

## THE DIALECTIC OF ETHIOPIAN UNITY

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### Abstract

*This research is meant to show the philosophical secrets lying behind the persevering stance of Ethiopian unity despite the mounting negative factors that has been in force since the downfall of the Dergue regime in 1991. The attempt to uncover the philosophical underpinnings that can explain the saddeningly amazing bitter fact that Ethiopian unity somehow holds onto its existential unit in the face of a relentless, structural and intentional acidic factors being strewn unto it in the hands of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government would rely on the theoretical framework of Hegelian dialectic. To the success of this philosophical research, I helped myself profoundly to the rational and critical methods that are touted as the warps and woofs of a philosophical treatise and research. Following the hefty and strict application of the aforementioned methods coupled with the theoretical framework of analysis the Hegelian dialectic offers, I arrived at the conclusion which holds: The dismantling of cancerous and utterly divisive legal ideological and structural threats the EPRDF government has been serving for nearly three decades against Ethiopian unity stands as the total negation or antithesis of Ethiopian unity; an antithesis which gave birth to its own negation instead of dismantling into smithereens Ethiopian unity. Hence, we do have this time around the Hegelian negation of negation which comes in the form and name locally known as Fanno.*

**Keywords:** Ethiopian unity, Hegelian dialectic, negation of negation, Fanno, antithesis.

### Introduction

When the concept of dialectic is heard such German giants as Hegel, Marx, Engels, and Feuerbach come to mind. No one comes anywhere near Hegel in giving the very concept a cosmic stance as he applied it to the stygian mode via which the whole universe is supposed to move in rhythms that know no

hiatus. No one as well comes anywhere near Marx in giving the very concept a materialist twist. For Hegel, reality which is the absolute spirit, the Big Idea, is in the state of constant change. The change which in its constant stance and dynamism defines reality is not fortuitous though. On the contrary, the very change is noted with a well-known pattern that subscribes to law. The law that governs the change which keeps the entire reality alive and meaningful is touted dialectic (Hegel, 1977; Engels, 1940; Marx, 1964; Katen, 1973). For Hegel, the spirit is in a state of sadness for it doesn't know itself at the initial stage. In order that the spirit can know itself it has to fashion itself into the subject and object of knowledge; into the knower and the to be known. This can be achieved through a dialectic process which makes it imperative for the spirit to deny itself, to negate itself and thereby change itself into its stark opposite, so that it can finally achieve the goal of self-consciousness, self-knowledge, self-realization and freedom.

“These two moments, – *itself* as independent object and, and this object as a mode of consciousness, and hence its own essential nature, – fall apart. ... We are in the presence of self-consciousness in a new shape, a consciousness, which as the infinitude of consciousness, or as its own pure movement is aware of itself as essential being, a being which thinks, or is a free self-consciousness” (Hegel, 1977, p. 120).

And this universal law of motion and reason, in a word this law of reality comes in well-defined patterns dubbed thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

For Hegel, the world was a place of constant change, but the change itself was not arbitrary, for it was to proceed according to a well-defined pattern or method. Method was fundamental, for the pattern of the universe was revealed in the unfolding of the dialectical process. The procedure of the dialectical process was as follows:

- Thesis: assertion of a position – affirmation
- Antithesis: assertion of the opposite position – negation
- Synthesis: the blending of the two opposite positions into a unity on a higher level (Katen, 1973, p. 153).

Hegel's belief in the pattern laden nature of reality is so thorough that he saw logic and reason in everything near and a far, in everything that appears, in everything that is there in and about the phenomenon. He saw reality living logic like none other. In fact, he saw logic in everything except in logic itself. To make this point clearer, for Hegel the real is the rational and the rational is the real. Put otherwise the real is but just another version of the ideal and vice versa. Nonetheless, there is one thing Hegel couldn't see eye to eye. And that thing is what since the times of Aristotle has been enshrined as the

untouchable truth, as truth given no to be challenged come what may. The point I am at is that what is known in most pages of logic as the three laws of thought. The said laws of thought come under the heavy fire power of Hegelian dialectic. These laws of correct thinking are: the law of identity, the law of contradiction and the law of excluded middle.

By Aristotelian light the law of identity can be presented as  $M=M$ . Providing something is true then it is true. Way too easy to miss, and way far too easy not to go remiss of it, according to Aristotle. The law of contradiction holds that no statement can be both true and false. The third law of thinking is that of the excluded middle. In concert with Aristotle, the third law holds that any statement can either be true or false (Miller, 1984; Katen, 1973).

