

The contribution of philosophy to Africa's development

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Abstract

Whether Africa is compared with other continents or it is considered on its own, much of Africa is in a precarious state. Africa is known to be lagging behind in development not only in the economy, but also in philosophy, science, politics, technology, etc. This precarious state has made many scholars cynical about the contributions philosophy has made towards the development of the continent. In this study, however, it is argued that such a cynical attitude is due to a myopic conception of "development," which excludes growth in education, the economy, politics, science, the mental aspect of culture, and/or the unawareness of the fact that Africans (including the colonial and neo-colonial interferences) led the continent to a precarious state, not because of the inability on the part of the philosophers to proffer solutions, but owing to the unwillingness and failure on the part of African leaders in their un-philosophical or unrefined political, educational, economic, and scientific policies to adopt the solutions proffered.

Keywords: philosophy, development, Africa, historical growth

Introduction

Philosophy, as the study of general and fundamental problems concerning matters such as the nature of knowledge, truth, justice, politics, culture, economics, medicine, the mind, security, language, among others (Blackburn 2005: 276-277), has been said to be the root of all knowledge. It is considered as (i) the mother of all sciences (*scientia matrix*), and (ii) the science that regulates all other sciences (*scientia retri*), to use the words of Richard Taylor (1903: 48). In other words, philosophy helps to coordinate the various activities of the people and the kinds of tools to be used in/by various inquiries or disciplines. It helps us understand the significance of all human experience. Philosophy critically evaluates and analyses the variety of human experience. It develops systems of thought about the society and the people as a whole.

One of the tasks of philosophy is the thoughtful consideration of human society. It gives insight into the actual activities of human beings in the society. In this regard, for instance, a philosopher tries to study society from a dispassionate axiological point of view, and tries to discover the link between human society and the basic essence of Ultimate Reality. What philosophy can help to achieve with its findings is to guide the society and human relationships. By so doing, philosophy can be said to contribute immensely to the growth of a/the society.

Recently, African philosophers have tried to engage in a similar philosophical task within the African society. The first generation of modern African philosophers, many of whom also happened to be political thinkers, such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor, Sékou Touré, Obafemi Awolowo, and Nnamdi Azikiwe, seemed to have made noteworthy efforts in this regard. Precisely, these political thinkers perceived philosophy as a tool capable of freeing the mind of the African people. The same is true of the new generation of African thinkers, such as Kwasi Wiredu, Odera Oruka, Kwame Gyekye, Olusegun Oladipo, Moses Akin Makinde, Didier Kaphagawani, Moses Oke, Joseph Omoregbe, Claude Ake, Larry Diamond, Chinua Achebe, Ali Mazrui, Paulin Hountondji and Wole Soyinka. If the task of philosophy, as stated earlier, includes helping to coordinate the various activities of the individual and the society, and the African thinkers earlier mentioned do not differ in this idea, then, their philosophy could be assumed to have helped, in one way or another, in the quest to develop African society. However, it may be the case that these African philosophers used different mediums to express their thought concerning development in Africa, but they laid emphasis on how this quest for development can be attained in Africa. To avoid working with mere speculations, this article examines how the reflections or philosophical thinking of some of these African philosophers have contributed to the quest for African development. The aim of the reflections of some of these African philosophers is to illustrate that philosophers have refused to keep quiet over how philosophy and development seem to be gradually fading away or becoming elusive. The article adopts the philosophical method of critical and diachronic analysis to examine the thoughts of specific African philosophers, with particular reference to their contribution to African development in areas such as politics, economics, science, and social and cultural wellbeing.

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The themes that this article will address are as follows: the nature of development, philosophy and African development, how philosophy has contributed to African development, and the empirical evidence of some theories about African philosophical quests for development that cannot be recommended.

What is development?

The major reason the concept of development is considered, in this regard, is to establish how development has been used in philosophy and by philosophers. Without getting to know the nature and meaning of development and its theories, we may not be able to understand how development has been used, which theory of development is being used in Africa, and how it relates to philosophy. Hence the nature of development will be treated, coupled with its theories.

