that the Renaissance is about enriching élites rather the empowering the disempowered. Cornwell (1998:11) notes that while the African Renaissance has been directed towards the masses, a significant role is reserved for the state; Sceales (in Ntuli 1998:15) argues that the success of the Renaissance depends upon the wisdom and determination of Africa's political and business leaders; Cleary (1998:26) also says that the success of the Renaissance depends on the leadership of Africa; Van der Berg and Du Plessis (2000:28) say that if the African Renaissance is to succeed, 'the emerging educated élite would have to be its bearers'; Mamdani (1999:53) argues that the driving force behind the Renaissance will be the intelligentsia; and Mbigi (2000:3) says that Africa is in need of 'strong parenting' and that this parenting will be done through government and private institutions. While the ideas of these writers may appear unobjectionable, they do imply that it is élites that will drive the African Renaissance, not the masses. Thus, even if the African Renaissance claims to benefit all, there is always the suspicion that it may benefit its 'drivers' a little more than the 'passengers' it has invited along for the ride.

Furthermore, when examining the goals for the African Renaissance as described by key thinkers, it seems that these goals are related to élite activities rather than to the actions and ideas of the masses. Some important components of the African Renaissance as identified by Cleary (1998:22) are rooting out corruption, encouraging the return of African intellectuals who have left Africa, and introducing economic reforms so that Africa can attract foreign investment. Other goals of the African Renaissance are said to be co-operation between South Africa and other countries, the promotion of democracy and good governance, the prevention and resolution of conflict, and the provision of humanitarian assistance (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001a). These goals are likely to affect the masses, but their achievement is to a large extent dependent upon élite activities rather than mass action.

The extent to which the Renaissance comes across as an élite-driven process is also dependent upon which conceptualisation of the Renaissance is being put forward. Thinkers who are labelled Africanists by Vale and Maseko (1998:278-283) and who see

the Renaissance to be about a rediscovery of African history and an embracing of African language and culture, are likely to see the African Renaissance as a mass movement which cannot be realised without extensive mass participation. However, the globalists according to Vale and Maseko's classification are likely to see the process as élite-driven and to see its goals as involving élite activities, rather than the actions of ordinary people.

4.3.3 The Rebellious Rediscovery of African Values or the Promotion of African Success in a Western-dominated World?

This rather lengthy heading aims to capture several related tensions that are evident in the African Renaissance. Is the Renaissance about a rediscovery of the past or is it a call for rapid modernisation? Does it reject Western values in favour of African values or does it try to inculcate Western values into Africans? Is it a call for Africa to rebel against global 'rules' based on Western experience or is it a call for Africans to attempt to succeed according to these rules?

Certain discussions of an African Renaissance appear to see the Renaissance to be primarily about the rediscovery of African history, of African values and of African culture. There is an assumption that African history, values and culture differ significantly from Western equivalents and that Africa must be different from the West and stop trying to emulate the Western way of life. These thinkers interpret the Renaissance as a rebellious response to Western dominance and see the African Renaissance to be about reviving African values and rejecting Western values. Consider Dladla (1997) who says:

> What we are talking about here is critically and respectfully tapping into hitherto neglected reservoirs of knowledge and practices that can make us walk tall, feed all our stomachs, lay to rest the image of the perpetually dancing, skin-clad African who is always smiling through ridicule and pain, and help us contribute meaningfully to rescuing the world from a barbarism that masquerades as civilisation.

However, other discussions of the African Renaissance encourage the adoption of values and ways of life which have nothing to do with African history or culture. Becoming 'modern' and more like the rest of the world seems to be a key goal of the African Renaissance according to these discussions. An example of this approach is found in Guèye (1999:259-260) who says that science and technology are the 'powers' which

determine the position that a country of region holds in the current international balance of forces. Guèye (1999:260) says that these powers must be conquered so that they can:

> spread some values whose assimilation is essential today for ... renewal: a spirit of rigour, organisation and method; a culture of rationality, effectiveness, efficiency and objectivity; a capacity for creation and innovation; a great aptitude for assimilation and adaptation; and permanent openness of mind and readiness to question oneself ....

A similar list of values is given by Vil-Nkomo and Myburgh (1999:278) who argue that the African Renaissance must be based on values that entail:

> economic competitiveness, systematically confronting the information age, building and sustaining a work ethic, investing in life-long learning, managing scarce resources effectively, allowing citizens to make informed choices and decisions, and vigorously pursuing economic development.

These two lists of values are similar to lists of values associated with the 'modern' person as described by modernisation theory (for a description of these values see Coetzee 1996:43-56). The idea of 'modernisation' being part of the African Renaissance is also suggested by other proponents of an African Renaissance. Mbeki speaks about the importance of the modernisation of African industries (Mbeki 2000), of building modern infrastructure (Mbeki 1998b) and of establishing modern economies (Mbeki 1998a). Mbeki's repeated emphasis on becoming 'modern' has led to him being criticised for disguising a call for rapid modernisation as a call for a return to Africa's past (Holiday 2001). Many discussions of the African Renaissance do indeed sound like a resurrection of modernisation theory despite the many critiques which have shown modernisation theory to be premised upon unacceptable biases and to be an arrogant continuation of colonial values (Treurnicht 1997:18).

An overview of different discussions on the African Renaissance reveals an inherent tension. Does the African Renaissance seek to encourage Africans to be proud of being African and to nurture African values? Or does the African Renaissance encourage Africans to emulate the West and embrace the values which have contributed to making the West what it is today? This tension is a fundamental one as the whole approach of the Renaissance is determined by whether or not it is seen to be about rebelling against Western values or accepting them. Since the next Chapter explores this tension in detail

by asking if the African Renaissance does challenge Western discourses, it will not be discussed further here.

4.4 ROOTS OF AN AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

Several writers have pointed out that the idea of an African Renaissance is not new - such as Maloka (1999), Ramose (2000:49-50), Mbeki (1999a), and Botha (2000b:25-30). These and other writers draw attention to earlier ideas regarding African renewal and point out that the concept of an African Renaissance rests upon the foundations made by earlier ideas and debates.

It is necessary to briefly draw attention to these earlier ideas and debates. It may seem odd to only draw attention to them now, after having already discussed the African Renaissance and what it is taken to mean and to include. However, without an understanding of the core elements of the Renaissance, it is difficult to identify which earlier ideas had the same elements or were based upon a similar philosophy. On the basis of the conceptualisation of the African Renaissance, it is possible to recognise the debt owed by the concept to earlier articulations regarding African renewal and recovery.

It should be noted that the word 'renaissance', related words and synonyms such as 'regeneration', 'rebirth' and 'renascence' have been used several times in previous discussions about Africa and about how Africa should move forward. Maloka and Le Roux (2000) trace the idea of an African Renaissance all the way back to the nineteenth century. Thinkers such as the Sierra Leoneans James 'Africanus' Horton, James Johnson and the Liberian Edward Blyden spoke of the 'regeneration' of Africa. Blyden, the most well-known of these scholars, argued that this regeneration would take place through the joint activities of former slaves and indigenous Africans (Ramose 2000:52).

Two South Africans, Pixley ka Seme and Gilbert Coka, were instrumental in the promotion of the idea of an African Renaissance in the first half of the twentieth century. Pixley ka Seme (1906) wrote an article entitled 'The Regeneration of Africa' in which he declared:

> The giant is awakening! From the four corners of the earth Africa's sons, who have been proved through fire and sword, are marching to the future's golden door bearing the records of deeds of valour done.

About thirty years later, Gilbert Coka wrote an article on African liberation in which he also referred to African renewal and regeneration, saying 'Africa is opening another era in human history' (in Ramose 2000:51).

In 1937 the Nigerian Nnamdi Azikiwe wrote a book entitled 'Renascent Africa' in which he described how Africa must be regenerated spiritually, socially, economically, psychologically and politically (Maloka & Le Roux 2000). In the late 1930s and the 1940s, ANC Youth League leader, Anton Lembede wrote a number of articles related to the renewal of Africa (Van Vuuren 2000:63). He spoke about how 'clear signs of national awakening, national Renaissance, or rebirth are noticeable on the far-off horizon'. In 1948 Cheik anta Diop wrote an essay entitled *When can we Talk of an African Renaissance?* (Maloka 2000:5) and in 1964 the chapter 'The African Renaissance and the African Past' appeared in a book by Walter Wallbank (in Maloka 1997). Wallbank described the African Renaissance as being about a rediscovery of Africa's past and an affirmation of the proud destiny of Africans. In 1969 Leonard Barnes *African Renaissance* was published (Maloka 1997:38). It advocated a 'Positive Policy' and a programme of modernisation for Africa. In the early 70s, Thabo Mbeki was influential in convincing ANC activists in South Africa to hold a 'Black Renaissance Convention' (Barrell 2000:9). In 1979 Kwame Nkrumah used the term 'new African renaissance' in his book *Consciencism* to describe the rebirth and renewal of Africa (Ramose 2000:52-53).

The above list of references indicates that the idea of the African Renaissance is certainly not new. The exact term and many related terms have been used before and African renewal and regeneration has been a goal of African leaders and intellectuals for at least a century. Various philosophies and schools of thought can be considered as forerunners of the contemporary call for an African Renaissance. Some of the most prominent forerunners will now be discussed briefly. It should be noted that the movements discussed below are sometimes difficult to separate from each other, as there are links between them and they build upon several common ideas.

4.4.1 Pan-Africanism

Pan-Africanism can be described as global African nationalism (Motyl 2001:395). Its focus is on the liberation of Africa and African descendants, the unity of African nations and the international co-operation of peoples of African descent. Mamdani (1999:51) defines Pan-Africanism as Africa's attempt to move beyond slavery and colonialism, to rediscover Africa's past and to use this past as a resource to enable Africa to escape the legacy of slavery and colonialism. Maloka (1997:37-38) describes Pan-Africanism as a movement that emerged as a reaction to slavery, colonialism and later decolonisation. It was initially an intellectual movement, but gradually developed a political dimension. Pan-Africanism can be considered to consist of two stages (Snyder 1990:266-267). The first stage was led by black people living in America and the West Indies and involved a mass movement of American blacks to Africa. The most prominent leaders of this stage of Pan-Africanism were Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. du Bois (Snyder 1990:266-267). The second stage of Pan-Africanism took place in Africa and was related to decolonisation. It was led by educated Africans and aimed to achieve the political emancipation, economic prosperity and industrial modernisation of Africa. A number of Pan-African congresses were held in the first half of the twentieth century and a number of resolutions were made regarding what Pan-Africanism meant and what its goals were. These resolutions demanded that Africans have a voice in how they are governed, that Africans have access to the land and resources of Africa, that African children have the right to education, that Africa be developed for the benefit of Africans, that commerce and industry be reorganised so as to benefit the masses, and that 'civilised men' all over the world be treated equally regardless of their race (Snyder 1999:268-269). The second half of the twentieth century saw the convening of only two Pan-African congresses, one in the early 1970s and one in 1994 (Campbell 1996:1). The 1994 conference aimed to articulate a vision for Pan-Africanism in the twenty first century. While divergent opinions and attitudes were expressed at the most recent conference in 1994, some agreements were made and the Congress was able to comment on the present leadership in Africa, on struggles against racism in Europe and America, and on the impact of international organisations and structural adjustment on Africa (Campbell 1996:2-5).

Several commentators on the African Renaissance acknowledge its Pan-Africanist roots. Kornegay and Landsberg (1998:33) speak about the African Renaissance as '[P]an-Africanism revisited', Mamdani (1999:51) calls the African Renaissance a 'child of the idea

of Pan-Africanism' and Bankie (1998:16) says that the African Renaissance is 'part of the Pan African lexion'. Certain similarities between the two are evident. Both argue for the ending of colonialism, neo-colonialism and slavery. Both fight for the complete liberation of Africans and for the unity and co-operation in Africa. Both combine an intellectual and political dimension.

It is possible then to ask if the African Renaissance is just a new name for an old idea. Is there anything different about the African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism? Perhaps one difference is that Pan-Africanism has its origins in the ideas of black Americans and has a key focus on the unity of Africans *and those of African descent* throughout the world; whereas the African Renaissance is primarily focused on the African continent. Depending on how the African Renaissance is conceptualised, it can also be argued that the African Renaissance has a much greater focus on the rediscovery of Africa's past than Pan-Africanism does. The 'enemy' as understood by each movement is also different: Pan-Africanism fought colonialism and the legacy of colonialism for most of its history, whereas the African Renaissance appears to be more intent on fighting the marginalisation of Africa in a globalising world. Despite these difference, the African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism have much in common, and advocates of an African Renaissance would do well to pay attention to the achievements and failings of Pan-Africanism so that the African Renaissance can be more successful than the Pan-African movement.

4.4.2 Black Consciousness

Black Consciousness originated in the United States and later spread to Africa (Scruton 1996:46). It urges black people to develop a consciousness of their identity and political aspirations. Black Consciousness implores black people to form this consciousness independently of the values of white people and colonialism, and to throw of a subservient consciousness dominated by the values of white people (Scruton 1996:46). Steve Biko (1998:350), the most prominent South African advocate of Black Consciousness, defined Black Consciousness as follows:

> ...Black Consciousness is the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation - the blackness of their skin - and to

operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude.

Biko (1998:360-363) argues that black people must not regard themselves as 'appendages to white society' but must develop their own values in terms of culture, education, religion and economics. Black Consciousness aims to inculcate black pride and end feelings of inferiority among black people (Bernstein 1987:13). It promotes the self-definition of black people in a world that continually defines black people in a way that degrades them.

The African Renaissance's assertion that Africans must define themselves and determine their own destiny is clearly similar to Black Consciousness' encouragement of the self-definition of black people and the development of black pride. Both movements encourage people who have been oppressed to reject the image of themselves painted by their oppressors, and to assert themselves and their dignity. Differences between the two concepts can, however, be identified. While Black Consciousness promotes the self-definition and assertion of dignity of *black individuals and groups*, the African Renaissance promotes the self-definition and self-determination of *Africans, of African countries and of the African continent*. Two differences are evident here. Firstly, Black Consciousness is focused more upon the consciousness of individuals and groups, whereas the African Renaissance has this consciousness as a concern, but arguably not as a key concern. Black Consciousness aims to liberate the mind of individuals (seeing this as a prerequisite for political liberation), but the African Renaissance has broader goals such as political and economic emancipation and the increased international influence of the continent as a whole. Secondly, Black Consciousness is a project of black people, and the African Renaissance a project of African people. This of course, introduces the lengthy (and probably insoluble) debate about who is a 'black' and who is 'African'; but however each is defined, to be black is not necessarily the same as to be African, and to be African is not necessarily the same as to be black. This means that while there is considerable overlap between the group that each concept aims to liberate, some distinction may be able to be made between each concept's 'target group'.

4.4.3 Afrocentricity, Negritude and the African Personality

Afrocentricity can be defined as 'an individual or collective quest for authenticity ... [and] above all the total use of method to effect psychological, political, social, cultural and economic change' (Asante in Lemelle 1993:104). It is a quest for identity and for the empowerment of the oppressed (Lemelle 1993:104). Afrocentricity argues that Africa should be understood from the perspective of Africans rather than that of Europeans (Lemelle 1993:94). Negritude is a cultural movement that aims to reassert African values as a worthwhile part of the heritage of mankind (Thompson 1969:251). It is associated with the poet Aimé Césaire and with the former Senegalese president Léopold Senghor. The African Personality was articulated by former president of Guinea Sekou Touré and former Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah (Thompson 1969:278). When these leaders and other writers speak of an African Personality, they are referring to the promotion of African culture in such a way that it can determine the future of Africans (Thompson 1969:268). The development of the African Personality involves a rediscovery of African values and morals and the assertion that Africa's future path must be based on African culture (Thompson 1969:268-271).

