Paut Neteru as An African World View Paradigm
by
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A useful definition of paradigm is "an example that serves as pattern or model. My model is Ra Un Nefer Amen’s presentation, discussion and application of the Paut Neteru (Kemetic Tree of Life). A full discussion of the Paut Neteru would require volumes. In this essay, I use it as model for doing authentic African cultural criticism.

The depictions below provide a visual reference for my discussions about the Paut Neteru:
I am using the *Paut Neteru* as a paradigm to discuss African world cultural expression in a unified fashion. A core assumption of this paradigm is that when one works from a unified theory of reality (the *Paut Neteru*) then what one knows in one field is transferable to another: my knowledge of grammar is a basis for my understanding of differential equations, and my ability to make extraordinary music, is a basis for my ability to make precise astronomical calculations and to use the same as a basis to build my structures which are but earthly mirrors of the cosmos.

With the unified perception of reality in mind, I return to the above depiction of the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is a symbol for both how to live this life, and how to live eternally. It is the perfect symbol for the African conception of God as having complimentary dualities: an un-manifested dimension (eternal life); and a manifested dimension (how to live in this life). In bringing humans to understand this relationship, *The Paut Neteru* is a “... graduated means through which the Prime Cause effects the world.” The prime cause is Amen—the “Zero” that sits above *The Paut Neteru*. The way the prime cause effects the world is outlined in the remainder of the *Paut Neteru*. There are a number of ways to discuss *The Paut Neteru*, but my discussion here is limited to explanations relating to the process of creation and the purpose of life. This is an ontological discussion which provides a basis for exploring how the creative process works within various African cultural products, and how the criticism of the same might authentically proceed. My discussion of the *Paut Neteru*’s explanation of the creative process is a necessary beginning to rescuing manifested dimensions of African world culture that have been robbed of their spiritual power by various colonizing Judeo-Christian political, sociological, and cultural theories. Such theories are of course the basis on which various socializing institutions stake their claims of legitimacy.

There are three triangles in *The Paut Neteru* and each signifies both a step in the creative process, and its purpose. The first triangle is composed of branches one, two and three and are called respectively Ausar, Tehuti, and Seker. In turn, these three branches correspond to the following seed-like divine characteristics that God shares with humanity: omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. Of the three triangles, this one is the only one that points up towards “Amen,” the hidden one which corresponds to absolute peace--un-manifested reality. Amen is the source of everything and can be thought of as a reservoir that supplies forever without diminishing.

The next triangle is composed of branches four, five and six, and are respectively called Maat, Herukhuti, and Heru. The function of each branch in turn is divine law, justice, and free will. In total, these three branches compose the administrative part of *The Paut Neteru*. This triangle points downward towards the Effect, which is manifestation. This administrative triangle helps bring and maintain order among the various manifested aspects of being--God. It is a middle triangle which helps to maintain balance between the un-manifested aspect of God (spheres one, two and three) and the activities necessary for manifestation and therefore experience in the world--the final triangle which I will discuss directly.
The final triangle is composed of branches seven, eight and nine and they are respectively called Het-Heru, Sebek, and Auset. The function of each branch in turn is creative visioning, information gathering, and memorization. In a sense, these branches are the workers, who ideally take their orders from the administrative triangle which, in turn, makes decisions that allow it to be guided by the first triangle--omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. Branch ten of The Paut Neteru is called Geb and represents the physical body, which can be thought of as a metaphor for the concrete manifestation of an idea. It is the effect intended by the cause.

*The Paut Neteru* process of creation as outlined here begins and ends with a single entity dividing itself for experience while, as noted, maintaining itself as one. The function of each triangle, and of each Neter within that triangle, as well as their various relational functions, provide the “graduated means through which the Prime Cause effects the world.” Thus *The Paut Neteru* is a system of initiation. We all start at branch ten, the physical body symbolized by Geb, and through life, with the appropriate cultivation we move progressively up *The Paut Neteru*. The purpose of each step in this graduated system is to move ever closer to the understanding of the unity within diversity, a knowing possible only through the cultivation of the shared seed-like God characteristics of omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. *The Paut Neteru* provides an excellent framework for both understanding several aspects of African cultural creation, and it provides an excellent basis for authentic African cultural criticism.

