

CONVERSATIONAL THINKING AS AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Conversational theory of development (CTD) is presented in this work as a new and alternative theory of development and as a mechanism for moderating and reconciling the differences and weaknesses in the modernization theory of development and in the main concern of post-development theory. By its basic canons and principles, conversational thinking offers a more robust global developmental framework. The rift between development and post-development theorists as to the main goal and direction of the world development agenda seems to heighten over the years. The heart of this rift is the question of the place of the third world countries in the much-acclaimed development drive by the United Nations and other International Organizations. I expose the strength and weaknesses of selected development and post-development theories and contend that poor implementation strategies, as well as imperial and exploitative interests, are the bane of these development theories. I demonstrate how conversational thinking overcomes these limitations and presents a more viable development alternative through a rigorous application of its canons of transformative indigenization, constructive modernization and moderate decolonization, as well as the ‘M’ and ‘T’ principles.

Keywords: Conversational thinking, development theory, post-development, canons and principles, modernization theory.

Introduction

What is development? What development framework should the African continent adopt that would accommodate her peculiar circumstances? What weakness(es), for instance, might impair the application of modernization theory of development to Africa's development effort? Does Africa have a place in the entire gamut of post-development theory? Is there a need for a new and alternative development framework for Africa? What should be the concern and future direction of development efforts (agenda) in the globe and in Africa particularly? These and many more questions arise as one attempts to make sense of development issues confronting the African continent.

My aim in this work is to review the substance of the debate on development by exposing the weaknesses of selected development and post-development theorists, and present conversational thinking as both a mechanism for moderating and reconciling the differences and inherent weaknesses in both theories and as a new and alternative theory of development that could present Africa and the world with a robust pattern of development that is effective, inclusive and sustainable. Considering the fact that no idea or theory is absolute or sacrosanct; selected development and post-development theorists have not said all there is concerning development in Africa and the globe. There is therefore a need for a more robust approach to development issues in the African continent and the globe at large.

It will be recalled that different development strategies, programs, policies, and institutions have been adopted, and established by African leaders at one point or the other with the aim of attaining a level of development that can be appreciable. These policies, institutions, etc., which are based on one form of western theory or the other include: Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and a host of others. However, most of these programs have failed to bring Africa to a desired level of development due to poor implementation, lack of humanity, and Eurocentric coloration among other factors.

The notion of development connotes a multi-dimensional process that involves a re-organization and re-orientation of the economic and social system of a country in order to improve the

quality of human lives (TODARO 2011). This definition appeals to the modernization theory of development, which argues that development comprises of institutions, processes, discourses, and knowledge, which attempts, in a systematic way, to help those underdeveloped nations into idealized societies patterned after developed nations in the west (AHORRO N.D. 1). Amartya Sen (2001) considers development as the process of expanding the freedoms that people enjoy. This means that development entails freedom, liberty, and self-esteem, which are most times neglected.

The idea of development has been said to constitute a steady and gradual growth or change from a not-so-good state to a relatively stable and better socio-economic, political, religious, and mental state. This is why development is said to encompass every aspect of a nation's life both human and non-human (ENYIMBA & IKEGBU 2020, 72-84). The word development is derived from the verb "develop" which means to grow larger. Development, therefore, refers to a state of growth or a state of maturity and organization that allows for a thing's essence or a person's essence, to be realized or unfolded. Development here refers to the progressive movement or growth towards a relatively stable state or position in which things can only get better, not worse. It is a significant improvement from what a thing was at a particular period in time to what its present condition is. A nation-state is said to be "developed when there are significant changes in all strata of its existence. In this case, the length and breadth of the said state have experienced progressive changes" (IKEGBU & ENYIMBA 2010, 119-126).

The emergence of post-development theory seemed to have dismantled the very fabric of development theory. This created a rift between the post-development theory and the mainstream development theory, which heightened the challenge of development facing Africa and other third-world countries. Whereas the modernization theory of development recommends that for Africa to achieve a maximum level of development in contemporary times, there is a need to imitate the industrialized pattern of the developed countries (PIETERSE 2000; TODARO & SMITH 2011), post-development theorists such as Ivan Illich condemns this approach as a western dictatorship towards the development of Africa and other third-world countries and recommends a de-westernization of the development drives by these countries (ESCOBER 1985;

FERGUSON 1990; RAHNEMA 1992, 158-176; 1997, 377-404; RIST 1997).