Development, from a non-technical viewpoint, is considered to be the process of change – the process of changing and becoming better, larger, stronger, or more advanced. Nevertheless, the question to be asked is “Better, in what sense?” If a society becomes better in terms of infrastructure, but still has its citizens craving for better education or they are wallowing in poverty, can such a society be said to be better? Also, if a society is better in terms of agricultural produce, but still does not understand the conceptual and critical aspects of philosophy, can such a society be said to be better? In other words, if philosophy and development means to change people both mentally and physically, questions arise about what sort of change matters. When it comes to addressing the relationship between philosophy, development and human lives, philosophy and development becomes value-laden. In her work *A Value-Laden Approach to Integrating Work and Family Life*, Sharon Alisa Lobel asserts that “value-laden refer to the presupposition of a particular set of values” (Lobel 1992: 21). The implication of Lobel’s view of the term “value-laden”, for Robert Chambers, is that, “when one fails to consider good things to do, it represents a tacit surrender to fatalism” (Chambers 2004: 1). The meaning of Chambers’ claim may be that the right course is for each of us to reflect, articulate and share our own ideas, values and accepting them as provisional and fallible (Chambers 2004: 2). There are several theories of development as to what aspect of a society is expected to become better before it can be considered to be philosophical and developed. This is not surprising, because since the conceptualization of “philosophy” and “development” sometimes depends on values and on alternative conceptions of the good life, there is a high possibility of a variety of answers. Before the contribution of philosophy to development in Africa is considered, there is a need to address the three major discernible conceptions of “development.” The first is historical – a long-term and relatively value free form of development. This sees “development” as a process of change. The key characteristic of this perspective is that development is focused on processes of structural societal change and not a change in the analytic, critical, or conceptual thinking of the people. But as it is perceived by Moses Akin Makinde, most African societies do not embrace this form of development (Makinde 2010: 11). Moreover, this conceptualization of development means that a major societal shift in one dimension, for example from a rural or agriculture-based society to an urban or industrial-based one, would have radical implications in another dimension, such as societal structural changes in the respective positions of classes and groups within the relations of production, for example – by which we mean the relationship between the owners of capital, the labour and the labourers (Deane 1965: 1-3).

On the historical long-term and relatively value free form of development, Claude Ake’s attempt to analyze the abysmal situation in Nigerian and African politics, in his work on development and democracy *Development and Democracy*, cannot be ignored. His attempt to address the abysmal situation of development and philosophy in Nigeria and Africa led him to make an eloquent plea for combining democratic governance with community-based development initiatives that emphasize an upsurge in philosophical education and self-reliance, which are designed to build Africa’s thinking and self-esteem by giving individual communities the opportunities to set and work toward their own political, economic and scientific goals (Ake 1996: 175).

The second conception of development is policy-related and evaluative or indicator-led. This is based on value judgments and has short-to-medium-term time horizons. The value judgment, as indicated here, is not the philosophical value but a kind that sees development as an attempt to aid the actualization of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); for example, the eradication of poverty, inequality, illiteracy, among other “evils” waging war against humanity. The key feature of this second perspective is that it is focused on the outcomes of change so that it has a relatively short-term outlook; which makes leading critics like Hountondji (1998), Hallen (2002), Oke (2006), Oladipo (2008), etc, to label it as “ahistorical.” Another major proponent of this view is Michael Chege (1997), who is of the view that “the citizen-based and community-based alternative that is feasible to advocate for most African societies needs to acquire a wide following. The derailment of African nation-building initiatives has been destroyed or ahistorical, while most philosophical, social, political, economic, cultural and psychological developments are being succeeded by neo-colonial structures (Chege 1997: 176). The neo-colonial structures in Africa are believed to be problematic to many of the more academic members of the development community because it presupposes a set of (essentially bureaucratic or government) objectives which may not be shared by many of the people who are supposedly benefiting from development. This means that

there is a paternalistic assumption as to what is philosophical or good for people's wellbeing based on a set of universal values and characteristics.

The third conception of development belongs to the post-modernist, drawing attention to the ethnocentric and ideologically loaded Western conceptions of "development" and raising the possibilities of alternative conceptions. This conception though supports development in terms of philosophical orientation, in a way, but it draws its strength from Michel Foucault. The key element of this approach is that for post-modernists, development and underdevelopment are social constructs that do not exist in an objective sense outside of the discourse (a body of ideas, concepts and theory) and that one can only "know" reality through discourse. From this perspective, there is no such thing as "objective reality." The term "development" is believed to have been a mechanism for the production and management of the "Third World" – it is used in organizing the production of truth about the "Third World." Development, in this third conception, is believed to have colonized reality to the neglect of philosophy, and thereby to have become reality itself. Similarly, "development" is believed to be a label for plunder and violence, a mechanism of triage (Alvares 1992: 1). The post-modernists believe that the term "underdevelopment" together with its fellow evils – poverty, hunger among others – is nothing but a myth, a construct and the invention of a particular civilization (Mojid 1997: 156). Hence, to address the neo-colonial challenge facing Africa, Rahnema Mojid posits that the call for collective development after the end of colonialism makes the struggle of most Africans energetic (Mojid 1997: 157). This is because colonial struggles for freedom and emancipation of Africa were recent and most Africans were hopeful, but as it is now, little remains of that enthusiasm.