The table below provides initial definitions for each of the four aspects of the African World View and will be used as a basis for elaboration on each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African World View</th>
<th>Ontology</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Space</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individuality defined in the context of community</td>
<td>Intuition and historical understanding validate what is said to be known.</td>
<td>Is structured by hierarchical value or function; awakens intuition to establish historical linkages (Amen, Tree of Life Meditation System, p. 121)</td>
<td>Means the order in which reality manifests itself (Amen, Tree of Life Meditation System, p. 121)</td>
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The collectivist nature of African ontology is demonstrated in sources and activities ranging from creation myths to various spiritual ceremonies. For example, in the area of creation myths, many African societies advance a monotheistic concept in which a singular Creator divides itself in order to accomplish the various tasks of creation. Among the ancient Egyptians, this Creator is a single entity and is given the description, “the hidden one,” which translates as Amen. Amen is the “primary cause,” and as such alludes singular description because its nature as the primary cause requires an absence of restrictions--which is what any definition is; thus, the ancient Egyptians, and over time, most major western religions, end many of their religious /spiritual ceremonies with a symbolic return to the “primary cause”-- the Creator--by invoking Her/His/Its omnipresence by calling the name, “Amen.”
From the above, it can be inferred that the epistemology emanating from this ontology does not make antagonistic, either/or divisions between the mind and the body, the sacred and the secular, and a variety of other dualities. Rather, it is an epistemology structured by a both /and logic which conceptualizes dualities as complementary expressions of a single reality. The both / and logic which structures African epistemology is relational in that it establishes and keeps in tact the simultaneously fixed and fluid set of dualistic and other relationships among reality’s infinite expressions of itself. This is an African basis for understanding the world, and this understanding is exhibited in a variety of cultural expressions. An obvious example is jazz, a form of music which relies as much on improvisation as it does on the fixed modes within a musical piece. It is this creative tension between improvisation and predictability which helps give jazz its dynamism. My point is that the epistemology which structures African world creative expression is, like all expression, an attempt to use the experiences that artifacts and/or performances occasion as a basis to make sense of the world; significantly, such attempts derive from an epistemology which assumes a complimentary nature among the infinite expressions of the unified phenomenon that is life.

In comparison to African ontology, Eurocentric ontology, which as structured by Cartesian logic, sees dualities as antagonistic. A brief exploration of a the way the Eurocentric societies have handled a fundamental duality within humanity--the female / male duality--is instructive. For the west, the fulcrum point in this duality is power. As used here, power has two dimensions: one is highly personal, and ego centered. The pursuit of personal power limits the possibility of creating community because by definition it clouds the ability to see dualities as complimentary. The second kind of power is communal because it sees dualities as complimentary. Communal power has a goal of creating an equilibrium wherein each aspect of reality finds its own place. Within the Christian tradition, the pursuit of personal power has structured the way western man has dealt with the male/female duality:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. (First Corinthians, Chapters 14 and 1, versus 34 and 35)

The prohibition of women speaking in church derives in part from her--as Eve--having tempted Adam into eating the apple from the Tree of Knowledge:

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjugation. But I suffer not a woman to teach or to usurp over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was the first formed and then Eve, and Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (First Timothy, Chapter, verses 11 through 14)
It is hard to expunge this historical record regarding the treatment of women within the Christian tradition as practiced by western societies:

I think it was John Stuart Mill who said that a society or philosophy can be judged by its treatment of women. If what he said is true then Christianity does not fair very well. In the nineteen centuries that were available to Christianity to improve the status of women it accomplished little. In fact, an argument can be made that the lives of average women were much better in the Roman Empire prior to the imposition of Christianity as the state religion. In the biblical scheme of things women are the property first of their fathers and then of their husbands, in effect making women non persons. (http://www.cableregina.com/business/trem/home/ntw.htm)

Within the Eurocentric framework, property is a significant determiner of power because that framework values the tangible, the material above all else. Hence, the more property one has, the more power one has. But material things are dumb and can not be made to praise their owners, so it is the reduction of the individual to a thing that can sing the praises of its conqueror which has come to evidence the greatest expression of personal power. Within this framework, men have perpetual dominion, perpetual power over women.