Despite their benefits, there are fundamental weaknesses in some of these theories of development that have militated against its efficiency in Africa's drive towards development. It is against this backdrop that I set out in this work to present conversational thinking as an alternative theory of development, and as a moderating and reconciliatory mechanism that has the capability of transforming Africa's development pattern by overcoming the weaknesses of earlier theories. In what follows, I shall proceed to review the debate between development and post-development theorists in order to expose their inherent weaknesses. An unveiling of the nature of conversational thinking through the exposition of its basic canons and principles will constitute my task in the subsequent section. Lastly, I will present a conversational theory of Development (CTD) by demonstrating how conversational thinking can serve as a viable alternative theory that could confront Africa's development challenges.

Development and Some Theories of Development

Development, as used in this work, connotes those practices and processes of intervention that are believed to raise the standard of living, increase income and ensure better conditions of health and nutrition in developing countries. It is primarily targeted at aiding underdeveloped nations of the world to become ideal societies modeled after developed western nations (AHORRO 2008, 2). It is in this sense that development is perceived as a vehicle for modernization. The notion of post-development emerged as a way of interrogating this idea of development (McGREGOR 2007, 156). Attempting a definition of development, Apostolides Alexander and Moncada Stefano (2013, 17) recall that after the Second World War, the idea of development focused on increasing income indicators for less developed countries. This goes to indicate that economic growth or progress is the target of any development efforts. By economic progress, one may mean an increase in the income or wealth of a nation, which is determinable by the increase in the income of individuals in a given country (ALEXANDER & STAFENO 2013, 17). As these scholars observe, some scholars of economics and development studies consider economic progress as necessarily linked

to a western-styled culture and community organization. This explains the reason the developed world, after the Second World War, saw it as a responsibility on their part to aid the development efforts of developing nations. This desire to increase the development of the so-called third-world led to the creation of the United Nations (UN), the International Bank for Reconciliation and Development (IBRD), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), among others, to foster development.

According to Wolfgang Sachs (1992, 1), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can be considered as one of the most important sets of tangible commitments undertaken by the international community to reduce poverty and foster development in developing countries. It was in the year 2000 during the millennium summit that the United Nations millennium declaration was adopted with eight international development goals to be achieved by 2015. These eight general goals, which got about 193 UN member states and 23 international organizations committed to their achievement, include the following: (a)eradicating extreme poverty (b)achieving universal basic education (c)promoting gender equality and empowering women (d)reducing child mortality rate (e)improving maternal health, (f) combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (g)ensuring environmental sustainability, and (h)developing a global partnership for development (FRIEDMAN & LAWRENCE 2016, 1-5).

While these goals may represent a considerable effort at improving standards of living and basic livelihoods, it was not achievable within the stipulated period due to certain factors. For instance, it appears overly ambitious for many countries. It pays little attention to the empowerment of the poor (VANDEMOORTELE 2009, 355-371). Above all, the intention appears to be far from being selfless or altruistic. All these and more contributed to its failure. Thus for development theorists, the development of the third-world countries is possible if these countries will look up to the developed western nations as a model, and pattern their efforts after theirs. Scholars such as Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2000), Michael Todaro and Stephen C. Smith (2011), among others, perceive development as modernization or industrialization after the manner of the West. For them, Africa and the global south would have to depend on Western Europe's technology and investment by patterning their economy

after them if development is to be achieved (TODARO & SMITH 2000). This conception is akin to the conviction expressed by modernization theorists.

The theory of modernization rests on the assumption that in modern societies there is more production, children are better educated, and the needy receive more welfare. This theory has the benefit of orchestrating interdependence among social institutions through strict adherence to functional-structuralism theory. Tracing the origin of this theory, Giovanni Reyes (2001, 2) recalls that the modernization theory of development came into being as a result of three major factors, namely, the emergence of the United States of America as a world power after the second world war, the spread of the united world communist movement, and the search by new nation-states for a model of development that could promote their economy and political independence. This theory is faced with a number of difficulties. It tends to Europeanise and Americanise other developing societies (TIPPS 1976, 14). For Reyes (2001, 2), it is an irreversible process, any contact with the west leaves a given third-world country desiring to be like them. It is evolutionary and not revolutionary in that it takes a long time to actualize. The theory tends to be transformative in the sense that a society that wishes to move into modernity must have its traditional structures and values replaced by a set of modern values. Following from these, one can notice that the modernization theory of development perceives third-world countries as traditional, maybe primitive, and the West as modern. First, this creates the problem of otherness; second, it entails that to develop, third-world countries must adopt western values. This is oppressive and marginalizing. Note that traditional values are not exclusively different from modern values nor do traditional values necessarily hamper development. Reyes (2001, 2) identified three other major theories of development and exposed their relationships. It is pertinent to examine briefly some of these theories, their relationship to modernization theory, and also show their limitations.