However Aristotle must have foreseen, it seems that somehow some thinkers in the times ahead might come up with something that sets a catch to his belief in the efficiency and certainty of the three laws of thought and writes a rough sounding warning which borders on a diatribe:

“Some indeed demand to have the law proved, but this is because they lack education, for it shows lack of education not to know of what we should require proof, and of what we should not. For it is quite impossible that everything should have a proof; the process would go on to infinity. So that even so there would be no proof” (Aristotle, 1946).

The foreboding nuance in Aristotelian defensive diatribe came true as his laws of thought were at least partially rejected both by Hegel and Engels, not to mention Marx. It is a situation the Ethiopian adage describes down to a note: *Yeferrut yderssal, yetellut ywerssal* – which would roughly mean in Amharic that which is feared would come true and he who is hated would overtake it.

Hegel rejected Aristotelian laws. He did not reject them entirely, to be sure, nor did he fail to understand them. Rather, he believed that reality is such that it cannot entirely be comprehended by these principles. Often when we try to fit reality into our Procrustean bed of logic, we distort it. There is a method of Reason (*vernunft* in German) that includes but goes beyond the method of logic or understanding (which he called *verstand*). The understanding or *verstand* is that part of the mind that is always trying to obtain clear distinctions. It has an obsession to make everything precise and cut and dried. But reality is not precise and cut and dried. Reality is a process. It doesn't still. It is a flow. Life is not static. At the deepest level 'to be or not to be' is not the question. Life constantly sees a passing from one stage of being to another so that to be is not to be, and not to be is to be (Katen, 1973).

In the heavy blow Aristotelian logic suffered in the hands of Hegelian *vernunft* we can see that Hegel's logic is indeed the metaphysics of becoming wherein reigned supreme is change which runs in the face of the law of contradiction. Accordingly, we have witnessed how to be is not to be, and not

to be is to be. In Engels' materialist metaphysics, wherein as well change reigns supreme, the Aristotelian laws of thought are cornered as follows.

There are three laws of dialectic:

1. The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa.
2. The law of the interpenetration of opposites.
3. The law of the negation of negation (Engels, 1940, p. 26).

As put unequivocally above dialectic in the hands of the Marxists with a material tint setting off from the spirit-bound stance of it in the hands of Hegel carries on the legacy of change. But then one thing should be made clear. Hegel might have stood in stark contradistinction to Aristotelian logic. Likewise, in a bit modified sense, Marx gave some of the same medicine to Hegel much as Hegel had given to Aristotle, though in a shade different form. “Marx appreciated the fact that Hegel was a powerful thinker. Indeed, this made it all the more important to crush Hegel’s idealistic excesses. Marx believed that Hegel saw things upside down, and he assigned himself the task of turning them right side up” (Katen, 1973, p. 155).

Applying materialistically the essentials of dialectic, Marx successfully left the footprints of historical materialism on the pages of metaphysics. Marx applied dialectic in his socio-economic analysis of capitalism where he debuted the concept of alienation. By his light, a radical change or revolution is a must in the heydays of alienation. In a social system where a given class or group of people is subjected to the harsh gories of reality a revolution, at the very least, is a must. Marx put the horrific gories of reality, or of a given socio-economic system that are visited upon a given people come into play when, “people are alienated from the results of their work, when people are alienated from themselves, when people are alienated from their nature and when people are alienated from fellow people” (Marx, 1964, p. 121).

The structural denial perpetrated against Ethiopian unity, the stark and nefarious negation visited upon Ethiopian longstanding unity, is probed deeper within the framework of the various facades of dialectic whose thumb-nail-sketch I have given above. The mounting intensive structural acts of saturated hatred towards Ethiopia notwithstanding, the bloody rankling and divisive and twice as destructive alienating and exterminating measures taken by the Woyanae – (the household name of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF)) led, Woyanae – baked and daubed government of EPRDF notwithstanding, Ethiopia’s unity has proved its quintessential to be one of perseverance interspersed with resilience which merits at this hiatus a closer philosophical delving.