However, personal power can never be satisfied with its accomplishments because in its inability to see complimentary relationships within nature, it always assumes that anything that stands outside its immediate realm of influence is a threat to be concurred. This personal-power consciousness applies to things. It takes a different twist when applied to the specific way in which a Eurocentric world view handles the male / female duality. Possessing people requires a form of rationalization which nullifies the humanity of the possessed individual. This nullification is facilitated by assigning some delimiting trait (ignorance, evil, greed, deceitfulness, etc.) based on an unchanging characteristic such as race or gender. Thus, in our example of Eurocentric handling of the male/female duality, the personal power men exercise over women has not been sufficient to assuage the psychological dissonance occasioned by the pleasure and necessity of procreation:

Women as a source of evil (note the linguistic kinship between “devil,” “evil” and “Eve”) became so intensified that by 1459 AD, the Catholic church decreed that witches existed and were blamed for many fantastic crimes... in 1484 AD...Pope Innocent VII issue a Bull to allow the inquisition to extract...confessions from witches of having sex with the Devil. As a result, 30,000 women were burned at the stake for having sex with a metaphor for the Reptilian and Mammalian (mid) portions of the brain. (Amen, Spiritual Union, 36).

The inability of White men to deal with natural impulses (the reference to the “Reptilian” brain above can be understood as a reference to both the medulla oblongata...
and the libido) toward sexual fulfillment has led to a range of perversions, too numerous to catalog here.

To reiterate: the way a Eurocentric world view handles dualities demonstrates an epistemology which can not see differences as complimentary, but rather sees differences as threats that need to be subjugated. Subjugation proceeds via the exercise of personal power in which the reduction of everything and everybody to a commodity is the preferred state of affairs. The Eurocentric epistemology presented here derives from an ontological view of the world in which the individual is the center, thus we understand the centrality of personal power as a means to deal with the different ways that reality presents itself.

As noted in our table above, the African epistemology is a combination of historical understanding and intuition. Both these terms require elaboration. Historical understanding derives its epistemological function from the oneness of the universe. Because we are part of this single universe, and have, in fact, and in one form or the other, always been a part of this universe, historical understanding is not primarily about names, dates, times and places. Rather, as used here, historical understanding is about a spiritual reservoir--or, if you will, a metaphysical science--that is the foundation for the various forms (names, dates, times and places) in which this spiritual reservoir manifests itself. At one level, this kind of historical understanding is sometimes advanced in terms of thematic or cyclical studies of history. It is also alluded to in folk-sayings like the “more things change, the more they remain the same.” My point here is that historical understanding is a basis for tracing back to the reservoir--the common point of origin--the specific manifestations of a given phenomenon. One can reasonably surmise that thematic and cyclical approaches to history are examples of this tracing back to a “common point of origin.” What is the theme(s) that ties phenomenon together over space and time? What is the nature of human development which can account for the apparent repetitive ways in which human kind seeks to pose and answer fundamental questions about life? These and similar questions must be what is at the root of historical study, and as such they derive from an assumption that there is a common cause, or, at the very least, a common set of laws which structure human development. If no such laws existed there would be no basis for development, for everything would always appear as if it just came into being for the first time and would have no relationship with anything else. This would create a kind of existential physics in which matter would have no reason to stay together--electrons would go their merry way, and protons and neutrons would do likewise. Humankind, after all, does not invent itself as matter, but rather studies itself as matter. This is the basis for thematic and cyclical approaches to the study of history: to discover at the sub-atomic level what it is that structures humankind’s development and evolution. And what is the purpose of humankind’s development and activity? As noted above, from the perspective of the African World View, the purpose is to discover the unity in diversity. As outlined here, historical study is an aspect of initiation into understanding of life’s purpose as the discovery of the unity in diversity.
As initiation, historical study begins with the unstated assumption that there is unity within diversity, and from this assumption—which is initially beyond the comprehension of most initiates—it proceeds through the following four stages: (1) systematic exposure to meanings associated with names, dates, places, and events; (2) engagement in activities meant to assist self-discovery within the context of history; (3) collaboration among the initiates and various others for the purpose of problem solving; (4) “networked intelligence” activities associated with meditation and technology. These stages of historical initiation help the initiates discover the cyclical nature of history, and those points within the cycle which suggest spirals in human development beyond what said cycles suggest.

The first stage—the systematic exposure to meanings associated with various phenomenon—is a stage of initiation which socializes the spirit/intellect to know and venerate the best traditions of an individual’s culture—in this case, African world culture. Aside from the obvious result of accumulating information, the successful completion of this stage of initiation into historical understanding eliminates the need to ever doubt either the existential worth and legitimacy of the individual or the worth and legitimacy of her/his community.