These three concepts can be discussed simultaneously because they are very similar and have sometimes been used interchangeably. The African Renaissance can be related to all three of these. The African Renaissance, especially the Africanist and culturalist conceptualisations of the Renaissance as discussed earlier, involves the rediscovery of African culture and African values. The Africanist and culturalist conceptualisations of the African Renaissance, like the three concepts discussed here, argue that Africa's future path must take into account African values and morals and should reject European culture. In this way the African Renaissance can be considered to have roots in Afrocentricity, Negritude and the African Personality. This link is explicitly made by Pityana (1999:146), Vil-Nkomo and Myburgh (1999:266-267), Maloka and Le Roux (2000), and Botha (2000b:25). Nevertheless, certain distinctions can be made between the three concepts discussed here and the African Renaissance. Afrocentricity, Negritude and the African Personality, like Black Consciousness, aim to change the consciousness of individuals and groups. Afrocentricity, Negritude and the African Personality believe that this change can be brought about through the rediscovery of African culture and values. These three concepts reject European values and emphasise the importance of ensuring that Africa's future is based on African culture. Some conceptualisations of the African

Renaissance (the globalist conceptualisation is an example here) place very little emphasis on African culture and values, and most conceptualisations of the African Renaissance are broader than Afrocentricity, Negritude and the African Personality because they involve political and economic goals for the entire continent.

4.4.4 Implications of these Roots

It is evident that the African Renaissance is by no means a new idea. But, is it relevant to identify these roots and acknowledge their influence on the articulation of the African Renaissance? There are several reasons why it is vital that it is recognised that the Renaissance is not a new idea.

4.4.4.1 Ensuring that the African Renaissance is not just another miscarriage

Africa's rebirth has been predicted and anticipated since the end of the 19th century. Writer after writer has declared that a new Africa is about to be born, and yet this birth has not yet been witnessed. It seems that while Africa is continually expecting this new child, it never arrives. This situation can be compared to a woman who is continually hopeful that she will bear a child, but who miscarries each time she becomes pregnant. This does not mean that there is no hope of renewal in Africa, but it does mean that supporters of the Renaissance must realise that this is not the first time that the situation in Africa has been described as being conducive to the rebirth of Africa. Africans must work hard if they are to ensure that this call for a Renaissance does not disappoint like its many predecessors.

4.4.4.2 Learning from previous mistakes

The roots of the African Renaissance must be scrutinised so that lessons can be learnt regarding why earlier attempts at African renewal and African unity did not succeed. These earlier attempts were not wholly unsuccessful, but had significant achievements and failings, and the current African Renaissance movement should pay attention to these achievements and failings so that the African Renaissance does not end up duplicating earlier mistakes.

4.4.4.3 Acknowledging the roots of the African Renaissance

Thabo Mbeki has been criticised for not acknowledging the intellectual foundations upon which he bases his understanding of the African Renaissance. Seepe (2000) sharply criticises Mbeki for this lack of acknowledgement of thinkers such as Steve Biko, suggesting that Mbeki learn from Isaac Newton, who said "that if I have seen further than the others, it is because I stood on the shoulders of giants". To be fair though, both South African President Thabo Mbeki and South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma have acknowledged that the African Renaissance idea which they both so eagerly support, is not a new idea and is based on the ideas of earlier thinkers. When speaking at the launch of the African Renaissance Institute, Mbeki (1999a) acknowledged that the ideas 'has been propagated before by other activists for liberation, drawn from many countries'. Jacob Zuma (2000b) too has acknowledged this legacy, saying: 'This call for rebirth of the African continent is not an entirely new concept. It has been made before in different ways by African leaders'; and South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nkosozana Zuma (2001), quotes a speech made by Albert Lithuli in 1961 regarding African Renewal.

4.5 BRANCHES OF AN AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

The African Renaissance not only has roots, it also has branches. Certain ideas have grown out of the original idea of an African Renaissance. These ideas are related to the African Renaissance and can be considered to be part of the Renaissance. Various projects for realising the Renaissance have been conceptualised. These projects include the Millennium African Renaissance Programme (MAP), the Omega Plan, the New African Initiative (NAI) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). These four programmes are very similar, and the MAP and Omega are supposed to be united in the New African Initiative which was later labelled the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Each of these programmes will be briefly outlined and then the core arguments and assumptions of these programmes and the implications of these arguments and assumptions for the African Renaissance will be discussed.

4.5.1 MAPping a Renaissance

MAP is a plan of action that hopes to achieve the goals of the African Renaissance. There is some confusion regarding what the acronym actually stands for, with various names

being given to it, including the Millennium Africa Renaissance Program (Mbeki 2001a, PANA 2001, Malala 2001, Cokayne & Fabricius 2001:4), the Millennium African Recovery Plan (Zuma 2001b), Millennium African Recovery Programme (Zuma 2001a, Breuillac 2001:18, Mills 2001a:34), Millennium African Renewal Programme (Pityana 2001), the Millennium Plan (Economic Commission for Africa 2001), and the Millennium Partnership for African Recovery Programme (United Nations University 2001). These different names all appear to point to the same thing - to a programme aiming to allow for the realisation of the African Renaissance.

Deputy President Jacob Zuma (2001b) says that the vision of the African Renaissance and the commitment to the realisation of this renaissance, led to the adoption of MAP by key African leaders. He describes MAP as 'a clear programme for African recovery'. Its architects are identified as being President Mbeki, President Obasanjo of Nigeria and President Bouteflika of Algeria and its key programmes are said to be 'human resource development; infrastructure development; peace and security; commitment to democracy and human rights; sustainable economic growth and development' (Zuma 2001b).

The MAP aims to plot out the path to African Renewal (Fraser-Moleketi 2001). It aims to do this by implementing a number of practical strategies. Proponents of the MAP emphasise that it must be an African-led endeavour, but also that it must be conducted in partnership with the West (Zuma 2001a). The South African Department of Foreign Affairs (2001b) describes the MAP as 'a detailed sustainable development project for the economic and social revival of Africa involving a constructive partnership between Africa and the developed world' and Stober (2001) sums up the MAP, saying: 'In a nutshell, MAP commits African countries to good governance and economic stability in return for better trade and aid deals from the advanced economies'. These two descriptions succinctly describe the MAP.

4.5.2 Senegal's Omega Plan

The Omega Plan was articulated by Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade. The Omega Plan aims to assess Africa's needs and to try to 'bridge the fundamental gaps' between African countries and developed countries (Omega Plan 2001). The Plan identifies four areas that will have to be given attention: infrastructure, education, health and agriculture (Breuillac 2001:18).

The Plan aims to integrate Africa into the global economy and attempts to adapt Africa to globalisation rather than opposing globalisation. The Omega Plan says that at its core it is 'the African strategy for globalization'. The Plan resists Africa's marginalisation and believes that the best way to combat this marginalisation is to adhere to globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation.

4.5.3 The New African Initiative (NAI) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

In July 2001 the New African Initiative (NAI) was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001c). It was said to be a merger of the MAP and the Omega Plan. According to the NAI document, the New African Initiative is a pledge by African leaders to eradicate poverty, promote development and to be an active participant in the global economy and global politics (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001b).

In October 2001, it was decided to rename the NAI as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (Granelli 2001). It is not clear why this name change was thought necessary, but evidently no content change accompanied the change of name. It seems that NEPAD is basically the new name for NAI which in turn was essentially a new name for MAP. This makes it possible for these to be referred to interchangeably. This dissertation will use the term NEPAD to refer to NEPAD and its predecessors MAP and NAI.

NEPAD advances a particular explanation of the African situation and provides a particular solution for this situation. The argument presented by NEPAD is summarised succinctly by a member of the President's Office, Nazeem Mahatey (2001), in an article in the *Pretoria News*. Mahatey (2001) points out that Africa is the cradle of humanity and has been an indispensable resource base for centuries. However, these resources were not used to develop the continent. Reasons why these resources were not used for Africa's development include both internal reasons (such as weak states, poor leadership and corruption) and external reasons (such as colonialism, Cold War divisions and international economic pressures). These and other factors have led to the situation in which Africa currently finds itself.

Mahatey (2001) goes on to describe NEPAD's assessment of the current global situation and how this situation provides an opportunity for Africa to develop. The current situation is one of global integration and, according to NEPAD, this situation presents Africa's best hope to end poverty and find the path to prosperity. Africa's development is seen as favourable to the rest of the world and deterioration in Africa as detrimental to the whole world. NEPAD argues that globalisation has the potential to eradicate human suffering, but that its potential benefits to the poor have not yet been realised. NEPAD hopes to affect the process of globalisation so that it can benefit the poor and marginalised.

NEPAD identifies a number of themes and accompanies each theme with a practical plan. The themes are divided into three sections: preconditions for development, sectoral priorities, and mobilising resources (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d). Preconditions for development are broken down into The Peace, Security and Political Governance Initiative and The Economic and Corporate Governance Initiative. Sectoral Priorities include The Human Resource Development Initiative, The Infrastructure Initiative, Diversification of Production and Exports, and The Market Access Initiative. Mobilising Resources is divided into The Capital Flows Initiative and The Environment Initiative.

After being accepted by the OAU, NEPAD was presented to the G8 at their summit in Italy in July 2001. The G8 demonstrated support for NEPAD and pledged to partner Africa in the implementation of NEPAD (SAPA 2001) and the World Bank and IMF have also given their approval of the project (Mills 2001b).

4.5.4 Re-evaluating the Renaissance in the light of NEPAD

What are the implications of the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)? Has the adoption of this new plan, based on MAP and the Omega Plan, changed the way that the Renaissance is perceived?

It is necessary to ask whether NEPAD is part of the Renaissance, whether it replaces the Renaissance or whether it is separate from, but complementary to, the Renaissance. This is a difficult question to answer. The MAP is clearly related to the Renaissance. As discussed earlier, one of the many names give to the MAP is the Millennium African

Renaissance Programme, clearly linking the MAP to the project of bringing about Africa's rebirth. The MAP appears to have grown out of and followed from the African Renaissance. The Omega Plan was conceived of separately from the African Renaissance and does not include any discussion of this Renaissance, although some of the Omega Plan's goals may be considered similar to some of the goals of the Renaissance. NEPAD is clearly linked to the MAP and Omega Plan, but the official NEPAD document (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d) mentions the term 'African Renaissance' only once. It seems that the idea of an African Renaissance led to the development of some kind of implementation strategy for the Renaissance - MAP - which in turn led to the adoption of a continental strategy - NEPAD - which aims to achieve some of the goals articulated by the Renaissance. This understanding leads to the conclusion that while NEPAD can be seen as part of the Renaissance project, it is different from the Renaissance. It is likely that the official line would be that NEPAD compliments the African Renaissance and will assist in its achievement, but it is also likely that NEPAD can be criticised for overemphasising some elements of the Renaissance at the expense of others.

NEPAD is part of the broader movement for African renewal, but can be distinguished from the African Renaissance. Several distinctions between the two can be identified. Firstly, the African Renaissance is clearly about the rediscovery of something, whereas NEPAD seems to aim to achieve something new. The African Renaissance aims to recover Africa's history and to restore pride in being African. It aims to retrieve past glory and then to use this pride in past achievement to build a proud future. NEPAD on the other hand, is not retrospective at all. It looks at the current global situation and assesses how best Africa can use this situation to its advantage.

A second difference is in the extent of the project. The African Renaissance aims to renew Africa politically, economically, psychologically, socially and culturally. NEPAD appears to focus on the economic and political. It has little to say about restoring dignity, or promoting African cultural and moral traditions. The goals of the African Renaissance are wider and more broadly conceived. NEPAD gives practical, empirical goals relating to the political and especially, the economic situation in Africa.

A third difference relates to the leadership of the project. As discussed earlier, there is tension in the African Renaissance about whether it is an élite or mass-driven project. However, there is no such uncertainty with regard to NEPAD - it is clearly an élite-driven process. The goals of NEPAD are not goals that can be realised by ordinary citizens, but are goals that depend upon the activities of African and non-African leaders.

A final difference relates to attitudes towards globalisation. Because of the multiplicity of conceptualisations of the African Renaissance, it is not possible to identify exactly what the African Renaissance's position regarding globalisation is - some statements indicate opposition to globalisation while others imply support. NEPAD, however, clearly regards globalisation as being a good thing, although not without reservations (see Mahatey 2001).

These differences entail a shift in the focus of the project of African renewal. It seems that the path to Africa's renewal has been decided upon and that the drivers of the process of renewal have been chosen. When addressing the Association for African Central Bankers, Mbeki made this clear, telling them that NEPAD should be their focus in promoting African development, and calling on them and Africa's other political and economic leaders to be the midwives of the Renaissance. It seems that Mbeki and other prominent African leaders have decided that the path to the Renaissance will be an economic and political one along the lines of NEPAD, and that the drivers of this Renaissance will be Africa's political and economic élites.

4.6 CONCLUSION: THE RENAISSANCE PACKAGE

This Chapter has explored the content of the African Renaissance, the roots of this concept and the related concepts which have grown out of the idea of a Renaissance. This overview has shown that the idea of Africa being reborn is not a new idea, nor is it a simple idea. African renewal has been called for several times over the last century, and the current articulation of the African Renaissance must acknowledge this history and learn from it. Recently, it has been felt that conditions are right for the rebirth of the African continent to finally take place. This has led to the current popularity of the term 'African Renaissance'. While there is agreement that a Renaissance is needed, there is much disagreement about the nature of this rebirth and how it is to take place. It was shown that there is no single conceptualisation of the African Renaissance, and that the

different understandings of the African Renaissance are sometimes conflicting. The last few years have seen the development of projects that identify practical plans to bring about the realisation of the Renaissance. Included here are Millennium African Renaissance Programme (MAP), the Omega Plan, the New African Initiative (NAI) and, most recently the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The overview of the African Renaissance, its predecessors and branches makes a critical examination of the Renaissance and a response to the research questions posed earlier possible. The subsequent discussion will explore whether or not the African Renaissance challenges Western discourses, based upon the overview of the African Renaissance provided above.

CHAPTER 5: THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE'S RESPONSE TO DOMINANT WESTERN DISCOURSES ON AFRICA

5.1 THE NECESSITY OF A CHALLENGE

This dissertation argues that the African Renaissance should challenge dominant Western discourses. Discourses can both reflect and perpetuate power relations. Accordingly, the dominant Western discourses on Africa were shown to act to maintain current power relations between the West and Africa. One of the components of the African Renaissance, namely 'The Empowerment of Africa in the Global Arena', as well as aspects of other components, indicates that the African Renaissance clearly aims to change global power relations. Given that dominant Western discourses serve to maintain current power relations, it is thus argued that the African Renaissance must challenge these discourses, if it is to achieve its goals. The extent to which this is indeed done, requires further investigation.