### **The Dialectic of Ethiopian Unity**

As soon as the regime that named itself the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Forces came to power in May 1991, the first thing it got hell-bent on putting into effect was the dismemberment of Ethiopia. To this end, the EPRDF government set out to write a new constitution which could provide, and it did a formidable legal basis for its effort to dismantle Ethiopia such that the only black nation that maintained its independence by beating colonialism would totally dissipate from the world map and get erased from the pages of world history. Side by side with the diabolic and quisling work which the EPRDF knew would bury Ethiopia alive, the government gave its all to the fabrication of new sovereign entities or powers, as endorsed by the constitution. Article 8 of the constitution clearly and unashamedly takes away the inviolable right of Ethiopia to sovereignty and gives it to the new de facto countries which in the EPRDF's parlance are termed as nations, nationalities and peoples. Article 8 of the constitution holds that: "All sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples of Ethiopia" (Constitution of the FDRE, 1995, p. 7). Needless to add that flags are therewith fabricated so that at least fourteen of the eighty-five Ethiopian population groups would fly under and identify themselves with them. Hence it went great guns in breaking Ethiopia at least into fourteen de facto states that are warranted and even encouraged by the constitution to break away from Ethiopia any time they please. Pursuant to this bitter, treasonous and abashing fact Article 39, the most notorious of all the articles of the constitution, stirs up, encourages and bravadoes with a thumbs-up gesture all attempts by any group or clan in the country to break away from Ethiopia any time they feel like walking away from this ancient country of independence, this ancient state that is the pride and joy of all black people the world over and the hope of all oppressed people across the globe. Article 39 of the EPRDF Constitution boldly babbles out, without batting its eyelids, and cries out its quisling-flavored and traitors-go-ahead edict as follows. Article 39, "Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession" (Constitution of the FDRE, 1995, p. 33). Sadly, and in outright self-defeat every ethnic group in Ethiopia has not just the right to secession, but the unconditional right to do so. Unconditional right being an operating term, in this Quisling besotted, treason enshrined and betrayal soaked constitution, it is nothing less than an open call for the total dismemberment of Ethiopia. With this constitution in general and Article 39 in particular the negation of Ethiopia, as per the Marxian parlance, is set in motion.

With the highly racist and divisive constitution in full swing, with the establishment of fourteen ethnic-based regional states in place, and with

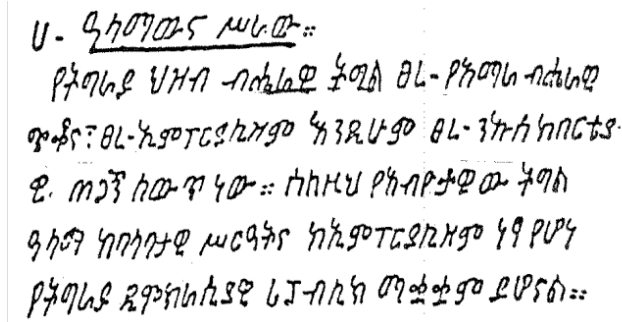
fourteen flags at whose beck and call stood respective and extremely cancerous, hate-laden ethnic anthems cutting a blazing trail of ethnic hatred, the arena was complete for the full-fledged antithesis in contradistinction to Ethiopian unity (Mindaralew, 2013, 2014, 2016). Thus, Ethiopia as we know it in history, Ethiopia noted for being the shining beacon of independence, the land of the patriots who prefer their immediate death to their being colonized or enslaved, Ethiopia as the only black nation that maintained its independence thanks to its gallant sons and daughters and wise kings was going to be relegated to the repository of history. Everything the EPRDF government did exuded an out-and-out anti-Ethiopian unity, to say the least. Put in different phrasings, EPRDF came to be a stark negation of Ethiopian unity, which in Hegelian terms amounts to the antithesis of the Ethiopian unity.

Side by side with the cancerous development of the aforementioned treasonous events, racism and open, rankling and unashamed hatred towards the Amharas has become the de facto ideology of the EPRDF government. If anyone has the effrontery to puke in broad daylight a gamut of diatribes against the Amharas, then he will scurry at his/her fastest the up-hills of power ladder. Everything EPRDF touched exuded racism at its worst and hatred at its ugliest.

The question of philosophical import at this juncture would therefore be one of delving into the underlying reason that can explain why and how Ethiopia has survived to date, maintaining its unity intact despite the leviathan big negative, racist, divisive, hatred-driven, and vengeance-laden challenges piled against it by the very government that has been in power for an odd and solid three decades? The philosophical answer to this question would take us right into the hub of Hegelian as well as Marxian dialectic, wherein nestled among other things are the precepts of change and the laws that govern the process of change.