One such theory is the dependency theory of development. This theory states that to create conditions for development within a country it is necessary to (a) control the monetary exchange rate, placing more governmental emphasis on fiscal rather than monetary policy (b) promote a more effective governmental role in terms of national development, and (c) allow the entrance of external capital

following priorities already established in national plans for development. Notice that like modernization theory, the dependency theory of development also polarizes modern and traditional societies and demands the third world to imitate the west. This is in addition to the fact that it is both abstract and theoretical, lacking concrete and practical facts. Moreover, rather than encourage interdependency; it encourages dependency (REYES 2001, 2). Contrary to the views expressed by Reyes, dependency theory has been perceived to be opposed to modernization theory. For instance, it can be argued that the main argument of the dependency theory is that, the persistent increment in industrialization in some of the developed countries appears to subject poor countries to underdevelopment as a result of the economic surplus of the poor countries being exploited by developed countries.

World system theory is another theory of development that encourages dependence on the west. According to this theory, there are some global conditions that point to the path or direction of development any underdeveloped nation should follow. According to Reyes (2001, 2), this theory suggests that nation-state level analysis is no longer a useful approach to the understanding of development conditions in third world countries, but social-system analysis. It is possible to consider such factors as new global systems of communications, new world trade mechanisms, international financial systems, and the transference of knowledge and military links as determinant forces, factors, or conditions that tend to influence the development of developing countries.

Globalization is yet another development theory that toes the line of the aforementioned three theories of development. Similar to the world system theory, globalization theory takes a global perspective in determining the unit of analysis rather than focusing strictly on countries as is the case in modernization and dependency theories. Globalization theory considers development as a gradual transition/change in a society that becomes a reality when different social groups adapt themselves to current innovations in the West, particularly in the area of cultural communication. One common feature that underlies these theories of development is their tendency to equate development with westernization thereby making the global north a model of development that the global south should copy from. This forms the basis for the rejection of the notion of development and

theories of development by most post-development scholars. In what follows, I expose the arguments of some post-development scholars, some post-development theories, and their limitations.

Some Post-Development Theories

Post-development can be considered a theoretical movement that propagates and articulates the need to question the very idea and concept of development. It demonstrates the conviction that searching for the most efficient way of delivering development is of no significance. Perhaps this disposition of post-development theory is influenced by their understanding of development as generally an intervention of aid structures and practices by the west that would lead to rising living standards of developing countries, manifested in an increase in income, which in turn would render better health and nutrition (CONSTANTINO 1985; KOTHARI 1988; MCGREGOR 2007, 156; RAPLEY 2004, 350). Post-development theory stands against modernization and development because it considers them as reductionist and ethnocentric in nature. It is a resistance to what it considers as an uncritical acceptance of western development schema. The works of Michael Foucault (1981) and the post-structuralist school (TREVOR 2002) are believed to have been influenced by this anti-development movement, as it exposes the politics and power dimensions implicit in the idea of development. Knut G. Nustad (2001, 482) strengthens this suggestion when he reckons that the main aim of development is to deliver the technological and institutional advances of the first world to poor people in the subaltern. Post-development scholars include Arturo Escobar (1985, 377-400; 1995, 44-45), Majid Rahnema (1992, 158-176; 1997, 377-404), Gilbert Rist (1997; 1990, 5-8), James Ferguson (1990) among others.

These scholars argue that development is both an arbitrary and a meta-narrative concept that is of benefit only to the practitioners or proposers. Post-development scholars insist that development should be rejected because it is primarily aimed at broadening the control of the western world, and its allies, on the developing world, thereby linking development with modernization (RAPLEY 2004, 350). The implication of this is that development theorists while upholding the virtues of development tend to essentialize the deficiencies of non-western countries by portraying them as a region in need of western

forms of modernization (see NANDY 1988; 1987). Generally speaking, post-development theorists reckon that the concept of development has gone obsolete and bankrupt, and its practice has done more harm than good (MATHEW 2004, 373). It also represents the call for a total rejection of development for its inherent deficiency and not for poor implementation by government or institution. It is rather a concept that is problematic along with its basic assumptions (RAHNEMA 1997, 379; PIETERSE 2000, 176).