Concerning various dominant Western discourses on Africa, two broad categories of Western discourse were examined. Firstly, Western discourses on the African situation, including discussions of Africa as the ailing continent; a continent of chaos; a continent where hope is shattered by despair; a continent with inherent weaknesses; a continent crippled by poverty, conflict and poor leadership; and a continent that is reliant on the West for survival, were discussed. Secondly, Western discourses on proposed solutions to Africa's problems, including discourses on democratisation and on development were examined.

The subsequent assessment requires, firstly, an examination of the African Renaissance's response to Western discourses on the African situation, followed secondly by an analysis of its response to Western discourses on how Africa is to be healed. In this context, the African Renaissance refers to the whole 'Renaissance package', including discussions about a Renaissance which have taken place from 1994 onward, the Millennium African Renaissance Programme (MAP), the New African Initiative (NAI) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

As a point of departure, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by 'challenge'. The argument that the African Renaissance should challenge dominant Western discourses on Africa, is not intended to be taken to mean that the African Renaissance should dispute every single proposition put forward by Western discourses, and deny every assumption inherent in these discourses. Rather, the African Renaissance should examine these discourses to reveal their biases, and then respond in a manner that is not merely a repetition of Western discourses. In the process, proponents of the African Renaissance must cultivate an awareness of the way that these discourses are intricately implicated in power relations in order to evaluate the assertions made by such discourses, then either accept or reject them.

It is, however, not argued that there is a set of 'incorrect' Western discourses on Africa which must be overthrown and replaced by a set of 'correct' African discourses on Africa. What is contended is that Western discourses cannot be assumed to be incontestable just because they dominate, and that African discourses should not be African echoes of Western sounds. Western hegemony needs to be challenged by African discourses that are premised upon African assumptions. African alternatives should not, however, simply deny every proposition put forward by Western discourses and present the exact opposite as an alternative. The latter will fail to emancipate African discourses from Western discourses, and rather reduce them to an inverse mirror image of dominant Western discourses by taking each discourse and turning it on its head. Hence, the argument is that an African Renaissance should scrutinise Western discourses and present alternative discourses that originate in Africa and are founded on African knowledge and assumptions. Preferable, this challenge must avoid being a single voice opposing everything Western, and rather provide an arena in which multiple discourses can emerge from Africans and where these discourses can converse with each other and with discourses of other origins.

5.2 THE RESPONSE TO WESTERN DISCOURSES ON THE AFRICAN SITUATION

The discursive élite in the West presents a picture of Africa as an ailing, chaotic and hopeless continent, dependent on the benevolence of the West for the survival of its inhabitants. Does the African Renaissance indeed challenge this discourse and provide an alternative interpretation (or multiple alternative interpretations) of the African situation?

5.2.1 Africa as a Recovering Continent

Similar to dominant Western discourses, the African Renaissance presents the African continent as a continent experiencing ill-health. However, unlike some Western discourses, the African Renaissance clearly sees this 'illness' as temporary. Writing on the African Renaissance, Reuel Khoza (1999:281) says:

> To be blunt, Africa is a pathologically diseased, drug-addicted, malnourished patient. ... We are a sick continent and we are largely to blame for it. We are a continent afflicted with war, famine, pestilence, incompetence, corruption, disease, crime and a generally declining standard and quality of life.

Khoza (1999:286-287) concludes that this assessment of Africa is not Afro-pessimism but 'is the admission of an alcoholic that he has a problem [and that] he carries a large measure of personal responsibility for the problem' and notes that there are African institutions which are serving as 'beacons of hope' and believes that these African (not Western) institutions must allow the Renaissance to be realised.

Other proponents of the African Renaissance also use the language of illness to describe Africa's condition. For example, the South African Department of Foreign Affairs (2001e) contends that the New African Initiative is 'anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalising world'. This statement acknowledges that Africa is suffering from a 'malaise' but identifies Africans as healers of this malaise.

South African President Thabo Mbeki (1998c) refers to Western discourses describing Africa as a diseased continent and argues that Africans must throw off the image that the West has created of Africa. He says that Africa:

> can and must be its own liberator from the condition which seeks to describe our Continent and its people as the poverty stricken and disease ridden primitives in a world riding the crest of a wave of progress and human upliftment.

African Renaissance discourses thus reject the image of Africa as a continent dying of a seemingly incurable disease. While proponents of the African Renaissance do not suggest that Africa's condition is a condition of optimal health, they present Africa as a

continent that is recovering from any illness it is experiencing, and in this way challenge Western discourses.

5.2.2 Africa as the Continent of Hope

As previously indicated, many Western discourses depict Africa as a hopeless continent, or as a continent where hope is obstructed by overwhelming despair. African Renaissance discourses reject this depiction and present a picture of a continent of hope. For example, South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nkosozana Zuma (2001), expressed this viewpoint on Africa Day 2001, when she said that 'the Africa of hope is emerging like warming rays of sun' and that this situation 'challenges us to be warriors of the renaissance'.

Similarly, several of President Mbeki's speeches on the African Renaissance have proclaimed that Africa is a continent of hope, despite its image as a continent of despair. In an interview with *Siemensworld*, Mbeki contended that the perception that Africa is hopeless is not true, and listed a number of situations that he believes indicates that Africa is a continent of hope (Vilsmeier 2000:21). For example, in a speech in Chantilly, USA, Mbeki (1998d:9) speaks about how Africa has been perceived as 'home to an unending spiral of anarchy and chaos, at whose unknown end is a dark pith of an utter, a complete and unfathomable human disaster', but how this Africa is now challenging this image and becoming a continent of hope. In other speeches Mbeki (1999a) emphasises Africa's 'bright future' and predicts that while the struggle for a Renaissance may be long and hard, Africa will emerge victorious as long as Africans do not allow their hopes to be overwhelmed by the 'cynicism of the defeated' (Mbeki 1999b). Mbeki's speeches do not suggest the absence of despair, but rather suggest that hope can and must conquer despair so that the Renaissance can be realised.

The whole concept of the African Renaissance is founded on the idea that Africa need not resign itself to some terrible fate, but that Africans have the capacity to shape their own destiny and to ensure that this destiny is a favourable one. Writing in the *Mail & Guardian*, journalist Howard Barrell (1998) says that Africa has hit 'rock bottom' and now has two choices: 'to bounce along the bottom, which means to choose despair' or to develop a vision of a multi-faceted Renaissance and to get on with realising this Renaissance.

Supporters of the African Renaissance have chosen the second option, rejecting despair and setting about to transform a hopeful vision into a reality.

5.2.3 Africa as a Continent that is Addressing its Problems

Western discourses present Africa as a continent plagued with many problems, including appalling poverty, unending war, and corrupt leaders. How does the African Renaissance respond to this presentation of Africa? The African Renaissance recognises the many problems faced by Africa and acknowledges that these problems present obstacles to the realisation of the African Renaissance. South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad (2001) underlines about the importance of being realistic with regard to the problems faced by the African continent and acknowledges that Africa 'is still bedevilled by the persistence of the scourge of conflicts and underdevelopment'. Mbeki (1996) tells of 'the dismal shame of poverty, suffering and human degradation' in Africa, and in a statement on the African Renaissance issued by the Office of the South African Minister of Transport, Dullah Omar (2001), it is acknowledged that 'warfare, conflict and polemics' as well as inadequate resources are huge problems facing Africa.

While the problems facing Africa are acknowledged, African Renaissance discourse differs from Western discourses in that it does not see Africa's problems as a result of inherent inferiority, but blames Africa's current situation on a number of different factors, mostly of an external and structural nature. South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma (2000b) describes Africa's problems as being the Africa's legacy of subjection through the slave trade and colonialism must be seen as a causal factor which contributed to Africa's current problems. In African Renaissance discourse, poverty is not seen as being the result only of African government's poor economic policies, but is also seen as being a result of an inequitable global economic system. This idea is reflected in a speech by President Mbeki (1998b) in which he speaks of the 'strange situation' in which the increase in the wealth of the countries of the North has been accompanied by increased poverty in the countries of the South. The New African Initiative identifies internal and external factors that have resulted in Africa's current situation. Three reasons for Africa's problems are identified (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001b). Firstly, colonialism is blamed for leaving post-colonial Africa with inherited weak states and dysfunctional economies. Secondly, corrupt leadership and poor governance is described as having aggravated this situation, and thirdly, the Cold War is seen as having been an obstacle in the way of the

development of accountable government in Africa. Instead of implying that Africa's problems are a reflection of some kind of inherent inferiority, the African Renaissance recognises that there have been internal and external factors that can be blamed for the poverty, conflict and other unfavourable conditions in Africa.

Unlike Western discourses, the African Renaissance has faith that Africa is currently addressing the problems of poverty, conflict and poor leadership. This is especially true of the problem of poor leadership. Supporters of the African Renaissance believe that there is a new set of leaders who are committed to leading in the interests of the people. For example, South African Deputy Minster of Foreign Affairs, Aziz Pahad (2001) says that a new African leadership is emerging and that this leadership is dedicated to African renewal. South African Minister of Foreign Affairs Nkosozana Zuma (2001) speaks about a new generation of African leaders who are enraged at Africa's current conditions and who are committed to a peaceful, stable Africa. Mbeki (1998a) identifies the emergence of this new leadership as being a result of the decision by African people that certain ways of governing are unacceptable, and have demonstrated unwillingness to tolerate corrupt leadership. African Renaissance discourse proclaims that there is a new breed of African leaders and that these leaders can lead Africa out of the current conditions of poverty and conflict. In this way, Western discourses on Africa are challenged.

5.2.4 Africa in Partnership with the West

Western discourses suggest that Africa cannot heal itself but will only be healed with the help of the West and by taking the advice given by the West. The African Renaissance's response to this is ambiguous, on the one hand suggesting that Africa holds the key to its future prosperity, but on the other hand continually referring to a need for 'partnership' from the West.

Some Renaissance discourse appears to see Africa as its own 'doctor', proclaiming that the healing of Africa will only take place through the efforts of Africans. In one of the first speeches making reference to an African Renaissance, former South African president Mandela (1994) describes the problems of Africa concluding that 'it is a matter of fact that we have it in ourselves as Africans to change all this'. In Mbeki's address at the Third African Renaissance Festival in March 2001, he warned that Africans must be the instruments of their own upliftment rather than 'wards of benevolent guardians' (Mbeki

2001b). The whole idea of Africa taking its destiny in its own hands implies that it is the activities of Africans themselves that will allow the Renaissance to be realised, and suggests that Africa should no longer depend upon the magnanimity of others for its survival.

However, some recent discourses on the African Renaissance have lost this emphasis on Africa determining its own destiny and have replaced it with the idea of 'partnership' between the West and Africa. This is especially evident in the MAP (which is sometimes even referred to as the Millennium *Partnership* for the African Recovery Programme), which became the New African Initiative and then NEPAD (New *Partnership* for Africa's Development). This initiative makes frequent mention of the partnership between African and the West that will drive the Renaissance.

A close examination of NEPAD (and its predecessors, MAP and NAI) suggests that this most recent articulation of the African Renaissance does not challenge Western discourses that depict Africa as dependent upon the West for any kind of pleasant future. NEPAD still plays lip service to the idea of Africans being masters of their own destiny, but appears to concede that Africa depends upon the West's assistance for its renewal. Commitments to African self-determination do appear in NEPAD, making it seem that NEPAD rejects Western discourses depicting Africa as dependent on the West to improve its current situation. NEPAD says that 'Africa recognises that it holds the key to its own development', and that Africans 'must be the architects of their own sustained upliftment' (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d). NEPAD says that it 'centres around African ownership and management' and that it is based upon 'the agenda set by African peoples through their own initiatives and of their own volition, to shape their own destiny'.

These assertions that NEPAD is about Africans determining their own destiny, are contradicted by other parts of NEPAD which suggest that Africa's renewal is dependent on actions taken by non-African powers. The whole initiative is clearly marketed as a 'partnership' between Africa and the world, especially the industrialised countries and powerful financial institutions. This 'partnership' is said to be one in which there are 'shared responsibilities and mutual benefits' - in other words, Africa's renewal is seen to be the responsibility of Africa and the West, and is seen to have the potential to yield benefits to Africa and the West. Frequent references are made to the responsibilities of both parties.

Section V - 'Programme of Action' - looks at various initiatives forming part of NEPAD, and identified 'Actions' that will have to be taken in each of these initiatives (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d). Several of these initiatives include a list of 'Actions' that must be taken on an international level. Included here are numerous calls for quite substantial support from the international community. In terms of health, there is to be a campaign for 'increased international financial support'. With regard to information and communication technology NEPAD aims to work with multilateral initiatives, such as the G8 DotForce. In terms of agriculture, 'partnership schemes to address donor fatigue for ... agricultural projects' is called for as well as increased support in terms of investment and research. When discussing marketing, NEPAD calls for information-sharing between non-African and African firms and for the transfer of technologies to Africa. With respect to promoting the private sector, the international community is called on to mentor African firms and to provide them with technical assistance. In the 'Market Access Initiative' NEPAD says that developing countries 'could collectively call for structural adjustment by developed countries in those industries in which the natural competitive advantage now lies with the developing world'. In the 'Capital Flows Initiative' discusses Africa's need for a 7 per cent annual growth rate and says that 'the majority of the much needed resources will have to be obtained from outside the continent', and then continues with a discussion of the importance of debt reduction and increases in ODA flows. In Part VI - 'A New Global Partnership' - NEPAD gives a list of thirteen quite substantial responsibilities for the developed world, including material support, debt reduction, increased ODA flows, trade terms more favourable to African countries, investment and technical support.

It appears that NEPAD believes that Africa can plan and can lead its renewal, but that without international support the African Renaissance will not take place. Consider the following paragraph in Section VIII of NEPAD:

> The view of the initiating Presidents is that, unless infrastructure is addressed on a planned basis ... the renewal process of the continent will not take off. Therefore the international community is urged to partner Africa in accelerating the provision of infrastructure.

Thus, the African Renaissance is dependent upon improved infrastructure, and this in turn is dependent upon the assistance of the developed world. This implies that the African

Renaissance is dependent upon the activities of non-African states, Western states. This kind of assumption appears regularly in NEPAD.

This idea of partnership in the African Renaissance (and all its various initiatives and programmes) has been criticised. Even before the NEPAD discussion came into being, Moeletsi Mbeki (1998:215-216) noticed a tendency for African Renaissance discourse to doubt that Africa can bring about its renewal by itself and thus to look to the West for help. According to him, this signifies 'a resignation by Africa's leaders to the idea that, despite many words to the contrary, Africans are not capable, in the foreseeable future, of running their countries economies, nor of being able to master modern technology and management'. With the emergence of NEPAD, other analysts made similar observations. Friedman (2001) comments that one of the reasons that we should remain sceptical about the MAP (and thus also NEPAD) is that it appears to see the activities of rich countries as the key to economic growth. Malala (2001) notes that for many delegates at the World Economic Forum, where the MAP was presented, the MAP sounded like 'the good old begging bowl', even though Senegalese President Wade and South African President Mbeki insisted that Africa was asking for finance for a project, rather than for a generous donation to a cause. Seepe (2001) comments that although the MAP sounds like a fresh call to African recovery, it is betrayed by its misreading of humanity. According to Seepe (2001) the idea of this partnership for African recovery places blind faith on developed countries, but this faith is ahistorical and naïve. He argues that global economic inequalities are not accidental, but are a result of the political and economic interests of the rich. Seepe (2001) feels that history has shown that moral appeals for assistance are inadequate. Rostron (2000) expresses similar sentiments to Seepe and points out that profits can be made from poverty. He is cynical with regard to the likelihood that the West will support any project that is not in their own self-interest, and suggests that global inequities function to benefit the West, making it unlikely that the West will provide substantial support for any project that aims to reduce global inequities.