While everything, by EPRDF's light, was put in place for the total dismemberment of Ethiopia, and while the negation of Ethiopia was in full swing, the government in power saw a catch to the plan it considered its heart's bent, to the plan it has invested its all, to the plan for the realization of which it has promulgated a constitution. And that catch turned out to be the Amharas (Muluken, 2016). As long as the Amharas are extant, the government envisaged, there will always be a challenge thrown at every attempt geared towards dismembering Ethiopia. Hence, the EPRDF government started to put into effect measures that would, in the long run, at least dwindle the impact of the Amharas on Ethiopian politics, and at the most whittle down the Amharas into an extinct ethnic group. It was a policy they pursued right from their very inception. TPLF the spiritual and political father of the EPRDF government as well as the godfather of the Prosperity Party now in power in Ethiopia made it

a point of its creed, the heart of its ideology, and the essence of its struggle to target the Amharas every step of their way. This was made unequivocally clear when they enshrined their utmost hatred and venomous animosity for Amharas in the 1976 manifesto of TPLF. The said manifesto of hatred and brawling animosity for the Amharas was handwritten, as shown below.



ሀ. ዓካማውና ሥራው፡፡  
 የትግሉ ህዝብ ብሔራዊ ትግል ፀረ-የክማሌ ብሔራዊ  
 ጭቆና፣ ፀረ-ኢምፐሪያሊዝምና ኢንዱስትሪያል ፀረ-ንኩሳክነት ነው፡፡  
 ይ. ጠጋኝ ሰው ሳይሆን፡፡ ሰብአዊ የክብርታዊው ትግል  
 ዓካማ ከጥገታዊ ሥርዓትና ከኢምፐሪያሊዝም ነፃ የሆነ  
 የትግሉ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ መብታዊ ደረጃ ነው፡፡

Figure 1: Paper clipping from the TPLF's 1976 Manifesto. p. 17.

Roughly translated, the above excerpt from the original handwritten TPLF Manifesto means, in Amharic, the overall objective of their struggle was an anti-Amhara national oppression, anti-imperialism and anti-petit-bourgeoisie reform meant to establish a free democratic republic of Tigray.

The very manifesto tells us that the perpetrators of hatred and the bearers of vengeance against the Amharas were back then in the formidable hideout the desert of Dedebeit in the Tigray province offered them. Like anyone could see the manifesto was handwritten; you don't expect them to have a typewriter or any other machine that they could help themselves to in matters of writing. Even if they did it seemed they didn't know how to write with it. Put differently, the TPLF, even when they couldn't find themselves in a position to write with a typewriter, they had deep in their hearts written, they had deep in their minds carved the hatred for Amharas. As could easily be learned from the above excerpt that TPLF had three inveterate enemies to fight against: the Amharas, imperialism, and petit bourgeoisie. And of these enemies the Amharas come first and foremost, as per the 1976 TPLF manifesto. This manifesto, with minor embellishments, later became the EPRDF constitution. Being guided by this manifesto, which in effect is the manifesto of hatred and venomous animosity, the covenant in which they vowed to fight the Amharas to the last man standing, to the last breath of their lives, the TPLF came to power in 1991. By the time they assumed power, they had already metamorphosed themselves into the EPRDF. Ever since they came to power there has been no measure, they have not taken to wipe out the Amharas from the surface of Ethiopia (Muluken, 2016).

While the negation of Ethiopian unity was still the government's number one project, as was blessed by the constitution of 1995, the EPRDF came to a stall in 2018 when it was forced to metamorphose itself into a new form publicly known as the Prosperity Party. Despite a few run-ins the members of the front, EPRDF have undergone to the point of changing their political tag into Prosperity Party, nothing of essence has really come into being where Ethiopia's unity, sovereignty, and continuity as a state that has persevered the challenges hurtled at it from the smudged hands of colonialism and the bloody hand of fascism is concerned. The creed to dismember Ethiopia was still on the agenda of the Prosperity Party. I could be justified to argue in this tint because the most lethal and cancerous of all tools, which has been in place where the continuity of Ethiopian unity and sovereignty is concerned, namely the constitution is still in place. It has been viewed by Prosperity Party, now the ruling party, in manners that border on idolatry worship and protected with ferociousness known only to a buffalo at the sight of her encroached calf by a pride of lions.