The second stage of initiation—self-discovery within the context of cultural history—begins the process of individuals finding and refining their various talents in the terms of the best traditions in their history and culture. In effect, a lifelong dialogue with history is commenced, and its best and most useful expression is captured in the present—the only dimension of time which, after all, is eternal. More will be said about relationships among time, space, and knowing later. The point here is that self-discovery within the best traditions of one’s history and culture is intended to positively impact the present.

The third stage—collaboration among the initiates—is intended to demonstrate the unity within diversity through structured activities which require sharing and creating information and experiences, and to assist the initiate in seeing the multiple, one might say, limitless ways in which responses to opportunities might be shaped.

The fourth stage of initiation into historical understanding—the utilization of meditation and technology to assist in developing “networked intelligence”—extends the third stage by focusing on techniques to historical understanding. The meditation techniques are timeless, and are supported by a variety of research on how the human brain works: essentially the purpose of meditation in this initiation process is to free the creative and unifying dimensions of the right hemisphere of the brain to conceptualize and understand reality. From this perspective, the left hemisphere of the brain, with its ability to implement, is put in the service of the unifying solutions posed by the right hemisphere. Within the Paut Neteru framework, the relationships between first triangle in which reside omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence—symbolized by Ausar, Tehuti, and Seker—the middle triangle (the administrative unit of Maat, Herukhuti, and Heru), and the third triangle of workers (Het-Heru, Sebek, and Auset) provide a deeper way to understand the left and right brain functions described here.

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The idea of “networked intelligence” derives from the digitalization of information and the placing of the same on the Internet. This technology has the potential to create learning communities and learning opportunities consistent with life’s purpose—the discovery of the unity within diversity. Just as various meditative techniques can train the human mind/spirit to see within and beyond what is immediately available and verifiable via the techniques of left brain dominated science, so too can the Internet extend the consciousness of an individual and of various cultures. The relationships between African centered theory and practice to the Internet will be developed in third section of this book. In bares noting here, that I am indeed mindful of the left-brain directed activity which helps structure the mathematical infrastructure of digitized communication. So I am not devaluing it; rather, in discussing right brain activity, I am operating within an African worldview which assigns different aspects of reality complimentary, non-antagonistic relationships. From this perspective, chaos and conflict are occasioned when things are out of place—that is, being assigned a function which is at odds with the order which structures the universe, and, in terms of its manifestation, they are coming into being at an inappropriate moment in the cycle of the thing’s existence.

**Toward Authentic African Cultural Criticism:** Intuition is derived from the ontological assumption that reality is a single, unified phenomenon. From this perspective, knowing has a relationship similar to the one that the involuntary systems of the human body have to the brain: we neither have to think or remember to tell our circulatory systems to extract oxygen from red-blood cells, nor do we have to tell our heart to beat at a rate consistent with the needs our physical activities require. This level of knowing requires no thought.

But how does one reach this stage of knowing? While this level of knowing is evidenced by the absence of thought, it is facilitated and made possible by activities indicated in the initiation process outlined in the historical understanding section. Intuition is therefore a learned method, or, perhaps more accurately, it is the natural state of an awakened consciousness. The learned dimension are those techniques used to awaken the consciousness. The truth or validity of intuition is evidenced by the results it achieves in time; indeed, knowing how to tell time (the order in which reality manifests itself) is an aspect of intuition. This African epistemology contrasts sharply with the western scientific method in a number of significant ways. The sharpest contrast is that African intuition as epistemology incorporates both the divisive aspects of the left-hemisphere of the brain and the unifying aspects of the right hemisphere of the brain. The ancient Egyptians symbolized the dual components of knowing in a variety of ways that were intended to create the equilibrium necessary to see the entirety of a situation. Here are four areas which structure the way humanity interacts with both the metaphysical and physical dimensions of reality: peace, self, will, and power.

Before discussing each of these concepts as complimentary dualities whose singular and related development are necessary to activate intuition, I need to acknowledge that at a fundamental level there is some redundancy in my discussion. My
redundancy is best understood as an expression of jazz, a polyphonic ensemble style of playing which incorporates some improvisation and syncopation. Keywords in this definition of jazz are polyphonic, improvisation, and syncopation. Polyphonic composition is a style of music in which two or more independent melodies are juxtaposed in harmony. Syncopation is a temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the weak beat. Improvisation means to compose, recite, play, or sing extemporaneously. But what is more revealing is that the root word--improvise--in Latin (improvisus) literally means “unforeseen.” So what do we have in this definition of jazz that is useful to my proclaimed redundancy? The melodies that are polyphonically juxtaposed in harmony are being, knowing, time and space. The stress that any one of these might receive at a given moment is “unforeseen,” an improvisation, and these improvisations often lead to syncopation. So my redundancy is a creative act motivated by a desire to explore the assumption that life’s purpose is the discovery of unity within diversity. From my perspective, probing motivated by life’s purpose (as stated above) is the function of authentic African criticism.