5.2.5 Assessment

The discussion presented above indicates areas where African Renaissance discourse challenges Western discourses, and where African Renaissance discourse concurs with the West. It is evident that African Renaissance discourse rejects the Afro-pessimism of many Western discourses. While it does not present an unrealistically positive picture of

Africa's current situation, it suggests that Africa is a continent of hope and a continent that is healing, rather than a hopeless dying continent. Africa's problems are presented as obstacles that are gradually being overcome, rather than as insurmountable hindrances to the realisation of any favourable future. Africa's problems are seen as an outcome of many internal and external factors, rather than being an inevitable result of some kind of inherent weakness. In this presentation of Africa, African Renaissance discourse challenges Western discourses and provides an alternative interpretation of the African situation.

However, African Renaissance discourse falls short of adequately challenging Western discourses on Africa's need for 'help' from the West. The African Renaissance's response to Western discourses regarding Africa's need for help is ambiguous. While it appears that the African Renaissance regards Africa as a capable continent that must not rely on others for its well-being; it also seems that African Renaissance discourse, especially as articulated in NEPAD, regards the West's assistance as vital for African recovery.

The argument put forward by NEPAD appears very logical. It is argued that although Africa is a continent with a proud history, its current situation is unfavourable. This current situation is explained as being a legacy of both external factors; such as slavery, colonialism and the Cold War; and internal factors, such as corrupt governments and foolish economic policies. NEPAD suggests that the current African and global situation is conducive to an end to Africa's marginalisation and underdevelopment. It is believed that the recovery of Africa will benefit the world as a whole, and that for this reason it can be expected that the whole of humanity will unite in the realisation of Africa's recovery - thus Africa's recovery will take place by means of a 'partnership' between Africa and the rest of the world, especially the powerful West. The recovery of Africa will allow Africa to be integrated into a globalising world and will end Africa's marginalisation in world affairs.

This argument is well worked out and has an appealing logic. However, the argument implies that Africa's recovery is to some extent dependent on help from the West. The term 'partnership' sounds better than 'help' but amounts to more or less the same thing. A type of deal is drawn up between the West and Africa: if Africa makes progress with regard to democratisation, conflict resolution and the liberalisation of Africa's economies, the West will step in and provide aid, investment and trade opportunities so that Africa can develop. Stated differently, it is Africa's request for the West's help accompanied by a

promise that Africa will 'behave' - it will attempt to bring about the political and economic changes that the West has prescribed.

Embedded in the whole NEPAD argument are a number of points of debate. Firstly, NEPAD appears to assume that Africa would be a developed continent, much like Europe, if certain factors had been absent. But it cannot be said with certainty that Africa's current situation would be one of development and prosperity (as defined by the West) had there been no slavery, colonialism, Cold War, poor African leadership, failed economic policies, and so on. Secondly, NEPAD suggests that the current global and African situation is such that Africa's recovery can finally be realised, after many failed attempts. However, this is certainly disputable. Implied in NEPAD is that globalisation is a positive force which can be allowed to work in Africa's favour, but several analysts of the globalising world suggest the opposite. Thirdly, NEPAD believes that an African Renaissance will benefit the whole world. NEPAD is said to be a partnership based on 'mutual interests'. But is this so? Would a prosperous, peaceful Africa be in the interest of global economic powers? There are arguments supporting both sides of this debate. Finally, are the global economic powers willing to assist Africa in realising its renewal? The rhetoric of political leaders such as former US President Bill Clinton and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair may suggest that powerful Western countries are willing to be part of this 'partnership', but the long-term political and economic commitment may not be forthcoming. NEPAD speaks about this partnership as based on 'shared commitments and binding agreements' (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d) - but how deep are any of the commitments the West has made to 'helping' African and how binding are any of these agreements? How is Africa to ensure that the West brings its side of the bargain? How have the events surrounding the attack on the US on 11 September 2001 affected Africa's position on the West's list of priorities?

Since these issues fall beyond the ambit of this study, all that must noted is that the various initiatives which have been proposed to allow the realisation of the African Renaissance, are premised upon a belief that Africa needs help from the West and that it can expect to receive help from the West. Western discourses also present the argument that Africa is in need of the West's assistance, but are less positive about the likelihood of the West providing this assistance. In campaigning for a global 'partnership' for Africa's development, NEPAD accedes that Western discourses are right to suggest that Africa cannot heal itself. It has been demonstrated that 'helping' can be an exercise of power,

but recent African Renaissance discourse does not provide a forum for debate regarding what kind of Western 'help' (if any) is beneficial and what kind involves an exercise of power. In addition, NEPAD argument may be naïve in its assumption that such help will be forthcoming.

5.3 THE RESPONSE TO WESTERN DISCOURSES ON DEMOCRATISATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Dominant Western discourses present democratisation and development as part of the 'cure' for Africa's 'illness'. The subsequent discussion will summarise African Renaissance discourse on democratisation and development. This summary is followed by an analysis of the response provided by the African Renaissance to the assumptions implicit in Western discourses on democratisation and development in Africa.

5.3.1 Democratisation

As previously discussed, Western discourses do not just promote democracy, but promote a particular kind of democracy - liberal representative multi-party democracy. This form of democracy is the form that has been adopted by most Western states, meaning that the West promotes its own form of government as a cure for Africa's ills. The African Renaissance makes frequent reference to democracy, but does not necessarily define democracy like the West does. As discussed, democracy is seen as one of the components of the African Renaissance. The word democracy surfaces repeatedly in African Renaissance discourse. But what is meant by the term 'democracy' when it is used in African Renaissance discourse?

The term 'democracy' when used in African Renaissance discourse appears to refer to multi-party competition and elections, at least when used by South African government officials. Consider South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aziz Pahad (2001), who speaks about the importance of the 'consolidation of multi-party democracies' for the realisation of the Renaissance. South African President Thabo Mbeki (1998a) discusses governance and the Renaissance and concludes that one party states will be obstacles to the Renaissance. He says that the consolidation of multi-party democracies and the holding of elections in several African states bode well for the Renaissance. South African Minister of Foreign Affairs Nkosozana Zuma (2001) speaks about the creation of multi-

party democracies as one of the conditions for the Renaissance and South African Minister of Public Service and Administration Geraldene Fraser-Moleketi (2001) refers to the legalisation of opposition and the holding of elections as being a positive sign for the Renaissance.

This enthusiasm for multi-partyism and the holding of elections may seem to imply that the African Renaissance supports the adoption of Western-style democracy in Africa, but other comments made by supporters of the African Renaissance suggest that this is not so. Botha (2000a) interprets the African Renaissance as supporting the establishment of political democracy while 'taking into full consideration African specific conditions'. South African President Thabo Mbeki (1998b) stresses that while he sees democratisation as part of the African Renaissance, he is not suggesting that there is 'any one model of democracy which we must copy', but rather that each country must adopt a form of democracy that suits its specific conditions. He reiterates this idea when addressing the joint houses of Parliament saying that the democratic political systems which must be adopted as part of the Renaissance must take into account 'African specifics' (Mbeki 1999a). When discussing democratisation and the African Renaissance, Guèye (1999:255-256) emphasises that Africans must question the presumed universality of the Western interpretation of democracy and should give some serious thought to what a genuine African democratic system should be. He points out that there are examples of African forms of democracy in Africa's history and that these forms of democracy should be considered when debating what contemporary African democracy should be.

The comments discussed above imply that the African Renaissance should provide a platform for debate regarding what is meant by democracy and what forms of democracy are appropriate in Africa. However, despite these isolated comments, there does not appear to have been much debate regarding the meaning of democracy within the context of the African Renaissance. While supporters of the African Renaissance suggest that democratisation is vital for the Renaissance and speak about the importance of establishing 'genuine' democracies, there has been little debate regarding how democracies should be consolidated and what is meant by 'genuine' democracy. This absence of debate weakens the African Renaissance's response to Western discourses on democratisation as there is little clarity regarding what kind of democracy is to be implemented as part of the African Renaissance. This has led some interpreters to view the African Renaissance as being supportive of liberal Western-style democracy.

Consider comments made by journalist Howard Barrell who wrote in 1998 that South African President Thabo Mbeki (who he sees as 'African Renaissance man') seeks to promote 'the spread of basically liberal democratic systems of government'. Two years later, Barrell remained convinced of this, saying that the form of democracy promoted by Thabo Mbeki was 'evidently liberal democratic' and referring to a number of Mbeki's speeches in support of this hypothesis (Barrell 2000:12).

The discussion of democracy in NEPAD supports Barrell's hypothesis. The NEPAD document devotes a sub-section to the 'the Democracy and Governance Initiative' (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d). This initiative is said to support 'principles of democracy, transparency, accountability, integrity, respect for human rights and promotion of the rule of law'. These values sound like those generally associated with liberal democracy, and NEPAD makes no reference to 'African specifics' or the need to devise an African form (or African forms) of democracy. Any commitment to thoughtful debate regarding democratisation in Africa appears to have been abandoned with the development of NEPAD.

5.3.2 Development

Western discourses repeatedly advise Africa that it needs to 'develop'. The term 'development' is a difficult one to define and has been related to various processes and various types of change. However, what is clear from Western discourses on development is that development is seen as change towards the better, and also as change to become more like the West, thus implying that Africa needs to become more like the West if its 'illness' is to be cured. Western discourses on development most frequently define development in economic terms and advise that economic changes be made in order for Africa to develop.

African Renaissance discourse also makes frequent references to development and clearly sees development as a key factor in Africa's renewal. What the African Renaissance takes development to mean is not clear, and some of the discussions on development that have formed part of African Renaissance discourse, appear to be contradictory.

5.3.2.1 Modernisation and the African Renaissance

Some African Renaissance discourse appears to embrace modernisation, speaking of how Africa is 'backward' and needs to become 'modernised'. The idea of 'backwardness' arises again and again in discussions on the African Renaissance. For example, in former South African President Nelson Mandela's statement to the OAU, which was one of the first examples of the use of the term 'African Renaissance', he refers to the need for African people to be emancipated from 'backwardness' (Mandela 1994). Thabo Mbeki (1998a; 1999a) describes Africans as being in a situation of 'backwardness' in his address to the United Nations University and in his speech at the launch of the African Renaissance Institute. The NEPAD document also makes references to Africa's 'backwardness' which it says stands in 'stark contrast to the prosperity of the developed world' (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d); and at the African Renaissance Gala Dinner, Deputy President Jacob Zuma (2000b) spoke about the need to ensure that the next generation of African do not have to endure the 'ignorance and backwardness' experienced by the current generation of Africans. What does this frequent use of the term 'backwardness' mean? It appears to accept the assumptions of modernisation theory: that all regions in the world are somewhere along a line of development, with some 'backward' and some 'advanced', and that progress along this line is inevitable and unidirectional.

This impression is strengthened by other comments made in discussions of the African Renaissance. NEPAD emphasises the importance of narrowing the 'development chasm' between Africa and the rest of the world and about allowing Africa to 'rise to the level of developing countries' (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001b). When discussing the African Renaissance, Joel Netshitenzhe (1999), CEO of the South African Government Communications and Information Systems (GCIS), said that Africa should try to 'leap-frog some of the stages through which the world has gone' so that it can reach the 'highest levels of human development'. In a discussion on the African Renaissance, Dr Tim Thahane (1999), Deputy Governor of the South African Reserve Bank, describes Africa as a continent that 'lags significantly behind' the rest of the world and in an address to the Association of African Central Bankers, Mbeki (2001c) discusses the need for the 'diversification and modernisation of African economies'. Howard Barrell (1998) interprets Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance as being 'unobjectionable motherhood, *mieliepap* and modernisation' while Holiday (2001) regards it as 'a call for rapid

modernisation' which has been disguised as a plea for a return to Africa's ancient past. Vale and Maseko (1998:276) also relate the African Renaissance to modernisation theory describing South Africa's idea of an African Renaissance as being 'buoyed by modernisation theory'.

What these comments indicate, is that some African Renaissance supporters accept the concept of development as presented in modernisation theory and see development as linear and universal. These commentators imply that each region in the world is positioned somewhere along a continuum of development and that Africa is the region that is furthest behind and thus that Africa needs to try to 'catch up' by becoming more like the rest of the world. These assumptions are very problematic given the wealth of criticism that has been given of modernisation theory. Those who have closely scrutinised modernisation theory have concluded that there are several Eurocentric assumptions inherent in modernisation theory. Modernisation theory has been described as the 'Western capitalistic dream for development' and some of the criticisms directed against modernisation theory include that it never questions Western knowledge systems, that it represents Western experience as universal and that it encourages the rest of the world to emulate the West (Treurnicht 1997:18-21; Coetzee 1996:56-62). Despite these often-repeated criticisms of modernisation theory, it seems that some African Renaissance discourse include assumptions that are rooted in this Westerncentric model of development.

5.3.2.2 Globalisation, neoliberalism and the African Renaissance

What is the African Renaissance's perspective on globalisation, capitalism and all that go with them? Pritvorov and Shubin (2000:89) comment on globalisation, saying that it

> has been accompanied by an upsurge of the neoliberal ideology with its standard form of 'freedom' postulates: liberation of market relations from state regulation and even state boundaries, reduction of the state to a machinery that serves private business; democracy, civil society *and other attributes ascribed to the society of Western countries.* The paradox is that while neoliberalism is undergoing a crisis in the fields of social sciences and political practice in the West, at the same time it acquires the features of an almost authoritarian ideology, virtually a religion, which *leaves no room for objections and heterodoxy, when applied to non-Western countries and to Africa in particular.* (emphasis added)

This comment indicates the extent to which globalisation is the globalisation of neo-liberalism, which involves the promotion of Western concepts, and Western lifestyle. It also suggests that globalisation involves the stifling of alternatives. Pritvorov and Shubin's argument is supported by Robinson (1999:149-150) who argues that the increasing acceptance of neoliberal ideology has been accompanied by increased support within US academic discourse for the promotion of liberal democracy as part of the US's global strategy. It is believed that the adoption of neoliberal ideology by developing states will be beneficial both to those states and to America and other states promoting this ideology. This perspective also argues that the acceptance of liberal democracy and neoliberal economic practices are a response to empirical conditions emerging out of globalisation and are therefore objective and legitimate. Because of this, a response to globalisation and the neoliberalism that accompanies it should be a vital part of the African Renaissance, as the African Renaissance has to address the question of development within the context of globalisation and neoliberalism. What is the African Renaissance's response?

Before examining the African Renaissance's response, it is useful to clarify what 'globalisation' and 'neoliberalism' are generally understood to mean and how they are related to development. Hoogvelt (1997:67) defines globalisation as 'a new social architecture of cross border interactions'. Scholte (1999:10-11) provides a more detailed definition, examining three different usages of the word 'globalisation'. The first usage equates globalisation with universalisation, seeing it as the spreading and increasing acceptance of various objects and experiences worldwide (Scholte 1999:10). The second usage sees globalisation as internationalisation, and uses the word to describe cross-border activity between countries as well as increasing international interaction and interdependence (Scholte 1999:10). A third usage of the word understands globalisation to mean liberalisation, and sees globalisation as referring to the removal of restrictions on movements between countries to create a more 'open' world (Scholte 1999:11). Using these definitions it can be conclude that globalisation refers to increasing universalisation, internationalisation and liberalisation and that it has far-reaching social, cultural, political and economic consequences. This very broad definition of globalisation is accepted.