The new government under the leadership of the Prosperity party beefed up its efforts by way of staying loyal to the creeds of Woyanae and the front, Woyanae has been galloping for nearly three decades. What Woyanae used to see as a threat to their efforts meant to dismember Ethiopia, viz., the Amharas are still seen by Prosperity party with blood in its eyes, and with fire in its hands. Accordingly, the Prosperity party pursued the longstanding creed of Woyanae with zeal known only to fanatics. Thus, the zeal to do away with anything and anyone that might stand in their way that is supposed to take them to the realization of Article 39, to the total dismemberment of Ethiopia has gathered momentum. It follows that the Amharas who have been considered by Woyanaes as the utmost anathema of any divisive and parochial act, have now become target number one of the Prosperity party. In satanic compliance to this bloody momentum, the government in power makes it a point of honor with it to evict Amharas from Addis Ababa, the city built from scratch by Emperor Menelik II. That explains why 500,000, at the very least, Amhara residents of Addis Ababa have seen their homes bulldozed and their properties destroyed right before their eyes and hopelessly found themselves in a long desperate march away from their home soil, their city, and their homeland.





*Figure 2: Hundreds of thousands of Amharas being evicted from Addis Ababa during 2022/23.*

What is more, the Amharas were subjected to unlawful killings in almost all provinces of Ethiopia. Such is the scale and berth of atrocity being visited upon the Amharas, that in Benishangul Gumuz regional state alone the Amharas were buried in a ditch dug by excavator. As could be seen below, in a country where it is customary that the dead is given the utmost respect and obsequies are more honorable than the respect given to kings, the dead bodies of the Amharas were piled to a mound from which a loader scoops them to the capacity of its blade and drops them later into the ditch excavated by a machine. This fascistic way, both Christian and Muslim Amharas were buried in a single ditch.



*Figure 3: A pile of the massacred Amharas in the Benishangul region, western Ethiopia, in December 2022.*



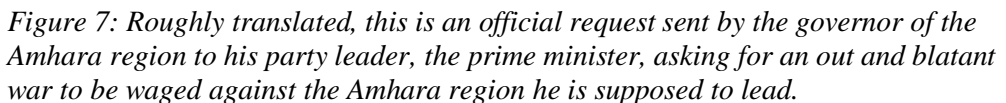
*Figure 4: The dead bodies of the massacred Amharas loaded into the blade of a loader.*



*Figure 5: The dead bodies of massacred Amharas being unloaded into the ditch dug by a bulldozer.*



*Figure 6: The tire marks of the loader clearly suggest that it had brought and offloaded the dead bodies here before returning to the pile (Fig. 3) of massacred Amharas to fetch another round of dead bodies for this bulldozer-dug ditch.*



It was a war in which four of the five national commands of the country were deployed to wipe out the Amharas from existence and erase them from history. It was a measure that spiked the three decades long cumulative acts of antithesis or negation to their natural conclusion. It was an act that brought out, in a dialectic parlance, a force that turns out to be the negation of the previous negation, in a word the negation of negation. This new force of the second negation will, as it did, play the role of an anti-dote such that Ethiopian unity and sovereignty will be put back on track. And when it is put back on track, it will assume, as it does, a higher notch of unity which supersedes the previous berth of unity.

The new force that stands to be an antithesis of the previous negation, or what is the same thing to say the negation of negation assumes within the

context of Ethiopian politics the name and organizational identity popularly known as FANNO.



*Figure 8: Despite all other ethnic organizations in Ethiopia, such as TPLF and OLF that create their own new flags, the Fannos are noted for their unwavering love, respect, and honor for the Ethiopian flag. This flag – the green, yellow, and red – has become a definition of the icon of freedom also among brother Africans and other oppressed peoples worldwide.*

The Fannos are the political realization of the dialectic, which among other things makes it imperative that in the stage of the negation of negation, the past is preserved in all its positive forms and contents, the present is superseded by a stance that freed it from all its cancerous, divisive, and backward elements, and the future is mapped out with a better and higher notches of development (Engels, 1940).

The Fanno forces appeared on the scene and eventually rose to a power notch such that they became not only a force to reckon with, but also a force that definitely has a big say in the East African power setting.