It is one thing to claim that the underdeveloped condition of the "Third World" has been taken advantage of; it is another to claim that there is no such condition. The post-modernists would have done well if they claimed that the underdeveloped condition of the "Third World" has been taken advantage of; but to claim that poverty and hunger in "the Third World" like in many African societies is nothing but myth is rather misleading: it is the denial of the predicament many African scholars have been grappling with. This predicament is highlighted by Obi Oguejiofor (2001). One aspect of this predicament, for Oguejiofor, is the way development has turned out to be elusive (Oguejiofor 2001: 27). Another aspect of this predicament is the way development has been conceptualized to the neglect of the rigour of philosophical training.

One of the confusions, common through these conceptions of development, is between development as an unintentional process, development as an intentional activity (Cowen and Shenton 1996: 6), and development as an activity in philosophy. For instance, taking the structural societal transformation as development makes development seem an unintentional process. This is why the post-modernist rejects the existence of poverty and other features of underdevelopment as myths. Similarly, taking the painstaking contribution of philosophers concerning the development of Africa on a theoretical ground without putting them into practice makes development a waste of time. Hence, theory without practice is a wasteful enterprise. In a way, the vision of the liberation of people which animated development practice, as found in Julius Nyerere's view, and replaced it with a vision of the liberalization of economies, is the goal of structural transformation which has been replaced with the goal of spatial integration. The dynamics of long-term transformations of economies and societies has slipped from view and attention has been placed on short-term growth and the re-establishing of financial balances. This shift to an ahistorical performance assessment can be interpreted as a form of the post-modernization of development policy analysis.

As Julius Nyerere correctly puts it, development is freedom; development and freedom are inseparable. For instance, he asserts that "without freedom you get no development, and without development you very soon lose your freedom" (Nyerere 1974: 25). This is reminiscent of Walter Rodney's position that Africa was deliberately exploited and underdeveloped by European colonial regimes. The combination of power politics and economic exploitation of Africa by Europeans, he says, led to the poor state of African political and economic development evident in the late 20th century (Rodney 1972: 24). However, the problem with Rodney's explication is that the condition in which African states found themselves is problematic. He oversimplifies the complex historical forces surrounding the colonial era. One of the complex historical forces surrounding the pre-colonial era was slavery (slave trade) which was made possible by the monarchs and not essentially by the colonials. Another force was the manner in which the armed forces were established, that is, they largely consisted of Africans who led military onslaughts against their fellow Africans. Another historical force was the way agricultural products were transported abroad, leaving the Africans with inadequate food supplies.

At least three aspects of freedom come to mind. First, there is national freedom – the ability of a people to determine their own future, and to govern themselves without foreign interference. Second, freedom has to do with liberty from hunger, disease, poverty and any other factors that can afflict the people. Third, there is the personal freedom for every individual – her right to live in dignity and equality with all others, her right to freedom of speech, freedom to participate in the making of all decisions which affect her life, and freedom from arbitrary arrest because she happens to annoy

someone in authority, among others. Thus, a society cannot be said to be truly developed until all these aspects of freedom are assured.

As a derivative of Nyerere's view, we can say that development and freedom without having a strong background or orientation in philosophy may make development a waste of time. Above all, the role which philosophy should be allowed to play given the need to introduce development to Africa should be unhindered. Precisely, it is in philosophical training that analysis, criticism and rigour can be attained. It is through philosophy that every theory and programme of development receives all forms of advantage or disadvantage in scope and nature.

With regard to Nyerere's practice of socialism (*Ujamaa* – familyhood, brotherhood or extended “familyhood”) in Tanzania, his concern was to resist surrendering control of the direction of the economic development of Tanzania to international capitalist interests dominated by the major industrialized states or companies of the West. Countries of “the Third World,” according to Nyerere, have to find ways to avoid being dominated by the developed countries before they can attain true development (Nyerere 1974: 41). In other words, when we talk about development, we ought not to focus on GDP or infrastructural transformations which concern things rather than humans, but rather on how human freedom in all areas of life needs to be enhanced. When we talk about how philosophy has contributed to the development of Africa, we ought to be thinking about the way philosophy has contributed to the liberation of African people – freeing them from all human “unfreedoms”, so that they can be said to be truly developed.