Neoliberalism is equally difficult to define. It evidently has its roots in liberalism, but is also different from liberalism. Liberalism itself is a confusing concept with many different connotations. Despite this wealth of connotations, Gray (1996:286) believes it is possible

to identify four key ideas present in all liberal thought. He identifies these as being normative individualism - the belief that the claims of individuals are more important than the claims of collectivities, institutions or other life forms; universalism - 'the idea that there are weighty duties and/or rights which are owed to all human beings ... just in virtue of their standing as human beings'; meliorism or progress - the belief that while human institutions may not be perfectible, they are certainly open to substantial improvement through human action; and liberal egalitarianism - 'the denial of any natural moral or political hierarchy among human beings'. Neoliberalism includes these ideas, but can be considered to be to the conservative side of liberalism (Sargent 1996:113). Neoliberals support fiscal conservatism and are slightly more conservative than other liberals in terms of social and foreign policy (Sargent 1996:113). This conservative aspect of neoliberalism has led some to remark that 'late twentieth century conservatives are often characterised "neoliberals"' (Ryan 1993:303).

The contributions to liberalism made by Fukuyama (1989;1992) can be considered to have contributed to this new understanding of liberalism. Fukuyama explicitly links liberalism to the globalisation of the capitalist economy and to rights-based individualism (Robinson 1999:149). The result of this shift in the understanding of liberalism can be considered to have influenced the United States' global strategy of promoting liberal democracy and free markets. It must also be noted that neoliberalism is clearly associated with liberal economics. The liberal economic order generally refers to the market or capitalist economy and to the economic system promoted by the IMF and related institutions (Amacher et al. 1993:349). The quote from Pritvorov and Shubin (2000:89) at the beginning of this section clearly indicates this approach, seeing neoliberalism as being related to the promotion of a free market economy.

Development today takes place within the context of globalisation and neoliberalism. The assumptions inherent in globalisation and neoliberalism are also present in contemporary theories and policies of development. This makes it necessary to examine the African Renaissance's response to globalisation and neoliberalism as part of an examination of the African Renaissance's response to Western discourses on development. Taking the definitions of globalisation and neoliberalism discussed above as a point of departure, it is possible to examine African Renaissance discourse to see to what extent it challenges the prevalent Western discourses of globalisation and neoliberalism and the way in which these discourses have influenced Western discourses on development in Africa.

The African Renaissance's does not provide one united response, making it difficult to determine what its argument is with regard to neoliberalism and globalisation. Some African Renaissance discourse appears to challenge globally accepted economic paradigms, arguing that Africa should challenge the West's acceptance of both and the West's expectation that Africa too should accept globalisation and neoliberal reforms. The words of South African Communist Party General-Secretary, Blade Nzimande (1999) are an example of this approach. He says that 'any genuine attempt at the renewal of the African continent has to, in the first instance, challenge imperialism and its current neoliberal ideology' and must also explicitly articulate an alternative agenda. Vladimir Shubin's (2000:68-80) analysis of the African Renaissance in the era of globalisation, also suggests that the African Renaissance should challenge globalisation and capitalism, arguing that neoliberalism and a true African Renaissance are incompatible. He reaches this conclusion by examining neoliberal economics, which is premised upon privatisation, competitiveness and individualism. If the African Renaissance is supposed to be premised upon the rediscovery of African culture and values, and especially the reassertion of the principle of *ubuntu*, then the African Renaissance must be a challenge to neoliberalism and globalisation, because *ubuntu* promotes collectivism which is incompatible with privatisation, competitiveness and individualism (Shubin 2000:69). Murobe (2000:43-67) advances a similar argument. He maintains that neoliberalism and globalisation are premised upon the acceptance of self-interest as an unavoidable and necessary element of contemporary existence (Murobe 2000:46-49). However, Murobe (2000:56) believes that the African Renaissance is based upon, or should be based upon, the ethical values that form part of *ubuntu*. These values are not compatible with individualism and the pursuit of self-interest, and therefore the Renaissance can be said to be incompatible with globalisation and neoliberalism.

Harvey (1999) feels that the African Renaissance has not as yet provided enough of a challenge to globalisation and related economic philosophies and practices. He argues that such a challenge is vital for the Renaissance to succeed. Hence new macro-economic frameworks must be developed, and the models and programmes prescribed by the World Bank and IMF must be rejected. Dladla (1997) is another thinker who believes that the African Renaissance must consist of a challenge to globalisation and capitalism. He warns that care must be taken so that the African Renaissance does not become an 'externally driven consumerist movement that will leave us Africans continuing to be

"valued" only for our ability to absorb and popularise foreign ideas, trinkets and junk'. Instead he suggests that Africans should educate themselves regarding African culture and pursue a future that is based in this culture. In this respect, Dladla (1997) argues that '[m]erely repackaging trendy ideas from other dominant polities ... will not be enough'. This perspective concurs with that of Vale and Maseko's (1998:280-284) conceptualisation of an Africanist version of an African Renaissance which rejects modernisation and challenges dominant narratives regarding African development. This Africanist perspective challenges dominant discourses in international relations, opening up space for the articulation of alternatives. It is furthermore argued that a successful African Renaissance will be one which adopts an Africanist perspective and which rejects neoliberalism.

This understanding of the Renaissance contrasts with one that positions the Renaissance within the framework of globalisation and neoliberalism, and does not regard a challenge to globalisation and capitalism as a necessary ingredient of the Renaissance. This approach is reflected in discourses which see Africa's increasing acceptance of neoliberal economic practices as beneficial for the Renaissance, or which advocate the adoption of such practices if the Renaissance is to be realised. For example, Aziz Pahad (2001), the South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, stresses that Africa is part of the global economy and underlines the importance of trade liberalisation, privatisation and financial and budgetary discipline for the Renaissance. This implies that a neoliberal approach to the economy must be adopted if the African Renaissance is to succeed. The Omega Plan (one of the forerunners of NEPAD) openly supports the acceptance of globalisation and neoliberalism as part of Africa's rebirth. In the introduction to the Omega Plan (Omega Plan 2001), the issues of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation are discussed. The Omega Plan states that:

> African States insistently re-affirmed their adherence to the above mentioned options [globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation] and categorically rejected the idea of being marginalized in the process of world economic and commercial evolution.

Similarly, Kritzinger-van Niekerk (2000:34-35) identifies the embracing of 'modern market economies' and the deepening of reforms so as to make the private sector the main engine of growth, as being promising signs for the African Renaissance. Cleary (1998:22) sees the revival of African history and culture as part of the Renaissance as only being

useful to the extent that elements of Africa's history and culture can be used to improve Africa's 'competitive advantage'. He argues that the African Renaissance can only emerge if it is 'founded squarely in the realities of the global environment' and says that the success of the African Renaissance depends on macro-economic stabilisation, privatisation, increased economic growth rates and increased economic activity (Cleary 1998:22;26). Deputy Governor of the South African Reserve Bank, Tim Thahane (1999), compares African development with Asian development, and concludes that 'a robust embrace of globalisation is not inconsistent with African culture, values and norms'. This perspective is also adopted by the NEPAD document which contends that there are already positive signs regarding African Renewal, and identifies one of these positive signs as being the spread of market-orientated economies in Africa. These and similar comments imply that Africa must not challenge the neoliberal orthodoxy and the current trend of globalisation, but must try to realise the Renaissance within this framework.

The position of Mbeki and the ANC-led South African government on this issue is difficult to decipher. In Mbeki's speech at the African Renaissance conference in 1998, he stressed that it is necessary to challenge the idea of the market as a modern god - 'a supernatural phenomenon to whose dictates everything human must bow in a spirit of powerlessness' (Mbeki 1998b). Mbeki (2000) argues that globalisation holds certain threats to Africans: it encourages Africans to succumb 'to the pervasive dominant culture' at the expense of African culture, identity and heritage and 'denies that there are other solutions to our challenges other than those imposed by the dominant cultures'. These statements appear to suggest that he would reject any scheme of development that involved an emulation of the West. This perspective is supported by the ANC's 1997 discussion document *Developing a Strategic Perspective on South African Foreign Policy*. According to Botha (2000a:10), this document campaigns against globalisation, arguing that South Africa and other African countries must not become 'municipalities' in the 'global village'. The document goes on to contend that globalisation contradicts the agenda of the Renaissance, and that 'the success of the Renaissance depends on the depth of and extent to which it challenges globalisation' (ANC 1997b).

This stance is difficult to reconcile with other speeches of Mbeki and with the promotion of documents like NEPAD by the ANC. An examination of Mbeki's speeches allows Cleary (1998:22) to argue that Mbeki understands that Africa must be integrated fully into the global economy. Howard Barrell's (2000:8;15-16) analysis of the ANC and Mbeki's stance

regarding globalisation and neoliberalism, leads him to conclude that a neoliberal strategy is being pursued by Mbeki. This assessment of Mbeki's approach is supported by the ANC's introduction of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) as the strategy for development in South Africa and by some statements by Mbeki. When addressing the Corporate Council Summit in Virginia, USA, Mbeki (1998d) stressed that the struggle for Africa's development must take place within 'the context and framework of the world economy'. Mbeki's (1999b) address at the Millennium Debate of the joint houses of Parliament in 1999 also supports integration in the global economy. In this speech Mbeki (1999b) says that development cannot take place outside of the context of the global economy.

An analysis of a lengthy and very complicated speech given by Thabo Mbeki (2001b) on the occasion of the Third African Renaissance Festival, provides some clarity on his position on the African Renaissance's response to globalisation and neoliberalism. In this speech, Mbeki speaks about the 'constraints and possibilities imposed on us by contemporary global reality' and the importance of placing discussions on the African Renaissance within this context. He describes these constraints and possibilities. Based on the assumption that the modern world is defined by liberal democracy, capitalism and globalisation, he argues that the West (which he defines as including North America, Western Europe and Japan) illustrates the success of these political and economic systems and that the West is the 'decisive and independent centre of the universe of human society'. Because of this, Mbeki argues that the West plays a decisive role with regard to even the cultures and value systems of the rest of the world. He calls the rest of the world 'the hinterland' and describes it as being dependent on the centre (i.e. the West) 'for its progress, *consistent with the needs of the centre'* (emphasis added). Mbeki stresses that the cooperation of the centre is vital for the hinterland, but that the centre will only act in its own interests. He says:

> ... the centre sets the rules of behaviour in the global village and reserves for itself the right to decide what the correct outcomes should be ... the hinterland has no choice but to fall in line with what the centre demands.

Mbeki goes on to argue that Africa needs the support of the West to succeed and thus needs to convince the West that it is in their interests to support Africa. From this starting point he argues that Africans must throw off the negative image that the West has of

Africa, and Africans must assert their value and their importance in the world. The West is now beginning to realise that Africa's current situation of dependence and relative destitution is not in the West's interests because it threatens the West's economic interests in Africa and weakens the political allegiance of African countries. This, Mbeki concludes, should lead the West to realise that it is in their own interests to assist Africa to 'take the next step in her political evolution' and discusses a variety of ways in which the West and Africa can work together to transform Africa.

An analysis of this speech illustrates Thabo Mbeki's perspective on the current global situation and the best way to respond to it. Given that he has been at the forefront of the promotion of the concept of an African Renaissance, an understanding of his perspectives is vital in order to understand the Renaissance. Mbeki evidently sees the current global power distribution as inequitable and disadvantageous to Africa, but sees no way in which Africa can avoid or fundamentally challenge this 'global reality' and therefore seeks to chart a way in which Africa can become more 'developed' and less marginalised. He encourages Africa to play according to the rules set by the West and to accept that the West will only act in self-interest, but to try to manipulate the situation so that it can work for Africa's advantage. Mbeki regards globalisation and neoliberalism as inevitable, and as a result encourages Africa to make the best of the harsh reality of today's globalising world, rather than to try to mount a radical resistance to this world.

An analysis of NEPAD suggests that this latest articulation of the African Renaissance also accepts globalisation and neoliberalism and sees Africa's revival as rooted within the context of globalisation and neoliberalism. The introduction to the NEPAD document speaks of 'signs of progress' in Africa identifying one of them as a commitment to 'market-orientated economies' (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d). When discussing Africa and the 'global revolution', the NEPAD document proclaims that globalisation presents 'the best prospects for future economic prosperity' in Africa (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d). The NEPAD document goes on to commit African leaders to the restoration and maintenance of 'macroeconomic stability' and to the development of 'standards and targets for fiscal and monetary policies' (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d). NEPAD's *Programme of Action* is filled with references to cross-border cooperation, the promotion of the private sector, the diversification of exports, trade liberalisation and improved market access - all of which are concurrent with the acceptance of globalisation and neoliberalism.

This apparent acceptance of globalisation and neoliberalism has led to the criticism of the African Renaissance by Africans who do not support globalisation and neoliberalism. An example is the criticism given by Bankie (1998:16) who calls the Renaissance a 'capitalistic messianic Concept' which indicates that the ANC has 'given up the struggle and embraced capitalism'. Kornegay and Landsberg (1998:36) observe that critics of the African Renaissance feel that the concept of an African Renaissance is a cover for emerging black liberals. They quote Siyabonga Mahlangu, leader of the Pan-Africanist Student Movement as having described the African Renaissance as a 'dilution of the struggle' (Kornegay & Landsberg 1998:36). Liebenberg (1998:45) considers the possibility that the African Renaissance could be an 'élite plot, a vital lie to recruit the masses into neoliberal (multiparty) politics, élite entrenchment and [the disempowerment of] the poor through Western mantras'.

The African Renaissance's response to globalisation and neoliberalism must be the subject of debate by all who support the idea. This debate should set out to clarify the Renaissance's stance on globalisation and neoliberalism. Those who believe that the African Renaissance should challenge globalisation and neoliberalism need to debate the way in which such a challenge is to take place. Those who believe that the African Renaissance must take place within the context of globalisation and neoliberalism must debate how the African Renaissance is to advance its goals within this framework. Thus far, there has been more rhetoric than debate. Some questions that need to be debated are the following:

- Is it possible to challenge globalisation and neoliberalism?
- If so, how should this challenge take place?
- If Africa chooses to challenge globalisation and neoliberalism, what kind of development path, if any, should Africa follow?
- If Africa is to develop within the context of globalisation and neoliberalism, is it possible for Africa to abide by the rules of an inequitable system, but still manage to slowly make the system more equitable?

The limited scope of this study makes it impossible for these questions to be addressed, but the African Renaissance should surely be investigating questions such as these and putting forward various answers which can vie for acceptance. There is no evidence that

any concentrated attempt to answer these questions is being made by those at the forefront of the call for an African Renaissance.

5.3.3 Challenging the Assumptions Implicit in Western Discourses on Democracy and Development

Previously it was indicated that there are certain assumptions implicit in Western discourses on democracy and development. Three assumptions were discussed: empiricism, universalism, and the idea that there is one value system appropriate for all. If the African Renaissance is to challenge Western discourses, it must challenge not only the content of these discourses, but also the assumptions inherent in these discourses.