In addition to jazz, my redundancy here can be understood in terms of that part of physics which teaches that at the sub-atomic level the foundations of material reality are essentially the same. There is no substance which does not contain atoms, and there are no atoms which do not contain protons, neutrons and electrons. What we also find is that at the sub-atomic level the distance between physical and metaphysical reality is difficult to distinguish. While the activities of protons, neutrons and electrons can more or less be traced, there are other activities which allude the threshold of machine-enhanced sensory perception. The spiritual or theoretical model which governs the activities of these sub-atomic phenomenon can not be discovered via machine-enhanced perception and it is this absence of “scientific” knowing to which I refer when noting the coalescing of the physical and the metaphysical. Put another way, the most sophisticated science can only describe processes; they can not explain why things work as they do. This is so because as noted above, at the sub-atomic levels, there is relatively little difference among different expressions of matter. Thus the success of science in offering excruciatingly detailed descriptions of the diversity of appearances in which nature clothes herself, does not in-itself tell us very much about the “why” of life. Under the avalanche of detail we seldom dig for meaning, but rather burrow further into the avalanche, assuming that meaning derives from knowing ever more things.

Obviously I have over stated what I take as the limitations of western science as relates to first causes. Certainly, western science has sought to understand first causes through field theories of one sort or the other. However, these attempts have not relied on the “unforeseen” of improvisation and intuition, but rather have taken mechanistic views, or views in which dualities are seen as antagonistic as opposed to being seen as complimentary. Finally, the redundancy in my discussion is an attempt to illustrate the unity in diversity.

Let me now return to the four concepts introduced above. Peace, self, will, and power are four areas which structure the way humanity interacts with both the metaphysical and physical dimensions of reality. These concepts take us back to the Paut
Neteru as a paradigm. My discussion of these concepts will demonstrate complimentary nature of the way the Ancient Egyptians viewed life’s dualities. What I intend to show is that dualities within each of these four components can be used to structure both an African epistemology and an authentic African cultural criticism. These four terms and the way I am using them derive from my reading of the following works by Ra Un Neefer Amen: *The Metut Neter, Volume 1, The Great Oracle of Tehuti* (1990), *An Afrocentric Guide to a Spiritual Union* (1992), *Metut Neter, Volume 2, Anuk Ausar* (1994), and *Tree of Life Meditation System* (1996). My interpretations and extrapolations of his work are guided by Khepera Rising’s necromancy, a term which here means the conjuration of the spirits of the ancestors to reveal the future and influence the course of events.

Each of the four components can be divided to correspond to the functions of the brain’s hemispheres and it is this model that is useful to my concern to outline a process to awaken intuition. The table below is illustrative:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>How Left Hemisphere Obtains concept</th>
<th>How Right Hemisphere Obtains Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>a state of tranquility or quiet</td>
<td>Obtained via manipulation of the body through satiating its appetites</td>
<td>obtained through meditation and unaffected by the material world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>an individual's typical character or behavior</td>
<td>Consciousness and therefore actions derive from identification with the personality</td>
<td>consciousness and therefore actions derive from the identification with the oneness of nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>a choice of one having authority or power</td>
<td>Choices based on the assumption that things have static meanings in themselves</td>
<td>choices based on relationships among things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>ability to act or produce an effect</td>
<td>Effects produced via manipulation of crass reality</td>
<td>effects produced via interactions with laws governing relationships among things</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The development of these four traits within individuals and cultures follows the same path of initiation noted above for historical understanding: (1) systematic exposure to meanings associated with names, dates, places, and events; (2) engagement in activities meant to assist self-discovery within the context of history; (3) collaboration among the initiates and various others for the purpose of problem solving; (4) “networked intelligence” activities associated with meditation and technology. A full discussion of how these four concepts operate is more than is the purpose of *Khepera Rising*. My interest here is to discuss the complimentary nature of these concepts in order to show why the ideal African epistemology is simultaneously non-thinking and highly analytical.