From a strict view point, development has been hinged on a practicing philosophy, and when there is specialization in industrial, practical, or mechanical arts and applied sciences. In another sense, development, in the technical view-point, is the systematic use of philosophical, scientific and technical knowledge to meet specific objectives. All these concerns should be hinged on philosophical training. But as it concerns Africa, development according to a transformational view, led by Walter Rodney, is when transformation of the lives of the people takes place, in order to re-shape and re-place the colonialist government that once dominated the African society. Furthermore, development in Kwasi Wiredu's (using Didier Kaphagawani's) explication, is when the three evils of *authoritarianism* (permanent control of all aspects of life, politics included, that ensues in people doing things against their will), *anachronism* (systems or principles outliving their suitability and utility), and *supernaturalism* (the tendency to establish supernatural or religious foundations or basis for a natural code of conduct) (Wiredu 1980: 1-6 & Kaphagawani 1998: 86), are eschewed or erased from the ways of life of Africans, in politics, economy, social life and wellbeing, health, and culture. Furthermore, development from an analytical point of view, as when a normative value of psychological egoism has been put in place to help each society attain self-consciousness, will be a beacon to other societies. A typical example is Greek philosophy, which was once a light to others, and still a reference point in the modern/contemporary era.

Given Walter Rodney and Didier Kaphagawani's explications, should it be presupposed that the strict definition of development cannot be achieved in Africa? According to Claude Ake, in his work *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa*, “one of the factors that makes liberal democracy impossible in Africa is the way we have embraced our historical lifestyle which shapes our current life or condition” (1992: 3). This implies that any concept or practice that is alien to Africa is somehow difficult for Africans to practise and maintain. As Ake posits, “the constitution of African societies as liberal democracies will be quite difficult, if not bizarre” (Ake 1992: 3). The reason is not far-fetched. Just as liberal democracy is specific to certain historical conditions (Ake 1992: 3), it presupposes that development based on the systematic use of scientific and technical knowledge to meet specific objectives and the specialization in industrial, practical, or mechanical arts and applied sciences is not part of the historical development of Africa and Africans over time.

Given the need to consider which of the theories of development should best be used to characterize development in Africa, or as to what aspect of the African society is expected to become better before it can be considered developed, it is noteworthy that development is still on-going. Precisely, none of the three conceptions/theories of development can be seen to have been chosen by any African society, because of the flaws endemic to them.

Philosophy and African development

Apart from the three approaches that see development as historical, policy-related and evaluative or indicator-led, and based on the post-modernist social constructs (where attention is drawn to the ethnocentric and ideologically loaded Western conceptions of “development”), it is noteworthy that contributions to development are not solely economic, but possess other aspects. However, no matter what these other parts may entail, the role which philosophy should be allowed to play is notable. Kwame Gyekye, for instance, in *Taking Development Seriously* is one of the advocates of the view that contributions to development are not solely economic. His perspective is that the economics-based conception of development is lopsided and terribly inadequate (Gyekye 1994: 45). He does not, in any way, presuppose that other views of development are not laced with one problem or the other; but he undertakes an analysis of the problems

associated with the economics-based conception of development, pointing out why it cannot become the monolithic conception for philosophical training or philosophical development in Africa

Kwame Gyekye, as an African philosopher, gave his own perspective of the African philosophical quest for development, using the tools of philosophy, premised on the conditions that are greatly helped by a congenial political climate and a viable ethical and cultural framework. However, Gyekye finds it difficult to steer clear of a strong economic foundation for the society he describes to flourish. The reason for this remark is simple: his contention that the economics-based conception of development, which seems to him to have been touted by “development experts” as the monolithic framework for understanding the problem of development, fails to come to grips with two things: the complex nature of human society and culture and the rigour of philosophy. As such, it is lopsided and terribly inadequate (Gyekye 1994: 45-56). This article neither suggests that the problems facing Africa are solely economic, nor that they are totally unrelated to economics, but that they are due to the unwillingness on the part of African leaders, in their political, economic, and unscientific policies, to adopt the solutions proffered by the philosophers. No individual or society can flourish without a strong economic base. It is on the foundation of a strong economy that a nation can do at least three important things: first, take bold steps towards actualizing the programs set aside to enhance the growth of the society; second, help other societies that are in dire economic need; and three, prosecute a war. However, this economic base, as Gyekye has observed, should not be devoid of a congenial political climate and a viable ethical and cultural framework.