5.3.3.1 Empiricism

There is no evidence that the African Renaissance challenges empiricism. This lack of a challenge of empiricism means that the Western understanding of democracy and development as measurable and quantifiable, is not challenged. The absence of a challenge implies acceptance of the methods by which the West measures democracy and development, even though these methods can be shown to have Western biases. Without such a challenge, the African Renaissance cannot open space for the articulation of different types of democracy and different ways of measuring democracy, nor for the articulation of different understandings of development and different ways of measuring development. If the empirical indicators used to measure democracy and development favour the West, then African countries are only likely to score better on such measures if they become more Westernised. Thus the absence of a challenge to empiricism as part of the African Renaissance is a serious shortcoming.

Some African Renaissance discourse uses the empirical indicators accepted by the West in assessing Africa's progress towards the realisation of the Renaissance. The NEPAD document serves as an example (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d). It uses empirical measures to compare Africa to the West and to conclude that Africa is in a disadvantaged situation. For example, in the introduction, poverty in Africa is defined as living on less than US $1 a day, and when discussing *The Strategy for Achieving Sustainable Development in the 21st Century*, NEPAD's goals are indicated as being the International Development Goals (IDGs) which are all empirical measures. While

statistics may have some utility in measuring progress towards a particular goal, the question is what goal do they measure progress towards? If the measures mainly relate to empirical measures of individual material well-being, then an acceptance of the understanding of development as being the achievement of material well-being is implied by the use of these empirical measures. No empirical measures can be drawn up to accurately measure spiritual, cultural, social or emotional well-being. This means that the reliance upon empirical measures implies a belief that material well-being is more important that other types of well-being and that development is primarily the improvement of the material well-being of individuals. The African Renaissance's acceptance of empirical measures as indicators of levels of development thus implies an acceptance of a particular type of development.

5.3.3.2 Universalism

As indicated, the promotion of certain understandings of democracy and development as universal, inevitably implies that to become more democratic or more developed is to become more Westernised, as the West is already democratic and developed and there is only one way of understanding democracy and development. This makes a challenge to universalism vital for the African Renaissance.

Certain advocates of the African Renaissance have stressed the importance of an African form of democracy and an African form of development, implying that there is no universal form of democracy or development. For example, Kwaa Prah (1999:60) warns that Africa's development cannot be based on 'unbridled cultural borrowings' from outside, but that development in Africa will only be meaningful if it is based upon African history and culture. As indicated, Mbeki and others have argued that democracy in Africa must be adjusted to African specifics, implying a rejection of the idea that there is one universal form of democracy.

However, resistance to universalism by the African Renaissance is very faint. While comments like those mentioned above are few and far between, as previously indicated there are many comments regarding the importance of democracy and development in Africa which do not add any comments regarding the type (or types) of democracy and development which is suitable for Africa. Support for the democratisation and development of Africa within the context of the African Renaissance, is thus rarely

associated with a challenge to the universalism implicit in Western discourses. In fact, many African Renaissance discourses imply some kind of universalism.

There is an implication of universalism in the choice of the term 'Renaissance' by current advocates of African renewal. The assumption is that Europe had a Renaissance with particular characteristics and particular results and that Africa must emulate this Renaissance to achieve what Europe achieved. Thus European experience is made universally applicable and universally desirable. When addressing the United Nations University, Mbeki (1998a) said that the African Renaissance hopes 'to *emulate* the great human achievements of the earlier Renaissance of the Europe of the 15th and 16th centuries' (emphasis added). This hope that Africa can copy European experience, suggests that Africa will experience what Europe has experienced, albeit several centuries later - Africa is on the same path (a universal path) as Europe, but it is a few centuries behind. Ramose (2000:56) strongly criticises this approach saying that it opens up the possibility for the West to argue "'You are still in the renaissance. We have long made the transition to man as a rational animal .... We are entitled to universal leadership"'. Ramose (2000:58) goes on to say that the idea of a Renaissance denies Africa the right to its own terms and its own experiences, and is a 'covert adherence to the linear interpretation of history' and 'concedes prominence and leadership to the North'.

As shown earlier, the assumptions of modernisation theory frequently appear in African Renaissance discourse. The acceptance of the assumptions of modernisation theory also reflects a concession to universalism, as modernisation theory presents a universal path of development, with Western countries leading the way.

The understanding of civilisation inherent in many African Renaissance discourses, and especially in NEPAD discourse, is another example of the acceptance of universalism. According to the NEPAD document, Africa is the 'cradle of humankind' - thus the beginning of civilisation was in Africa (Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d). However, because of various factors, Africa's contribution to 'world culture' has been limited. NEPAD proposes that this period of Africa being unable to contribute meaningfully to 'world culture' has now come to an end, and that Africa is now going to be placed 'on a pedestal of equal partnership in advancing human civilisation'. South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma (2000c) also embraces this idea of a world civilisation, describing the African Renaissance as 'a historical movement that has the potential to restore Africa

to her former glory, at the cutting edge of world civilisation.' The implication in all of this is that while world civilisation began in Africa, Africa has fallen behind and now needs to be revived so that Africa, like the other continents, can contribute to the single universal 'human civilisation'.

While there is some suggestion within African Renaissance discourse, that Africa should find its own path to an improved future, there is also much to suggest that the African Renaissance seeks to imitate Western experience, and thus implicitly accepts universalism, seeing only one route to democracy and development, and only one acceptable type of democracy and development. The African Renaissance must provide a forum for debate regarding Africa's development and democratisation, rather than just pushing for African to follow the path of regions seen as more democratic and more developed. The African Renaissance has not as yet provided such a forum.

5.3.3.3 One value system for all

Western discourses ignore alternative value systems in their assumption that the Western value system is appropriate for all. This assumption is not always immediately evident, but as shown, it is implicit in many Western discourses on Africa's democratisation and development. This assumption acts in such a way as to maintain current power relations between the West and Africa, and must therefore be challenged by the African Renaissance. Is such a challenge apparent?

On the surface it appears that the African Renaissance does present at least some challenge to the idea that there is one value system which is appropriate for the whole world, and that this value system is the Western value system. The stress that is placed upon the importance of *ubuntu* in the African Renaissance is an example of an apparent challenge to this idea. As previously indicated, *ubuntu* is seen as an important part of the African Renaissance. This embracing of *ubuntu* can be seen as a challenge to the attempted hegemony of the Western value system.

This challenge must be commended, but at the same time it must be acknowledged that this challenge has sometimes been only superficial. It is not enough to make some statement of loyalty to a particular value system, if the implications related to that value system are not carried through. Several discussions on the African Renaissance suggest

that African values and Western values can co-exist unproblematically. Deputy Governor of the South African Reserve Bank, Tim Thahane's (1999) address to the African-Asian society compares Africa to Asia. He admires Asian countries for managing to maintain their cultures while still embracing globalisation and concludes that Africa too can embrace globalisation without having to sacrifice its culture (Thahane 1999). This argument is illogical: just because *Asian* countries did not find their culture incompatible with globalisation does not automatically mean that *African* culture is compatible with globalisation and the values being promoted by globalisation.

As mentioned earlier, Murobe (2000:43-67) regards neoliberalism and African cultural values as incompatible. He goes on to suggest that the African Renaissance must then be seen as being incompatible with the acceptance of globalisation and neoliberalism. He argues that globalisation promotes neoliberalism which leads to a 'perpetual state of competition in pursuit of self-interest'. Through careful arguing, Murobe suggests that neoliberalism is premised upon the promotion of self-interest, individualism and competitiveness. But this approach is not compatible with African tradition, based on *ubuntu*. Taking this argument a step further, it is possible to contend that the African Renaissance, if it is understood to involve the revival of African culture, is not compatible with neoliberalism and thus, also not with globalisation because globalisation promotes neoliberalism. Despite this, many African Renaissance discourses embraces both African culture and neoliberal reforms, apparently not seeing this as problematic. Such African Renaissance discourse does not acknowledge any tension between the value system being promoted by neoliberalism, and African value systems.

Obviously, there are many questions that can be raised here. Is the successful adoption of neoliberal practices dependent upon the concurrent adoption of a particular value system? Is it necessary for a culture to promote individualism, the pursuit of self-interest and competitiveness, in order for neoliberal reforms to be successful? Can a single African value system be postulated and if so what are the values promoted by such a value system? What is *ubuntu* exactly: does it apply to all African societies and does it really reject individualism, the pursuit of self-interest and competitiveness? These questions should be debated within the context of the Renaissance, but this debate is not taking place. The African Renaissance began as a call for Africans to be proud of their heritage, history and culture, but subsequent to this call, the Renaissance began to speak about Africa's economic and political revival and began to shape this revival within the

context of globally accepted norms. NEPAD appears to unproblematically accept certain tenets of neoliberalism and to endorse neoliberal values. There is no indication that this may be incompatible with African culture or that this involves a submission to a value system not premised on African history or African experience.

5.4 ALTERNATIVE READINGS OF THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

Examining the African Renaissance is a confusing and difficult task, enhanced by the fact that there is a diversity of ideas and emotions attached to the African Renaissance. The African Renaissance is not a coherent response to Western discourses, but a variety of different responses grouped around the vague idea of Africa's renewal. Because of these different ways of seeing the Renaissance, several 'readings' of the Renaissance are identified so as to provide some clarity to the broad discourses being voiced within its context. Three readings are identified here, although it may be possible to identify several more.

5.4.1 Reading A: A Courageous Challenge to Western Discourses

This reading of the African Renaissance sees it as a movement which rejects the image that the West presents of Africa: an image of a useless, helpless, hopeless continent and draws on Africa's proud past to assert that Africa has its own strengths and that Africa's future can be a future filled with opportunities. Reading A of the African Renaissance challenges Western values and Western social, economic and political narratives, and encourages Africans to forge their way to a future situation that is uniquely African. Writers who encourage the promotion of African culture and a future based on African history and traditions, can be considered to support this reading of the African Renaissance. Some advocates of this reading include Ntuli (1998; 1999), Dladla (1997) and, arguably, Vale and Maseko (1998).

Earlier, the multiple conceptualisations of the African Renaissance such as the globalist, Africanist, Pan-Africanist and culturalist conceptualisations of the African Renaissance were examined. The Africanist and culturalist conceptualisations can both be considered to be examples of Reading A of the African Renaissance. These two conceptualisations reject Western dominance and argue for the development of African alternatives to the social, economic and political paradigms being promoted by the West. Various

components of the African Renaissance were also identified. The components which form the core of Reading A are the rediscovery of African history and culture; and African self-definition and self-determination. This reading of the African Renaissance is overshadowed by the readings discussed below, especially with the articulation of NEPAD, but the existence of Reading A is encouraging and shows that there are Africans who are brave enough to encourage the whole of Africa to choose a destiny, or several destinies, different to that being promoted by the West as universally suitable and desirable. Reading A, however, runs the risk of being usurped by those who lack the courage to challenge the West.

5.4.2 Reading B: A Weak Echo of Western Sounds

Some critics read the African Renaissance as being a weak echo of ideas originating elsewhere. This version of the African Renaissance can be considered to be a disguised effort to Westernise Africa. As mentioned earlier, some critics - amongst others, Bankie (1998) and Mahlangu (in Kornegay & Landsberg 1998:36) - feel that the African Renaissance is a dilution of the struggle. It is a resignation to the superiority of Western culture, Western forms of government, Western economic systems and the Western lifestyle in general. If this is what the African Renaissance is, then talk of rediscovering African culture and of encouraging Africans to be proud of being Africa, is only a superficial attempt to make the Renaissance project sound more politically correct. The implicit acceptance of modernisation theory and universalism as well as the open promotion of political and economic structures originating in the West, suggest that this particular reading of the African Renaissance is nothing more than the acceptance that the West is the model to the rest of the world of how to develop, how to govern and how to achieve prosperity.

There are several critics who have believe that the African Renaissance is nothing more than an echo of sounds emerging in the West. For example, Ramose (2000) calls the African Renaissance 'a northbound gaze' saying that it is an example of 'the fixation of the African gaze to the North' and that this fixation implies a concession of prominence and leadership to the North. Other critics have noted the ease at which the goals of the African Renaissance match Western countries' policies towards Africa. A case in point is Christianson (1997:27) who contends that the African Renaissance 'meshes comfortably

with [the vision for Africa] of the US' and notes that many critics are perplexed by the closeness with which the African Renaissance matches US policy.

It has been noted that sections of NEPAD are disturbingly similar to documents and policies originating in the West. Mbeki (2001c) insists that MAP is the 'product of independent African thought' rather than a perspective 'elaborated by consultants from the developed world', but an examination of Western policy documents on Africa suggests otherwise. In 1997, the US launched the Africa Trade Initiative. There are several similarities between the US's Africa Trade Initiative and Africa's NEPAD. A comparison of a speech by former US President Bill Clinton in which he announced the Africa Trade Initiative, and the NEPAD document indicate these similarities (Clinton 1997; Department of Foreign Affairs, South Africa 2001d). Both speak about partnership. Both identify democratisation and the increased acceptance of market economies as positive developments on the African continent. Both see increased market access, the provision of technical assistance, increased private investment, continued aid, and debt relief as vital for African renewal. Both initiatives see partnership as involving shared responsibilities and mutual benefits, and the benefits for the West are seen as the same: increased markets and decreased risk of disease, terrorism and environmental degradation.

A critical examination of the MAP conducted by *Noseweek* (2001:12-13) suggests that British political advisors played an integral role in the formulation of the MAP. *Noseweek* reports that some of Tony Blair's top advisors were apparently involved in the drafting of the MAP, and also suggests that there are significant similarities between a British government paper entitled *British Africa Partnership - Informal Paper* and the MAP. The reading of the African Renaissance being promoted by NEPAD may be nothing more than a weak echo of Western sounds.

5.4.3 Reading C: An Attempt to Make the Best of a Bad Situation

The two readings discussed above are two extremes, but there is a third reading which fits somewhere in between. This reading sees the African Renaissance as an attempt to make the best of a bad situation. Africa is marginalised and exploited and has been for centuries. The emerging new global order does not appear to be making the world any more equal or fair than it was in the past. Global inequities are increasing along with

global integration. Given this reality, it seems that some advocates of an African Renaissance have observed that Africa's options are limited and that the old idiom of being caught 'between the devil and the deep blue sea' may appropriately describe Africa's current situation. Some supporters of an African Renaissance appear to see Africa as having two choices: remain on the margins of a global world (and continue being exploited and excluded); or accept the global 'rules' articulated by non-Africans and conform to these in exchange for the opportunity to attempt to fight its way from the periphery towards the centre in a world where the odds appear stacked against Africa. Reading C accepts the inevitability of globalisation (broadly defined) and believes that Africa cannot extricate itself from this process and all that accompanies it (including neoliberalism, capitalism, and increasing global inequities). Africa's best option, then, is to try to make the best of a bad situation.

Arguably, much of the South African government's discourse on the African Renaissance may fall under Reading C. Even NEPAD could be read to be an example of an approach which grudgingly accepts the inevitability of Westernisation, rather than an approach which eagerly encourages Westernisation. It could be that NEPAD only grudgingly accepts global rules, but disguises this reluctance because the West's support for NEPAD is essential for its success. The best example of Reading C of the African Renaissance is the speech given by Thabo Mbeki (2001b) at the Third African Renaissance Festival. This speech clearly illustrates the reluctant acceptance of 'global rules' out of a belief that Africa has no better option. It is possible to read NEPAD as being part of this version of the Renaissance or as part of Reading B.