Based on this, post-development theorists advocate for alternatives to development rather than alternative development (MATHEWS 2004, 373). Certain criticisms have been leveled against post-development theory and theorists. It has been argued that post-development theory is destructive in its criticisms of the idea of development in that they could not present anything in replacement of the idea and practice of development. A corollary of this criticism is the fact that post-development theory's call for alternatives to development is misinformed since it does not present any such alternative (PIETERSE 2000, 188; MATHEWS 2004, 374).

However, defenders of post-development theory such as Nustad (2001) and Escobar (1992) have continued to insist that despite the inherent weaknesses of post-development theory, its insightful and radical criticism of development should not be taken for granted. Moreover, efforts should be made by concerned scholars towards ascertaining what alternatives to development may involve. Following this, Sally Mathews (2004, 373-384) seems to have been motivated in this direction, hence, her attempt at questioning post-development theory's call for alternative from an African perspective. Her argument is that though the critique of development by post-development theory seems to be particularly relevant to Africa, little or no attempt has been made by scholars (both African and non-African) to relate the post-development project to Africa. Thus, she calls for more attention to be given to post-development theory by African scholars, and more attention to be given to Africa by those writing from a post-development perspective (MATHEWS 2004, 374). It is important to note that the rejection of development and all it stands for by post-development theorists does not imply a rejection of the possibility or desirability of change in the direction of improving societies. It is also not a call to return to a mundane way of living and in disregard to the suffering and poverty of many who

would desire improvement in their conditions of living (MATHEWS 2004, 377). Thus, Mathews concludes that Africa's cultural differences and cultural diversities must be taken into cognizance in an attempt to heed the call of the post-development theorists in charting alternatives to development (2004, 380).

In what seems to be a response to the above call, Stefan Andreasson (2007, 17-19) has suggested a way out of the challenges posed by the deficiency in post-development and development theories. According to him, Ubuntu ethics (An African ethics of communalism) can fill in this gap. For him, to move beyond the confines of orthodox ideas about development, and to attain the forms of alternatives to development envisaged by the post-development theorists, demands a communal effort at re-imagining, and re-inventing goals and aspirations for a better future (ANDREASSON 2005, 971-986; 2007, 17-19). Andreasson thinks that this approach will aid in resolving the two major problems created by the modern drive to development, namely, alienation of man from nature and alienation of human beings from each other. The point to be noted here is that Andreasson tends to strengthen the ideas of the post-development theorists and presents the South African Ubuntu philosophy as a veritable means of achieving the goals of post-development theory. The challenge here is that he fails to expose and confront the failures of post-development to present the world with a better development alternative. In the subsequent section, I shall expose the nature of conversational thinking through an exposition of two of its canons and principles.

Three Canons and Two Principles of Conversational Thinking

Conversational thinking is a new methodology of philosophizing that recognizes the complementarity and interdependence of seemingly opposed variables such as *Nwansa* (proponent) and *Nwanju* (opponent). As developed by Jonathan O. Chimakonam (2015a), conversational thinking demonstrates how diverse variables can interact and relate in a constructive and yet, mutually beneficial manner. In this way, conversational thinking purveys a strategy for the interrelationship of different traditions and cultural identities. What this means is that conversational thinking recognizes that there are different traditions, different variables, different nations and

stakeholders with different needs and capabilities, and are differently conditioned or inspired. Yet it recognizes the need for interrelationship, complementarity, and interdependence of these different variables and the possibility of their reaching a point of complementation, where the significance or identity of one cannot be denigrated by the other. Instead, one's significance or identity is enhanced through mutual interaction with others. Chimakonam and Victor Nweke, (2018, 289) had argued that conversational thinking orchestrates “a strategy of exchange derived from an African notion of relationship that under-girds the method of African philosophy teased out of the world-view that reality exists as a network in which everything depends on everything else”. In other words, conversational thinking recognizes that everything that exists serves as a necessary link of reality, which implies that, every existing thing; individual or nation rather than being neglected or eroded is made significant by the other (ENYIMBA 2016, 57). The complementarity of diverse cultural identities, traditions or places rather than displacement of one by the other is the watchword of conversational thinking, and this makes it a viable tool for brokering cooperation (and development) among nations of the world. What is implied here is that all nations should work hand in hand without denigrating the efforts of any nation of the world, and also embrace the possibility of a solution coming from any part of the world.