*Figure 9: Fannos displaying a remarkable array of weapons they captured following an outstanding showdown and feat of bravery in their existential fight against government forces.*

The Fannos organized themselves into a freedom fighters stance following the beefed up hatred driven, and an open racist war waged against the Amharas. Thus, the Fannos organized themselves along an ethnic line. A question might suggest itself at this hiatus: How can a force that organized itself all along an ethnic line be, by any measureable standard, different from the TPLF, EPRDF, OLF and the Prosperity Party, which are also known for organizing along ethnic lines? It is true that the Fannos are organized along the Amhara ethnic line. However, the nationalism upheld among the Fannos, on one hand, and the nationalism advocated by the Woyanaes, EPRDF, OLF and the Prosperity Party, on the other, are two widely different things. They are as different as paradise is from hell, as widely apart as earth is from the sky. The nationalism held near and dear by Woyanae, EPRDF, OLF, and the Prosperity Party and the likes is a racist ideology driven animosity that has no room for inclusion, no room for unity to swing in, no room to see even eye to eye with other Ethiopian ethnic groups. Theirs is a nationalism whose be all, and end all is setting a homogenous demographic group at the detriment of all other ethnic groups, and break away from the motherland Ethiopia, and establish their own banana republics. In stark and dialectic contradistinction to this wrong-footed nationalism as exalted by Woyanaes, EPRDF, OLF, and many other liberation fronts and the Prosperity party, the Fannos nationalism, a.k.a. the Amhara nationalism, is a completely different type of nationalism, a negation of all the previously known Ethiopian narrow-minded, and parochial nationalisms. The Fannos represent a nationalism which does not fight for secession under the cloak of liberation, as is the case with nearly all other nationalist groups. On the contrary, the Fannos fight for survival. They fight to counter the fascistic and genocidal war waged against the Amharas. In effect, the Fannos represent

a new brand of nationalism which is meant to stop the genocidal nationalism of the groups and governments in power for the last thirty-something years in Ethiopia and supplant them by a government that reasserts Ethiopian unity on a new, reinforced, all inclusive and all benefitting notch of dialectic. The Fannos, in a word, are noted to represent a nationalism which stands in dialectic negation of the negation resulting in the synthesis of a higher unity and a well-founded Ethiopian sovereignty. The Fannos, put otherwise, are not here to repeat the destructive, vindictive, racist, exclusivist, selfish, and nihilistic creed of the nationalism exalted by Woyanae, EPRDF, OLF, the Prosperity Party and the like. The Fannos are here to bring into play, which they did, a new species of nationalism which supersedes the first negation and metes out the second negation, hence the negation of negation, the negation of the former brand of nationalism which proves to be cancerous in any part of the world it appeared. The Fannos thus are the synthesis of or the double negations of the entire negative stances and nationalisms that have been let loose all over Ethiopia for the last three decades and some.

### Conclusion

Ethiopian unity has been dangerously threatened by the divisive, destructive, racist, and extremist nationalisms upheld as an ideology by various groups and governments of Ethiopia for well over three decades. Everything these nationalisms represent is noted for being an antithesis of Ethiopian unity and sovereignty. This is what philosophers called the negation of a status quo – the negation of the previous stance, the negation of a being (Hegel, 1977; Engels, 1940; Marx, 1964). A negative act against the being from within which it has sprung, would, on its own machination, give birth to its own negation, the second negation, which will come to be a force dubbed as the negation of negation. Long before Engels, Marx, and Hegel stated their theories in favor of the negation of negation, Ethiopians have had a saying which has it to say: '*Eshohhn be'eshoh*,' which, when roughly translated, would mean in Amharic, 'the negation of negation', the approaching of something by somehow its own like, the dealing and pulverising of something by its own kind, serving someone or smoothing some of its own medicine. This is exactly what happened when we see how the Fannos emerge to stop the racist, divisive, Quisling-like hatred driven negation of Ethiopian unity which nearly precipiced on dismemberment, on dissipation and nonexistence. The Fannos are being replenished by the springs of Amhara nationalism, which is a nationalism of different brand, as it is a nationalism not against Ethiopian unity, not against the existence and honor of any other ethnic group but against those forces, those nationalisms and their agents that vowed to dismember Ethiopia in general and the Amharas in particular. In fine, the

Fannos act in ways and dints that philosophers touted as the negation of negation and thereby maintain and build Ethiopian unity on a better, higher and more advanced level than heretofore.

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