5.4.4 Assessment of the Readings

What all three readings above have in common is that they seek to achieve the renewal or rebirth of Africa - the African Renaissance. Where they differ is in their interpretation of what is meant by the renewal or rebirth of Africa, and in their proposed route to the Renaissance. Reading A sees rebirth as involving a renewal of interest in Africa's past and the use of this past is shaping a future for Africa that is true to African traditions and cultures. Reading B takes the renewal of Africa to be the process of encouraging Africa to achieve what the 'superior' regions of the world have achieved. The route to renewal is seen as dependent upon the help of these regions and the following of a path similar to the path already followed by these regions. Reading C takes the renewal of Africa to be

an ending of Africa's situation of marginalisation and exploitation. This reading believes that in this globalising world, the empowerment of Africa can only occur according to the global rules dictated by the West, and so Africa must try to best play at these rules, and only later, if at all, try to change these rules. The existence of these very different readings, and possibly other readings as well, indicates that the African Renaissance is an umbrella concept which has various connotations. Currently, it seems that the first reading is receiving less attention, while the last two readings appear to dominate. Recent discourse on Africa's renewal appears to abandon any sustained, comprehensive challenge to Western discourses, in favour of trying to win the West's approval and achieve success as defined and epitomised by the West. This is especially evident in the NEPAD document which appears to accept Western definitions of democracy, development, success, progress and related concepts and which depends upon the West's support for its success. Supporters of Reading A of the Renaissance need to become more vocal in their support for a Renaissance which recognises the importance of a challenge to Western discourses and which courageously pioneers a path to a future which allows Africans the opportunity to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The African Renaissance's response to dominant Western discourses is difficult to determine. While there is some challenge to some Western discourses, many discourses are left unchallenged. When responding to discourses on the African situation, African Renaissance discourses challenge the idea of Africa as a hopeless, ailing continent, plagued by problems it can never address. In place of the image of Africa presented by dominant Western discourses, the African Renaissance posits a hopeful, healing Africa, which has the capability to overcome the obstacles in its way. This challenge to Western discourses on the African situation is, however, compromised by the African Renaissance's ambiguous response to whether or not Africa is dependent upon the West for a propitious future. Talk of 'partnership' appears to suggest a degree of dependence upon the resources and ideas of the West for Africa's recovery. This concurs with, rather than challenges Western discourses.

When responding to dominant Western discourses on democratisation and development in Africa, the African Renaissance falls far short of challenging these discourses or their underlying assumptions. As shown, almost all African Renaissance discourses on

democracy and development endorse Western conceptualisations of democracy and development and do not see this endorsement as in any way problematic. The assumptions of empiricism, universalism, and the universal appropriateness of one value system are implicit in dominant Western discourses on democracy and development, but none of these assumptions are adequately challenged by African Renaissance discourse.

When assessing the African Renaissance's response to dominant Western discourses on Africa, various readings of the African Renaissance can be identified. Three readings are identified and the extent to which each provides a challenge to dominant Western discourses is indicated. Reading A provides a challenge to Western discourses, but it is this reading which is least dominant in understandings of the Renaissance today. As long as this Reading is overshadowed by Readings B and C, the Renaissance's challenge to dominant Western discourses will remain inadequate.

CHAPTER 6: EVALUATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

> [The African Renaissance] must unleash a thorough interrogation of our own Eurocentric scholarship, to shake it from its contented hegemonic pose into an arena of meaningful contestation.

On the basis of this quote from Ntuli (1998:18) it was earlier argued that the confrontation of Western discourses ought to be part of the African Renaissance. This dissertation has carefully advanced this argument and then gone on to examine Western discourses and the African Renaissance's response to these discourses, in order to determine whether or not such a confrontation has truly taken place. In conclusion, an evaluation is now made of the response provided by the African Renaissance to dominant Western discourses on Africa.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENTS

Africa is a marginalised and exploited continent, pitied and ridiculed by the rest of the world. In comparison to other regions of the world, Africa has little power and influence. The overview of the relations between Africa and the West indicates that the last few centuries have been a period where the West has had considerable power and influence over the lives of Africans. Over the years, the relations between the West and Afica have changed considerably, but still today Africa remains a region with relatively little power. The idea of an African Renaissance acknowledges this situation.

The contemporary world with its sophisticated communication and travel systems have made it possible for academics and journalists to comment on the political situation of regions all over the world. Western academics and journalists do not limit their focus to the Western world, but also examine and analyse other regions of the world, including Africa. If discourse is taken to mean a body of knowledge, then these academics and journalists can be said to be producing discourses on Africa.

Critical theorists and postmodernist writers have provided insight into what the term 'discourse' can be taken to mean and how discourses function. Contributions made by

these thinkers challenge the idea that it is possible to provide factual, unbiased, neutral, empirical discourses. Rather discourses emanate from a particular position and are premised upon particular assumptions and ways of understanding reality. The contributions made by critical theorists and postmodernist writers also illuminate the relationship between knowledge and power, arguing that the two cannot be considered to be independent of each other. Rather, it must be accepted that power influences the production of knowledge and that knowledge can also affect power. Accepting this, discourses, as bodies of knowledge, can be said to be intimately related to power. In Foucault's (in Lemert & Gillan 1982:40) words 'It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together'.

An acceptance of this understanding of the relatedness of discourse and power, changes the way the question of Africa's relative powerlessness is approached. If discourses are related to power, then it can be argued that Africa's situation of relative powerlessness is both reflected and perpetuated by dominant Western discourses on Africa. This study accepts this understanding of discourse and power and so argues that a desire to change current power relations necessitates the expression of different discourses. If a movement wishes to challenge power relations, the movement must also challenge dominant discourses and promote the production of alternative discourses. The African Renaissance has as one of its stated goals the empowerment of Africa, and so it is argued that the African Renaissance must challenge dominant Western discourses which reflect and perpetuate current power relations, and encourage the production of alternative discourses.

Several dominant Western political discourses produced in Western academic and journalistic sources from 1990 to the present have been scrutinised. The examination of Western discourses begins with an analysis of Western discourses on the African situation. An assessment of these discourses brings to light certain themes. Firstly, Africa is presented as being an ailing continent. This labelling of Africa as diseased forms part of a dichotomy of sickness and health, where the characteristics Africa are seen as the characteristics of illness and the characteristics of the West as those of health.

Another theme evident in Western discourses is one that portrays Africa as a continent with various inherent weaknesses. Africa's situation of ill-health and inherent weakness is shown to result in a need for help from the West. These discourses are analysed and

problematised, showing how Western discourses on the African situation both reflect and perpetuate current power relations between Africa and the West.

Western discourses on democratisation and development are also examined and it is shown that these discourses are not neutral reflections of an empirical reality, but are founded on particular assumptions. Western discourses on democratisation and development indicate an implicit acceptance of empiricism, universalism, and the existence of a single value system applicable to all. The analysis of these discourses and their implicit assumptions illustrates the way in which discourse can serve as a juncture where power and knowledge meet.

The analysis of Western discourses on the African situation and on democratisation and development strengthens the argument that a challenge to Western discourses by the African Renaissance is necessary. The necessity of such a challenge is clearly evidenced, as it is shown that Western discourses do indeed not only reflect, but also perpetuate current power relations between the West and Africa.

Once the argument that the African Renaissance should challenge Western discourses has been put forward and reinforced by the analysis of Western discourses; it is necessary to carefully explore the concept 'African Renaissance'. The various meanings and components of the African Renaissance are discussed. This is followed by an assessment of the degree to which the African Renaissance challenges Western discourses. The discussion and assessment of the African Renaissance begins to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the dissertation. Using this discussion and assessment, it is now possible to comprehensively address the research questions.

6.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research question put forward at the outset was 'What is the African Renaissance's response to dominant Western political discourses on Africa?' It is assumed that the Renaissance by its very nature provides some kind of response to Western discourses, whether implicitly or explicitly. What the research question seeks to discover, is the nature of this response. A number of further research questions arose out of the original question, namely: 'Does the African Renaissance challenge Western discourses?'; 'Has the African Renaissance the potential to provide a sustained, critical challenge to Western

discourses'; and 'How can the African Renaissance's response to Western discourses be improved?'

In setting out to answer these questions, a particular process was followed. Firstly, the argument that the African Renaissance should challenge Western discourses was presented. Secondly, several Western discourses on Africa were examined so as to support the argument that Western discourses on Africa need to be challenged, and so as to provide some examples of the type of discourse which needs to be challenged. Thirdly, the African Renaissance was carefully examined. Finally, Western discourses and discourses produced by the African Renaissance were compared in order to establish the extent to which the African Renaissance challenges Western discourses. On the basis of this analysis, the research questions as posed can be answered.

6.3.1 Does the African Renaissance Challenge Western Discourses?

The African Renaissance has responded to and challenged certain dominant Western political discourses on Africa. The African Renaissance rejects the pessimistic outlook provided by many Western discourses, and asserts that Africa is a continent of hope and a continent with a bright and prosperous future. It also rejects the idea that Africa is inherently inferior and believes that Africa has the potential to find a way out of its current dismal situation and to chart a course to an auspicious future.

Although the African Renaissance confidently challenges certain Western discourses, it is silent on some discourses; provides ambiguous responses to others; and appears to agree with the West on several discourses, even though it could be argued that such agreement is disadvantageous to Africa.

The African Renaissance appears to be silent, or at least quiet, in its response to the Western assumption of empiricism inherent in many Western discourses. This is a serious shortcoming of the African Renaissance. The African Renaissance provides ambiguous responses to Western discourses on 'helping' Africa and on the Western assumptions of universalism and the appropriateness of the Western value system for all. It is not clear to what extent its proponents believe that Africa is capable of being its own saviour and master of its own destiny. On the one hand, Renaissance discourse asserts that Africans must put an end to years of submission and subjugation to the West, and

must determine its own future. On the other hand, Renaissance discourse, especially the recent articulation of the NEPAD, regards Western help as vital for the success of the Renaissance. The African Renaissance's response regarding the Western assumption of universalism and the existence of a single value system appropriate for all, is also ambiguous. While some comments made by African Renaissance proponents appear to challenge universalism, the discourse also implicitly accepts universalism. In terms of the African Renaissance's response to the Western assumption of the appropriateness of one value system for all, the African Renaissance promotes *ubuntu* as the value system underlying the Renaissance, but the implications of *ubuntu* do not appear to be carried through to all aspects of the Renaissance and Western values appear to be implicitly accepted by some readings of the Renaissance, making the Renaissance's response to the idea of a single value system ambiguous.

The African Renaissance essentially agrees with Western discourses on democratisation and development. It is agreed that Africa must democratise and develop, and the definitions of democratisation and development accepted by the West, appear for the most part, to also be accepted by African Renaissance discourse.

Thus the question 'Does the African Renaissance challenge Western discourses on Africa?' can be answered by saying, 'Yes, the African Renaissance has challenged some Western discourses, but not all, and the challenge provided is not always coherent or adequate'.

6.3.2 Has the African Renaissance the Potential to Provide a Sustained Critical Challenge to Western discourses?

The African Renaissance, like several of its predecessors, has considerable potential to become an arena for the challenge of dominant discourses and the articulation of alternatives. However none of the Renaissance's predecessors managed to reach their potential, and the African Renaissance is also not currently realising its potential in this respect. Considering the various readings of the African Renaissance, Reading A begins to realise the Renaissance's potential to provide a comprehensive and courageous challenge to Western discourses. The other two readings of the African Renaissance compromise this challenge by acceding to Western discourses. The recent promotion of NEPAD is a worrying sign in terms of the African Renaissance's potential to challenge

Western discourses. The NEPAD appears to place far more value on winning the West's approval (and the accompanying investment), than on challenging Western discourses which perpetuate a power structure in which Africa is disadvantaged.

The question regarding the African Renaissance's potential to provide a challenge to dominant Western discourses can thus be answered by saying that the African Renaissance has some potential to provide such a challenge, but currently does not appear to be realising this potential.

6.3.3 How can the African Renaissance's Response to Western Discourses be Improved?

In answer to this question a number of suggestions are made. Firstly, the African Renaissance's response to Western discourses could be improved by a recognition of the necessity of a challenge to Western discourses. Currently, there is little explicit recognition by promoters of the African Renaissance of how necessary it is to carefully analyse Western discourses and then challenge these discourses where they are shown to stand it the way of the goals of the African Renaissance.

Secondly, the African Renaissance's response could be improved by the cultivation of a critical stance towards Western discourses. The way in which power and knowledge are inter-related is not self-evident. The ways in which Western discourses reflect and perpetuate power relations are, therefore, not immediately obvious and so careful critical analysis of discourses produced by Western academics and journalists is necessary. The African Renaissance could be improved if such a critical stance was encouraged.

Thirdly, the African Renaissance's response could be improved if it strove to provide an arena where alternative discourses can be produced and debated. The African Renaissance has not thus far provided such an arena. The challenge to Western discourses must include a confrontation of Western discourses with African alternatives. It is not argued that a single, comprehensive alternative plan for Africa's future should be formulated but rather that space should be created for the production of several alternatives, which should be examined and debated. Thus, the argument is not that the dominant discourses on Africa emanating from the West should be shown to be 'incorrect' or 'false' and then replaced by a 'true' representation of Africa and the African situation.

Rather, it is stressed that a variety of alternatives should be cultivated and then critically debated. The African Renaissance would be greatly improved if it provided the space for the cultivation and critical debate of such alternatives.

Finally, the African Renaissance's response to Western discourses on Africa would be improved if a more self-critical stance was adopted by its proponents. The African Renaissance should be reflexive by continually examining the discourses it produces and assessing the extent to which it remains true to its ideal concept. This would mean that the African Renaissance could continually improve and adapt to changes occurring in Africa and the world. The African Renaissance must not adopt a defensive approach which rejects any criticism given of it, but rather should embrace any criticism which can assist in improving the its ability to realise its goals and perhaps even in the reformulation of these goals.

6.3.4 What is the African Renaissance's Response to Western Discourses?

Having answered the research questions which flow out of the main research question, it is now possible to attempt to answer the main research question by providing a description of the African Renaissance's response to dominant Western discourses. In answering this question, it is evident that there is not really one single response to Western discourses provided by the African Renaissance. Three alternative readings of the African Renaissance were provided each of which provides a different response to Western discourses. Thus the answer to the main research question depends upon which reading of the African Renaissance is most prominent. If Reading A is most prominent then the African Renaissance provides a courageous challenge to Western discourses. If Reading B is most prominent then the African Renaissance is a travesty. If Reading C is most prominent then the African Renaissance has compromised its goals out of doubt that they can be fully realised, but not completely forgotten these goals. Unfortunately it seems that Readings B and C overshadow Reading A at the moment, meaning that the response currently provided by African Renaissance discourse, does not provide sufficient challenge to dominant Western discourses on Africa.

The African Renaissance could be described as a variety of voices some of which provide a limited challenge to Western discourses, while others accede to Western discourses. The challenge provided by the Renaissance is thus a faint, ambiguous and compromised

challenge. Pitika Ntuli (1998:18) calls on Africans to 'shake [Eurocentric scholarship] from its contented hegemonic pose', but thus far the African Renaissance has not even caused Western discourses to tremor, and has certainly not shaken them from their position of hegemony. The tensions, ambiguities and compromises in the Renaissance need to be dealt with in order to allow the Renaissance to provide a clear, confident challenge to Western discourses.