To be sure, conversational thinking is a strict formal intellectual engagement between seemingly opposed variables – a proponent called *nwansa* and an opponent called *nwanju* – who engage in arumaristics (creative struggle that involves construction, deconstruction and reconstruction, through questioning and answering) in order to improve both seemingly opposed variables at higher levels of sophistication. (CHIMAKONAM 2015a, 463; 2015b, 19; 2017, 116). *Nwansa* is the party in a relationship that holds and defends a position. *Nwanju* is the other party in that creative relationship whose duty is to question the veracity and viability of the position of *nwansa*. In the context of this paper, *nwanju* and *nwansa* represent different nations and traditions of the world that constructively engage with each other in a mutually beneficial and creative encounter. The aim is to reveal the loopholes and creatively fill-up the lacuna and not to destroy, discount or displace the identity and context of these different points of view. As we have observed

elsewhere, this relationship between *nwansa* and *nwanju* is flexible and accommodative of other indices, traditions, cultures, identities or positions so as to ensure progress and development that can be sustained for a long time (ENYIMBA 2019, 11; 2021a, 38-39; 2021b, 164).

The argument of this paper concerning the above exposition is that the West and other countries in the global north needs to consciously and open-mindedly engage in a convivial exchange of ideas and values with other countries of the world on the issue of development bearing in mind that no culture, nation or individual is superior. Each culture or nation has something to learn from the other and as such, following conversational thinking, no culture or nation ought to impose itself on another as an absolute instance (ENYIMBA 2021b, 6). This nature of conversational thinking becomes even clearer and appreciable when one is acquainted with a fair knowledge of its canons and principles. There are eight canons of conversational philosophy developed by Chimakonam, (2015b, 27-29). By canons, we refer to the standard rules or norms of a given system. These canons of conversational philosophy prescribe the minimum requirements, mode, focus and direction of thinking in African philosophy, and in any epistemic venture with the aim of guarding against illicit posturing (CHIMAKONAM 2015b). As enunciated by Chimakonam and Nweke (2018, 291-292), these are: the need for critical conversation, transformative indigenization, noetic re-Africanization, moderate decolonization, and constructive modernization, non-veneration of authorities, theoretic interrogation and checking of perverse dialogue. Here I shall explain three of such canons, namely, transformative indigenization, constructive modernization and moderate decolonization; as well as two conversational principles, namely, trans-culturalism and multi-culturalism.

The canon of transformative indigenization states that when authors write on non-African issues or employ foreign methods, they should endeavour to indigenize them through contextual transformation that would give them relevance in (contingent) African thought. The idea of indigenization is simply about finding contextual relevance. It does not suggest cultural bracketing (CHIMAKONAM 2015b, 27). Constructive modernization is another canon that states that a standard work in African philosophy is one that marks a fusion

of relevant modernity and relevant tradition. Similarly, the canon of moderate decolonization stipulates that the African philosopher's posture towards African philosophy should not be that of radical decolonization, but that of moderate decolonization that would suggest the relevance of some aspects of characteristically non-African thought. This canon further recommends that there shall not be any racial bar as to who is or can be an African philosopher. Anyone regardless of his/her racial background can be an African philosopher.

The transcultural approach, or T-principle, refers to any engagement, interaction or encounter involving different indices, cultures, nations, stakeholders and positions. In order to set aside cultural hegemony, cultural injustice, cultural centrism or inferior-superior culture dichotomy, trans-cultural conversational principle prescribes the adoption and internalization of the ideals of tolerance, equity, justice and interdependence. This means that conversational thinking is not self-centered in its outlook, it is rather open-minded, giving room for every culture to not only participate in world affairs but also to contribute its part in the global development project. By being trans-cultural, conversational thinking encourages different cultures and nations participating in the global epistemic process to see themselves in each other in order to go beyond cultural centrism and self-centeredness to judge, will and act towards the other.