At the outset of our individual lives, we intuitively associate pleasure with peace. The attainment of pleasure goes through stages of anticipation, acquisition, experience, and release. The feeling that accompanies and signals release is peace--a state of tranquillity or quiet. This pattern of pleasure to reach peace is as apparent for new born who cries for food and attention, to the most seasoned business executive who too cries for attention and food, and only reaches release when satiated. In both cases, the new born and the hard-driving business executive, the peace which comes from release via satiating some perceived material need is temporary. Thus the drama is routinely repeated. There is nothing wrong with this drama; it only becomes problematic when the individual assumes that permanent peace lies in the acquisition and experience of things. From the perspective of *Paut Neteru*, permanent peace is possible only through the consistent and unthinking self-identification with the oneness of nature, a concept symbolized by the Kemetic Neter, Ausar. From my perspective, this self-identification has to be unconscious in order to assure that it is not shaken by the “unforeseen,” but rather is able to automatically adjust to whatever experience that might come our way.
But what do these ideas of peace have to do with understanding African world creative culture? The drama involved in the uninitiated stages of life wherein the individual associates pleasure with peace, is the archetype for most creative expressions. For example, regardless of the culture, the plot in most expressive and written art includes rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution. The rising action is similar to what I mean by the anticipation and acquisition stages of pleasure. The climax in creative expression is similar to what I mean by experience. The falling action or resolution is similar to what I mean by release.

The methods and purposes of this universal framework vary from culture to culture. For example, in my first book, Connecting Times, I discuss the resolution to conflicts characters’ experienced as a result of their involvement in one or more of the definitional events of the sixties (the Civil Rights Movement, the war in Vietnam, the Black Power Movement) as being a function of their identification with either their personalities, or with their identification with the oneness of the universe. In the former case, whatever peace such characters obtain is temporary, angst-filled, and generally of no use to their communities. In contrast, characters’ whose identity is derived form the oneness of the universe, resolve conflicts in a manner which connects them with some informing tradition in their culture. Such characters become models for others.

In retrospect, what I was writing about in Connecting Times was the decision that characters made to commence a process of historical initiation along lines similar to the ones described above. Significantly, for such characters (Walker’s Meridian, Bradley’s ?? in Chaneysville Incident, McCIsukey’s Mac in Look What They Done to My Song) the process of initiation plants them firmly within an African worldview. Let me return my discussion of peace.

The peace obtainable via meditation and other similar techniques is desired because it is consistent with the nature of reality. When we assume that peace is a function of things, we have assumed that things have meaning in themselves. To a great extent, such an assumption is entirely consistent with a western worldview which is essentially outer-directed, prejudiced towards those things that can be known via the senses, and linear in thought. Such a worldview has more or less guaranteed the production of anxiety-ridden cultures that are always trying to figure out how to find the balance between the necessary pleasures of the flesh and the equally necessary pleasures of true peace.

As discussed here, the peace obtained by training the spirit/intellect to respond to all situations in a manner consistent with what the relationships that compose situation requires (a process I called cultural literacy in Connecting Times and other works) is primary. When this kind of peace is operative, one can enjoy the other peace with the full knowledge that such enjoyment is simultaneously a choice, and is temporary. To paraphrase Ra Un Nefer Amen, one does not become a slave to the first kind of pleasure by assuming that it is the basis for peace. For doing so limits the individual’s ability to move toward self-actualization.
As implied above, if the individual is motivated to discover and experience life’s purpose, then the self identification with the oneness of nature, the Neter Ausar, is preferable to the self-identification with the personality. As Ausar, the individual transcends the limitations of the personality. The limitations of the personality have two symbiotic dimensions: (1) we are all born with certain predispositions that may be nurtured or not by our environments; and (2) for a variety of reasons, we learn and teach ourselves a range of conditioned responses to the innumerable appearances in which nature presents herself. Together, these two factors compose the individual’s personality. It should be noted here, that personality in-itself is not an impediment to anything. Indeed, outstanding contributions to world civilization have come through various portals of personality, race, gender and class. Those variations are of course a part of what makes life so potentially rich for all people. My point here is that personality is problematic when we take it is our identity.