6.4 LIMITATIONS

It is necessary to acknowledge several possible limitations of this study. The identification of such limitations is necessitated by the choice of postmodernist critical theory as a theoretical framework. Five limitations are identified. No doubt several other critical comments can be made, but the identification of these five limitations and the explanation as to why it was impossible to avoid them, is necessary in order to provide some defence of the obvious criticisms that can be made of this dissertation.

The first limitation relates to the use of postmodernist critical theory in this dissertation. There is a degree of irony in the choice of postmodernist critical theory as a theoretical framework for this topic. This dissertation argues that the African Renaissance should challenge Western discourses and present African alternatives. However, this argument is advanced by making use of a set of theories which emerged in the West and which have primarily focused on the Western situation. Using a collection of Western theories to encourage the challenge of Western discourses is certainly problematic. In defence of the use of postmodernist critical theory, it must be said that despite the irony in the selection of a Western theory to present the argument that Western dominance must be resisted, this dissertation has demonstrated the usefulness of postmodernist critical theory in application to the African situation. Without the perspectives provided by postmodernist critical theory on discourse, it would not have been possible to effectively present the argument that has been put forward here. The Western origins of postmodernist critical theory do not invalidate the usefulness of this theory outside of the Western context, just as it can be hoped that the perspectives provided by the African Renaissance could at a later stage be useful in analysis of regions of the world other than Africa. Nevertheless, a theoretical perspective originating in Africa may have been more appropriate.

A second limitation also relates to the use of postmodernist critical theory. This dissertation asserts that the African Renaissance should put forward a particular response to dominant Western political discourses - one which calls these discourses into question and challenges them. By saying this, it is implied that a particular type of Renaissance discourse (one that challenges rather than accedes to Western discourses) should dominate. It can be argued that from the perspective of postmodernist critical theory, the dominance of any reading of the African Renaissance in any context, must be resisted, just as the dominance of Western discourses must be resisted, because dominance of any kind, stifles the development of alternatives. This means that there is an unavoidable tension in arguing that one set of dominant discourses should be challenged by another discourse, which could in turn become the dominant discourse which would need to be resisted by a new alternative. Any dominant African Renaissance discourse could be subjected to the same kind of critical review as has been adopted here in examining dominant Western discourses on Africa. This tension is unavoidable, but must be acknowledged.

A third limitation is that only a limited overview of Western discourses on Africa has been provided. The overview is limited in that only written academic and journalistic discourses produced from 1990 to the present are examined. It is also limited in that its assessment of the discourses chosen could have been more extensive. A very comprehensive overview of Western discourses on a variety of aspects of African politics would certainly have been useful and could further illustrate the extent to which Western discourses on Africa reflect and perpetuate power relations between the West and Africa. Since there is little research on Western discourses from a postmodernist critical theory perspective, it was not possible to draw on already existing analyses in order to present the argument that Western discourses reflect and perpetuate current power relations. Consequently, a brief analysis of Western discourses on Africa from a postmodernist critical theory perspective was provided. Although this analysis is not as comprehensive as would have been ideal, it provides enough support for the argument advanced here.

A fourth limitation relates to the timing of this research. The current articulation of an African Renaissance is still relatively new. The idea of a Renaissance is still in its formative years with different versions vying for acceptance. The relative newness of the concept means that there is not a wealth of critical analyses to draw upon in this research. It also means that the Renaissance is being analysed without the wisdom of hindsight. It

may have been easier to have waited and then to have analysed the African Renaissance retrospectively. Future analyses of the African Renaissance may be able to better answer the research questions posed in this dissertation. However, the advantage of doing this research now is that its findings could still contribute to the path taken by the Renaissance rather than just retrospectively suggesting what should have been done.

A fifth limitation is this dissertation's dependence upon the speeches of South African government officials in defining and describing the Renaissance. If the African Renaissance is a continental movement then surely an analysis of the Renaissance should depend on the writing and speeches of African philosophers, academics, government officials and others from across the whole continent. However, the current call for African renewal originated in South Africa and has most often been articulated by South African government officials. The speeches of South African government officials regarding the Renaissance are also more readily available than the speeches of government officials of other African countries. These are the reasons for the dependence on the perspectives of South African government officials. The lack of available documentation on the Renaissance from non-South Africans also reflects a lack of continent-wide support for the Renaissance which is a shortcoming of the Renaissance. However, the dependence on South African government officials can still be criticised for narrowing this analysis and its relevance. Hence, an analysis of non-South African Renaissance discourse should be a future research agenda.

6.5 RESEARCH AGENDA

There are a number of research questions arising out of the argument presented in this dissertation. These questions could provide avenues for further research.

One question that could provide a further avenue for research is 'How useful are other aspects of postmodernist critical theory to the African context?' The usefulness of postmodernist critical theory's conceptualisation of discourse to the African context has been demonstrated. Further research should be undertaken to determine the usefulness of other aspects of postmodernist critical theory, such as textual strategies and discourse ethics, in the analysis of the African continent.

Another research avenue would be a more comprehensive analysis or analyses of Western discourses on the African situation. Little, if any, research has been done on how discourse (as defined by postmodernist critical theory) is related to power in the context of relations between Africa and the West. Analyses of Western discourses on a number of aspects of African politics could be undertaken to determine the role played by discourse in reflecting and perpetuating current power relations between Africa and the West. Since this study was limited to Western academic and journalistic discourses produced between 1990 and the present, the analysis of other types of discourse (such as public opinion, television discourse, cinema discourse, etc.) as well as discourse from different time periods should be pursued.

A variety of additional research questions regarding the African Renaissance could also provide avenues for future research. There has not yet been sufficient commentary and analysis of the Renaissance. The roots of the Renaissance, its goals and components could all be the subjects of extensive research. The recent articulation of the NEPAD introduces several new questions.

A further avenue relates to the argument put forward in this dissertation regarding the importance of confronting Western discourses with alternative discourses. If alternatives are to be presented, then more research will have to be done regarding the articulation of alternatives. If Western discourses on the African situation are to be challenged, then research needs to be done on alternative ways in which the African situation can be interpreted. If Western discourses on democratisation and development are to be confronted with African alternatives, then extensive research also needs to be done regarding what forms of government and socio-economic change are best suited to the African continent.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Today's world is one where the powerful appear to be wielding increasing influence over the fate of the powerless. The phenomenon of globalisation sees the increasing acceptance of one style of government, one economic system and one life-style. Resistance to this situation cannot only come from angry fundamentalists who have the courage to challenge Western hegemony by obliterating buildings but lack the compassion to care about the people who are destroyed in order to make this statement.

Africans can bear testimony to the destruction which earlier Western hegemony has brought as they struggle still to overcome the legacy of the slave trade and colonialism. The experience of the past should urge Africans to recognise the poverty of the 'solutions' the West urges them to accept, and to challenge contemporary Western hegemony by confronting it with alternatives. The production of these alternatives is vital not only for Africa's future, but also in order to create space for the production of further alternatives which are applicable to other regions and for the rejection of an understanding of reality which implies that all other interpretations of reality are illegitimate and untenable.

The calls for African renewal which have been made over the last century have all shown the potential to confront Western discourses with African alternatives, but none of these movements has managed to realise this potential. Once again, an idea which attempts to lift Africa out of subjugation to the West and see Africa's confidence restored has emerged. Unfortunately, the current idea of an African Renaissance seems to have been compromised by movements within it which appear to regard Western approval and Western investment as more important than any attempt to provide a substantial challenge to Western hegemony and to restore African dignity. The articulation of the NEPAD appears to accept Western assumptions and the superiority of Western life. The extent to which African Renaissance discourse appears to accept the desirability of the adoption of Western-style government, Western-style economic systems, and Western lifestyle in general indicates the incompleteness of the process of decolonisation in Africa. Africans may ostensibly have their own governments and their own states, but it seems that not all Africans have managed to discard the belief that what emerges from outside of Africa is superior to what originates within Africa, and that the more Africa becomes like the rest of the world (through industrialisation, modernisation and the like) the better for Africans.

This compromise of the goal of African renewal must be resisted. The African Renaissance needs to be led by Africans who have the courage and vision to see a way in which Africans can be pioneers of a path which leads to a future in which the lives of Africans can be lives of spiritual, cultural, social, emotional, political and material fulfilment. This path should be one that shows up the inadequacy of the 'cure' the West offers for Africa's 'illness' and rejects the meaningless, materialistic, spiritually void life being marketed as the only good and desirable life by Western discourses.

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SUMMARY

THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AS A RESPONSE TO DOMINANT WESTERN POLITICAL DISCOURSES ON AFRICA: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

by

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The African Renaissance is a call for African renewal. It is an attempt to unite Africans in a common vision for a prosperous and propitious future for the African continent. One of the African Renaissance's goals is to empower the African continent, changing its global position from one of marginalisation and powerlessness to one of dignity and influence. This dissertation critically assesses the concept of an African Renaissance in terms of its ability to challenge dominant Western political discourses on Africa.

In order to provide such an assessment of the African Renaissance, it is firstly necessary to examine the concept 'discourse'. This study summarises the contributions made by critical theorists and postmodernist thinkers to understandings of this concept. The way in which discourse can function as a junction where power and knowledge meet, is discussed. The contributions made by critical and postmodernist thinkers draw attention to the way in which power can be both reflected and perpetuated by discourses. Any attempt to change Africa's position of relative powerlessness in the global arena, necessitates a scrutinisation of Western discourses in order to determine how they reflect and perpetuate current power relations. The dissertation presents the argument that the Renaissance should examine and challenge Western discourses on Africa.

The presentation of this argument is followed by a study of several Western discourses on Africa. An overview and assessment of Western discourses on the African situation and Western discourses on democratisation and development in Africa is provided. These

discourses are shown to reflect and perpetuate current power relations between Africa and the West.

Once Western discourses have been discussed, the dissertation moves on to provide an outline of the African Renaissance. The multiple conceptualisations of the Renaissance are explored, and the various components of the Renaissance are summarised. South Africa's role in the Renaissance is critically examined and tensions in the conceptualisation of the Renaissance are identified. The roots of the African Renaissance and the branches which have grown out of the Renaissance, are discussed.

Finally, the extent to which the African Renaissance provides a challenge to Western discourses is assessed. An examination of the Renaissance's response to Western discourses reveals the inadequacy and limited nature of this challenge.

In conclusion, the dissertation assesses the overall response provided by the African Renaissance to dominant Western political discourses. The response is shown to be a mixed one, with some Western discourses being challenged, while others remain unchallenged or are confronted only with an ambiguous response. While the African Renaissance shows some potential to provide the necessary challenge to Western discourses, this potential is not being fully realised. The African Renaissance could be improved through a recognition of the necessity of a challenge to Western discourses, through the development of a critical stance towards Western discourses, through the provision of an arena where alternative discourses can emerge, and through the cultivation of a more self-critical stance.

KEY CONCEPTS

African Renaissance
African renewal
African recovery
discourse
power
postmodernism
critical theory
South Africa
Foreign Policy
New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

SAMEVATTING

DIE AFRIKA RENAISSANCE AS 'N REAKSIE OP DOMINANTE WESTERSE POLITIEKE DISKOERSE OOR AFRIKA: 'N KRITIESE BEOORDELING

deur

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Die Afrika Renaissance is 'n wekroep om die vernuwing van Afrika. Dit is 'n poging om die inwoners van Afrika in 'n visie te verenig wat 'n voorspoedige en voordelige toekoms vir die vasteland inhou. Een van die oogmerke van die Afrika Renaissance is om die vasteland te bemagtig en om daardeur Afrika se gemarginaliseerde en magtelose globale posisie in een van waardigheid en invloed te omskep. Hierdie verhandeling behels 'n kritiese beoordeling van die Afrika Renaissance en van die mate waarin dit dominante Westerse politieke diskoerse oor Afrika uitdaag.

Om sodanige beoordeling van die Afrika Renaissance moontlik te maak, word die konsep diskoers as 'n vertrekpunt omskryf. Die studie bied 'n oorsig van die bydraes van kritiese teoretici en postmodernistiese denkers tot die verskillende betekenisse van die term diskoers. Die wyse waarop diskoerse 'n raakpunt tussen mag en kennis vorm, sowel as kritiese en postmodernistiese denkers se beklemtoning van die manier waarop diskoerse mag weerspieël en perpetueer, word bespreek. Enige poging om Afrika se posisie van relatiewe magteloosheid in die globale arena te wysig, vereis egter 'n noukeurige ontleding van Westerse diskoerse om te bepaal in welke mate hierdie diskoerse huidige magsverhoudinge reflekteer en laat voortduur. Die betoog van hierdie studie is dus dat die Afrika Renaissance dominante Westerse diskoerse oor Afrika moet ondersoek en uitdaag.

Die uiteensetting van hierdie betoog word gevolg deur die bestudering van verskeie dominante Westerse diskoerse oor Afrika. 'n Oorsig en beoordeling van Westerse diskoerse oor die situasie in en demokratisering en ontwikkeling van Afrika word gebied. Hieruit blyk dit dat hierdie diskoerse bestaande magsverhoudinge tussen Afrika en die Weste weerspieël en perpetueer.

Hierdie bespreking word gevolg deur 'n oorsig van die Afrika Renaissance. Die veelvoudige beskouinge van die Afrika Renaissance word ondersoek en die komponente daarvan word saamgevat. Suid-Afrika se rol in die Renaissance word krities ondersoek en spanninge in die konseptualisering van die Afrika Renaissance word geïdentifiseer. Die oorsprong van die Afrika Renaissance en die vertakkinge daarvan word ook in oënskou geneem. Ten slotte word die mate waarin die Afrika Renaissance 'n uitdaging aan Westerse diskoerse bied, beoordeel. 'n Nadere ondersoek van die Renaissance reaksie onthul die onvoldoende en beperkte aard van hierdie uitdaging.

Ter afsluiting – die verhandeling beoordeel die oorkoepelende reaksie van die Afrika Renaissance op dominante Westerse politieke diskoerse. Hierdie reaksie is egter 'n gemengde reaksie - sekere Westerse diskoerse word wel uitgedaag, terwyl ander nie uitgedaag word nie of met 'n dubbelsinnige reaksie gekonfronteer word. Alhoewel die Afrika Renaissance oor die potensiaal beskik om die gewensde uitdaging aan Westerse diskoerse te bied, word hierdie potensiaal nie ten volle verwesenlik nie. Die Afrika Renaissance kan dus verbeter word deur die erkenning van die noodsaaklikheid dat dit wel 'n uitdaging aan Westerse politieke diskoerse moet bied, deur die ontwikkeling van 'n kritiese ingesteldheid jeens Westerse diskoerse, deur die verskaffing van 'n arena waarbinne alternatiewe diskoerse kan ontwikkel, en deur die kweek van 'n meer selfkritiese ingesteldheid.

SLEUTELKONSEPTE

Afrika Renaissance
Afrika-vernuwing
Afrika-herstel
diskoers
mag
postmodernisme
kritiese teorie
Suid-Afrika
Buitelandse beleid
Nuwe Vennootskap vir Afrika Ontwikkeling (NEPAD)