In a similar fashion, the M-principle of conversational thinking refers to the multicultural approach in any engagement, interaction or encounter involving different cultures, traditions, nations, stakeholders and positions. This principle suggests that not only is there room for every culture; there is also a horizontal relationship among all cultures in a conversation (CHIMAKONAM & NWEKE 2018, 291). The multi-cultural principle of conversational thinking accommodates the different perspectives of different cultures. It does not absolutize any of them, nor does it segregate or exclude any of them. This principle recognizes the interculturality, interdependence and complementarity of these different traditions and cultures in its attempt at securing progressive development processes.

Based on the above principles, nations of the world need to see themselves in each other to avoid the obliteration of cultural identities, to avoid cultural hegemony or to avoid impositions of one form or the other in their interactions and as they encounter

themselves in the global epistemic process. Thus, conversational thinking allows room for every culture to encounter progressive transformation (ENYIMBA 2019, 13). Indeed, conversational thinking provides a level playing ground for various cultures and contexts, based on the mutual interdependence that undergirds their existence as necessary links. This is what conversational thinking presents as a way of overcoming the inherent weaknesses of earlier theories of development. The argument here is that the colonial mindset of considering some part of the human race as incapable of sound judgment and of contributing meaningfully to global development should not come into play because that would jeopardize the possibility of getting a robust idea capable of engendering balanced and inclusive global development should such come from Africa or any other developing countries of the world. This colonial temperament is the type of temperament conversational thinking advocates against because of its emphasis on harmonious and progressive coexistence.

When these canons and principles are applied in any attempt at formulating development programs, policies and agendas, a new and robust theory and pattern of development would have been birthed. A demonstration of the possibility and viability of this approach shall constitute my concern in the next section of this article.

Conversational Theory of Development (CTD)

Development is multifaceted (IKEGBU & ENYIMBA 2010, 119-126; 2020, 72-84). It involves different aspects of an individual's and/or a nation's life. Development is also multicultural and transcultural, implying that development cuts across borders, cultures and traditions. It is not the prerogative of a given culture. The Global Development Index (GDI) attests to this fact. That is why it is not the exclusive responsibility of one culture to decide how other cultures should develop. The danger in having one culture decide the development pattern for other cultures is that, first, it tends to present its peculiar circumstances, ideology, worldview or values as the paradigm. Second, it tends to undermine the contribution of other cultures to the development agenda, which might even be of immense benefit to it. This particular absolutized culture assumes a "superiority complex" that enables imperialist behaviour, whether militarily,

culturally or otherwise (ENYIMBA 2021c). This absolutization of a cultural context immediately creates a self-and-the-other dichotomy, as well as a polarized, distorted and fragmented perspective of reality. Armed with this fragmented view of reality, this hegemonic force begins to imagine what it considers to be the developmental needs of other cultures. Pretending to fully understand, or even ignore, the various cultural nuances that should undergird the developmental agenda of cultural contexts outside of its borders.

This is the pit-hole that both the post-development and development theorists have fallen into. Whereas the post-development theorists hope to invent a better approach to the development needs of nations of the world especially the third world by rejecting the dominant ideas about development and its strategic processes, it fails to present a well thought out implementation plan or process to achieve its aim. Development theorists on their part, tend to erroneously think that inducing, pressurizing and compelling, by all means, other cultures of the world into adopting western-styled-modernization as the best approach, would bring about the desired level of development. This approach does not only amount to epistemic marginalization, but also constitutes a form of cultural injustice.

Conversational thinking is different from these theories. Conversational thinking is not polarized, fragmented, distorted, close-minded nor exclusive in nature, structure and approach to issues. It is rather complementary, open-minded, forward-looking, inclusive, multicultural and transcultural in its outlook. This is why conversational thinking offers itself as a more viable alternative theory of development. Conversational thinking agrees with development theorists that for there to be development in African countries and other developing countries, poverty must be exterminated, education must be accessible by all, the mortality rate among women and children must be reduced drastically by preventing certain diseases, among other things. However, conversational thinking rejects their approach and implementation processes aimed to achieve these goals on some counts. First, they are ill-conceived with the intention of superimposing an ideology or values of a given culture on other cultures. Second, they create a dichotomy between the self and the other, superior and inferior, which leads to some form of marginalization of the other. These, then, account for the unsuccessful

implementation and achievement of their set goals. Similarly, conversational thinking, though it subscribes to the post-development theory's critique of development theory on the ground that it is culturally, economically and politically hegemonic, and serves the interests of the global north, it does not agree with the theorists that the entire idea of development should be jettisoned. Conversational thinking by nature does not reject completely any idea as useless nor elevate any particular idea as absolute or sacrosanct, rather it makes use of what is valuable in each idea and harnesses them to arrive at a better and more robust proposal to the problem under consideration. This is a major string that ties all of the conversational canons and principles of operation.