When we take our personality as our identity we violate fundamental laws of space and time. While space and time will be discussed below, it is necessary to here to restate their definitions in order to relate the same to the point I am making. Space is the hierarchical value we give to phenomenon, both physical and metaphysical, and time is the order in which reality manifests itself. By taking the personality as the identity, we have put it (the personality) in a space that is of higher value than the identification with oneness of nature, i.e., the identification with Ausar. The self identification with the personality also affects time in that the order in which reality manifests itself is likely to be ignored for an order of manifestation which conforms to the needs of the personality. As a consequence, the manifestations which come into existence--from medicine to machines--carry their own negations. As medicine, such negations are seen as side-effects which themselves are often as severe as the illness they seek to remedy. The negations which have accompanied the mechanization of society often have ecological effects that alter life chances for various groups within society.

The exercise of the will from the perspective of the personality can be understood in ways already expressed above. In particular, we looked at how the will and power have historically structured relationships among women and men in European centered, Christian societies and found that women were reduced to property. When the individual derives her will from the assumption that meaning is not derived from the relationship among things, then said individual is positioned to intuit the spirit or purpose of appearance. To get this stage of intuition requires a decision to put aside any number of pre-conceived notions about what specific things mean. This is a process of seeing everything as if for the first time.

When one can intuit the appropriate law structuring a set of relationships, then one is in the position to appropriately exercise power. When one does not intuit the appropriate law structuring a set of relationships, the exercise of power will come from the personality perspective and will more often than not limit the humanity of individuals who are affected by said exercise of power.

So what have we seen concerning the relationship of peace, self, will and power to explicating epistemology as an aspect of an African world view? The following may
be stated: 1) these concepts are universal; 2) each has a dual structure, corresponding to the right and left hemispheres of the brain; 3) in each case, the part of the dual structure corresponding to the right hemisphere of the brain occupies a primary place and the part of the dual structure corresponding to the left hemisphere of the brain represents a secondary place; 4) manifestation consistent with life’s purpose requires both halves of the dualities; 5) the relationship between the dual expressions in each area, as well as the relationships among the concepts and their components is complimentary; and 6) the development of these relationships in the manner just outlined is learned through phases of initiation similar to what we see for historical initiation.

**Authentic African Cultural Criticism:** The Khepera Method (KM) is a way of discussing African world culture within the framework of key philosophical and spiritual assumptions of that culture. The key assumptions are being, knowing, time, and space and those have been defined and discussed above. Relationships among Peace, Self, Will and Power have also been defined and discussed above, and these too are a basis for the Khepera Method. Tehuti and Maat are the organizing core of the Khepera Method. Respectively, they represent branches two (omniscience or the Will of God) and three (Divine Law) of *The Paut Neteru*. Tehuti provides a way to use for interpretation the underlying dualities that structure all of existence. Maat provides a basis to establish the truth of a premise, and for holistic, relational thinking. Below I discuss how I use each *Neter* to develop the Khepera Method.