For instance, the canon of transformative indigenization, which states that when authors write on non-African issues or employ foreign methods, they should endeavor to indigenize them through contextual transformation that would give them relevance in (contingent) African thought, is very relevant when applied to the global development issues as it concerns Africa, and from the West. As a result, any development proposal fabricated by the Global north for the "benefit" of Africa and other countries in the global south, must accommodate all stakeholders in the context of their peculiarities. Contextual transformation is very important in fashioning a relevant development theory that will benefit not just the African continent, but the other cultures of the world, even in their peculiarities. That is why contextualism or relevant context is the major emphasis of this particular canon of conversational thinking. The point here is that "the idea of indigenization is simply about contextual relevance and this does not in any way suggest any form of cultural bracketing" (CHIMAKONAM 2015b, 27).

In applying this canon, conversational thinking would demand that any development theory or approach should consider the indigenous cultural values and knowledge system of the different traditions or stakeholders involved in a given development plan or agenda in the light of their existential conditions. By adopting an African mode/sense of mutual relationship, conversational thinking suggests that the global north must not consider their interest alone, but also the interest of other members of the international community involved in the global development project by taking into cognizance the peculiar experiences of these other cultures. In this instance, the

advocates of development theory, following the developmental approach of conversational thinking, are expected to contextualize their proposal for development in order to accommodate the contributions of every culture in their peculiarities, not in the light of another culture's existential state. This would orchestrate conditions and circumstances that could engender progressive development for the benefit of all.

Similarly, the conversational canon of moderate decolonization proposes that a philosopher's approach towards African philosophy should not be that of radical decolonization, rather it should be a moderate and/or gradual decolonization that allows for the adoption of relevant parts of the western mode of thought. This canon also discourages any form of racial discrimination of superior-inferior dichotomy. This is one of the reasons conversational thinking offers itself as a better alternative to development and post-development theories of development. Following this canon, while conversational thinking agrees that there's a need to decolonize development, conversational thinking opposes the radical approach of the post-development theorists in decolonizing or de-westernizing development. There are valuable, useful and/or relevant aspects of each constituent culture in the global development episteme. For example, there are some useful aspects of western and non-western, African and non-African cultures that will be of benefit to all in the development program when employed with specific cultural contexts in mind. Conversational thinking does not discard any cultural context as useless, instead, it recommends moderation in the adoption and application of any aspects of each culture found relevant at the moment.

One of the major impacts of this aspect of the conversational canons is the fact that not radically rejecting any indigenous culture's contributions and participation, encourages racial tolerance and reduces racial bigotry and discrimination (ENYIMBA 2021c). This is a constructive rather than a destructive way of accepting the modernization recommended by the development theorists. Constructive modernization, another very important canon of conversational thinking is closely related to the canon of moderate decolonization. The canon of constructive modernization states that a standard work in African philosophy is one that makes a fusion of the relevant modernity (Western thought) and relevant tradition (African

thought). In other words, there should be a mutual, complementary relationship and interaction between and among these aspects of culture.

In practical terms, what this means is that when IMF, World Bank, and other international organizations, for instance, encourage African countries to borrow or take loans in order to embark on development projects, it impoverishes these countries and draws them centuries away from their desired level of development. This is one of the reasons development theories are rejected since they galvanize the economic and political interests of the world powers and the industrialized nations of Europe and America. Genuine development (IKEGBU & ENYIMBA 2010, 119-126) from the purview of conversational thinking would consider the interests of the others. Thus, borrowing would not have been encouraged by these world powers, rather proper management of internal revenue and resources, as well as investment and attraction of the right investments in these developing countries should have been recommended.

The M-Principle states that conversational thinking is multicultural in that it gives room for every culture to participate in a mutual relationship that opens up further avenues for development and progressive transformation. The T-Principle which states that conversational philosophy necessarily has to be transcultural implies the idea of one seeing itself in the other, such that one transcends his/her culture when judging, willing and acting towards the other and vice-versa. The principles clearly reject lopsidedness and superior-inferior type of relationship. Multicultural and Transcultural relationships are possible with and among epistemic agents or variables recognized as *nwansa* and *nwanju*. Based on these principles, the nature of the relationship between *nwansa* and *nwanju* is what is needed between and among the different world cultures and traditions, members of the international community and their representatives, as well as the different theories of development, for there to be knowledge progression that will engender the right development in the right direction. These ideological differences existing among these different global variables gradually dissolve when mutual and complementary interactions, which the canons and principles of conversational thinking espoused earlier, are allowed to guide and determine the pattern any development agenda or project should follow.

Laws of Conversational Theory of Development (LCTD)

In this section, I will briefly, for lack of space, outline the three laws of development formulated to guide the right application of the new conversational theory of development (CTD) in any sphere and clime for inclusiveness and sustainability. These laws also constitute the implementation strategies of CTD for Africa and the globe. These laws are drawn from a combination of the ideas implicitly and explicitly expressed in the canons and principles of conversational philosophy.

Law of ‘Constructive Mutual Benefit’

This law states: “let there be a constructive mutual benefit for all participating variables in any global affairs”. According to this law, for there to be development, mutual benefits of all stakeholders must be the driving force or motivating factor in such development endeavor, and this should be so irrespective of who is involved. Any approach to development issues globally, continentally, regionally or nationally that is not constructed on the basis of mutual benefits is a bane to any development project and an aberration to the spirit of Conversational Theory of Development (CTD).

‘Recognizing the Peculiarity of Entities’

This law of conversational theory of development states: “do not exclude any of the different traditions/variables that are differently conditioned and inspired in any global discourse”. What this law demands is that in any global affair, no entity, culture or tradition should be excluded or neglected due to its peculiar circumstance. Instead, the peculiarities of such entities or cultures must be put into consideration in order to ensure the inclusiveness and sustainability of such a global development endeavor.

Law of the ‘Sacred Cow’

This particular law of CTD states: “accord no special place to any participating variable/stakeholder no matter the clime, race, color, or status as ‘developed’ or ‘developing’”. By this law, no tradition, culture or entity is placed above others in the scheme of things. All participating variables or stakeholders in any development project are

considered equal and should be treated as such. This law abhors segregation, victimization or marginalization on the basis of superior-inferior relationships.

In light of these laws, principles and canons of conversational thinking, no variable, stakeholder or tradition in the global development project ought to throw away, disregard or exclude each other as unimportant in any aspect of the development process, so every tradition counts according to its merit in achieving the common purpose of the project in view. This is what will lead to the development of Africa and other third-world countries. Again, conversational thinking, by virtue of its canons and principles, presupposes that every participating and contributing variable or tradition makes each other significant. Chimakonam alludes to this in the following words:

We are left with the option of formulating a new universal method for intercultural engagement that is at once rigorous, complementary and devoid of ethnocentrism. Conversational thinking becomes the fruit of such an attempt. The intercultural philosophy I propose is inclusive and complementary in nature. It recognizes the existence of different traditions of philosophy in different places and argues that all these different traditions house ideas that can be creatively and critically harnessed for the benefit of humanity (CHIMAKONAM 2017, 124).

The significance of what is encapsulated above is an expression of the relevance of conversational thinking to philosophizing in Africa and beyond, and of course to formulating the right theory for the development of Africa and the rest of the world.

Conclusion

I have argued that development policies presented by the UN to the world through its agencies and institutions are exclusive, hegemonic, lopsided and largely western in orientation. Using modernization theory as an instance, I unveiled the nature of the debate between development and post-development theory and exposed their inherent weaknesses. I also demonstrated that there is discrimination against

the views, contributions and concerns from the global south. It was shown that this factor limits the right implementation and realization of some of the worthy goals of the UN's development goals. I then employed selected canons and principles of CT to formulate a Conversational Theory of Development (CTD) that not only serves as a reconciliatory and moderating mechanism but also as an alternative theory of development that is both inclusive and implementable. CTD prescribes 3 major laws which also serve as its implementation strategies (i) let there be 'constructive-mutual benefits' of participating variables/stakeholders in global affairs. (ii) do not exclude any of the different traditions/variables that are differently conditioned and inspired in any global discourse (iii) accord no special place to any participating variable /stakeholder no matter the climate, race, color, or status as 'developed' or 'developing'.

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