Tehuti identifies six dualities that structure all reality. These dualities are elaborations on my earlier discussion of peace, identity, will and power. The six dualities are: (1) Inner Peace vs. Pleasure; (2) Self vs. Person; (3) Knowing vs. Being Informed; (4) Inner Power vs. Outer Power; (5) Freedom vs. Divine Law; and (5) Justice vs. Vengeance. The first component of each of the six dualities is the preferred state of being for that duality: it is better to achieve Inner Peace than it is to achieve Pleasure; it is better to Know than it is to be Informed, etc. Accordingly, the first half of each duality occupies a more privileged hierarchical space than does the second component in each of the dualities. Similarly, the first aspect in each duality has a higher priority in time than does the second aspect in that the manifestation of the former is key to resolving conflicts.
The table below provides definitions and an outline of the critical relevance of each duality. All references in the table are from Amen’s *Tree of Life Meditation System.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Critical Relevance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner Peace vs. Pleasure (0-10)</td>
<td>“We cannot be at peace and emotional at the same time…Man must learn to enjoy with the knowledge that pleasure is not a property of the object of enjoyment” (124-125)</td>
<td>Explains self-sacrifice; heroic behavior; the ability to transcend; also explains cool and funk as styles; explains addictions; excessive behavior; acquisitiveness; inability to achieve happiness; war</td>
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<td>Self vs. Person (1 –9)</td>
<td>“..there are two parts in Man that compete for identity…How do we embrace the world without throwing our personal interests away and vice-versa…Once thinking is shut down to allow the wisdom faculty to manifest its knowledge, it will become known that the identification with the indwelling Divinity as oneself gives one the spiritual powers to satisfy the needs of the person and the whole at the same time”</td>
<td>Explains self-sacrifice; heroic behavior; the ability to transcend; also explains cool and funk as styles; explains various phobias; personal and societal conflicts concerning controlling means of production;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowing vs. Being Informed (2-8)</td>
<td>“A sage’s knowledge has nothing to do with the knowledge of how to perform technical and mathematical operations. That is the function of the intellect (symbolized in the Kamitic tradition by Tehuti’s baboon, who was employed to read the scales in the Weighing of The Heart/Will ceremony). Conversely, the syllogistic logical intellect is incapable of handling the issues of Man’s life, for the simple fact that there is nothing in it that can process the reality of the divine part of Man’s being” (128)</td>
<td>Explains humanity’s ability to “know without going through a logical process;” explains the process of knowing; explains the how being informed leads to conflict; also indicates symbols associated with trickery, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inner Power vs. Outer Power (3 –7)</td>
<td>“The emotional attitudes of the faculties of the 3rd sphere wherein resides God’s spiritual power, and of the 7th sphere Het-Heru are direct opposites of each other…This seeming conflict is resolved by Tehuti which instructs us that nothing is enjoyable in itself, and that our natural state of being is the undifferentiated state of energy/matter—peace” (129)</td>
<td>Explains transcendence; ability to concentrate and affect change; Explains acquisitiveness, addictions as sources for peace; joy marries death and the latter is thereby transcended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom vs. Divine Law (4-6)</td>
<td>“Man’s will, which is the potential to act, the instrument through which choices are made is the only thing in the world that can initiate an act that flows outside of Divine Law…It is given to us that we may ignore the impulses of the lower part of our being and this control it, but instead we capitulate to it and use our freedom to disobey the laws of God. The conflict is resolved as soon as it is realized that divine law is not a set of rules—moral or otherwise—but the understanding of the undeniable interrelationships and interdependence between things. (130)</td>
<td>Explains variations of the Hamlet syndrome; questions of identity; questions about getting what you think you are supposed to get.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice vs. Vengeance (5 –5)</td>
<td>Justice is possible only when we take Ausar as our identity; vengeance occurs when we take Auset as our identity</td>
<td>Explains a range of character flaws and the ability to achieve peace.</td>
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Before indicating how the above helps structure the Khepera Method, let me turn to a discussion of Maat. I will then discuss Tehuti and Maat in concert, for within the context of *The Paut Neteru,* the two are paired as husband and wife and as such have a complimentary relationship that is a basis for the critical use to which I will put them in structuring the Khepera Method.
Maat provides a way to understand relationships among nature’s expressions of herself. Those relationships can be complimentary, supplementary, and/or interdependent. This holistic form of thinking asserts that the truth of a thing or situation is obtainable only by posing the question in this manner: “What is the truth concerning X? This is due to the fact that truth concerns itself with the proper function of things, their purposes and the correct interaction with, and use of things” (*Tree of Life Meditation System*, 151). In this system, truth does not exist apart from what it seeks to inform us about. The table below indicates the three relationships that have to be considered in order to determine the truth about any thing or any situation. Again, all quotes are from *The Tree of Life Meditation System*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Critical Application</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. INTERRELATIONSHIP: The form-function relationship.</td>
<td>The principle of interrelationship or the relationship that existing within the thing itself. This is the relationship that exists between the structure or make-up or form of a thing with its function or purpose (152)</td>
<td>Critics of African world culture tend to denigrate function and valorize form; this has the twin results of trivializing the culture, and mis-reading its products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. INTRARELATIONSHIP: Mutual relationship between a thing and the other members of the whole (system, unit)</td>
<td>“Once we learn to look at the world as a gigantic network of interdependent systems, we can understand the function and purpose—truth—of every creature, including man. (152)</td>
<td>Critics tend to dismember African world culture and use the pieces as a basis to understand some cultural product.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The function a thing performs for the system or unit to which it belongs</td>
<td>“Once we learn to look at the world as a gigantic network of interdependent systems, we can understand the function and purpose—truth—of every creature, including man. (152)</td>
<td>Critics tend to dismember African world culture and use the pieces as a basis to understand some cultural product.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ongoing Conclusion**: This essay has provided an overview of one way to use *The Paut Neteru* as a way to understand creative expression.