In considering Gyekye’s analysis, Joseph Margolis’ view that, there is a “conceptual continuity between the analysis of knowledge and the direction of human life” (Margolis 2002: 193) reminds us of the need for development to be seen from other perspectives. Margolis’ perspective re-echoes the thought of a scholar like Eric Voegelin, who notes that, “philosophy has its origin not just simply in a desire to understand more clearly ... but also in the philosopher’s felt awareness of and resistance to the disorder in his surrounding culture or society – an awareness that threatens the philosopher’s own soul” (Voegelin 2000: 124). Thus, if the African predicament is something that threatens our soul, then, the contribution of philosophers, at least in Africa, needs to be seriously taken into consideration.

However, the implication of Voegelin’s view is that passionate thinking can only be united with deep concern for concrete issues. There are some reasons why some African literature tends toward helping to restate the importance of development in Africa – texts such as *Philosophy Born of Struggle* (Harris 1983) or *Africa’s Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonialization* (Messay Kebede 2004). These texts specifically address the socio-political and cultural importance of development in Africa. However, most literature that examines development in Africa cannot be extricated from culture. As Charles Mills remarks, African philosophers often choose to specialize in ethics or social and political philosophy, or in philosophy of culture, because their lives’ context directs them to these areas of philosophy (Mills 2002: 158). This does not mean there are no philosophers in Africa; rather Mills simply indicates why Africans feel so obligated to embark on a philosophy that will contribute towards the development of their embattled societies.

In an attempt to respond to the problems facing philosophy and development in Africa, Lansana Keita raises several grounds for his own personal expectations and demands, taking the responsibilities of African philosophers and other intellectuals in relation to developments in their own societies into consideration. These grounds are as follows: the prospect of socialism as a doctrine and its importance to African society, given the fall of communism in the former Soviet Union and the various disruptions in socio-economic situations taking place in other parts of the world like Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Afghanistan, the West Bank and Gaza between Israel and Pakistan, Iraq; the calls for a diagnostic analysis of developmental problems in Africa and proposed solutions; the task which Kwame Nkrumah assigns to philosophy in the political field by making reference to Frantz Fanon and Cheikh Anta Diop on the significance of their political thought in relation to the present development issue in Africa; and the possible contribution of African philosophers from ancient Egypt to date concerning the purpose or *telos* of development (Keita 2011: 87).

As with their counterparts in Western philosophy, we can hardly find any African philosopher who actually remains totally unconcerned about the problems facing the development of their society. Every philosophy carries directly or indirectly a society project. The whole difference lies indeed, directly or indirectly, that is, in the more or less explicit nature of the project. The African philosophers who are concerned with how development takes place in Africa such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Obafemi Awolowo, Ali Mazrui, Leopold Senghor, Sékou Touré, Theophilus Okere, Claude Ake, and Larry Diamond should be credited for clarifying the social and political conditions of Africa, just like their Western counterparts Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Rawls, and Nozick. Their social doctrine is explicit. By “laying their cards on the table,” they make it easy for the reader to assess their proposed vision.

However, the present African predicament with regard to philosophy and development can make one doubt if there is any meaningful contribution by the African philosophers towards the philosophy and development of their societies. Hardly any scholar can justifiably doubt the poor state in which African societies are at present in terms of philosophical training, etc. Concerning this, Moses Oke states:

In either relative or absolute terms, i.e., whether we compare Africa with other continents or we take the African situation on its own, the tendency to degenerate has already become a reality in the human situation in the continent. The situation is such that no one is in doubt that generally, and in particular on the human level, much of Africa is in a precarious state. Most Africans are very deeply concerned about how to halt the fast degeneration of the human condition and how to bring about what is called some worthwhile improvement. The shared sense of feeling for the African predicament is not in doubt; the difference lies only in ideas of how best to understand and deal with the situation (Oke 2006: 333).

It is therefore surprising how the post-modernists like Niyi Osundare (1998), Barry Hallen (2002), and Segun Oladipo (2008) still think poverty and under-development attributed to societies in Africa are a myth. Unlike the post-modernists, Moses Oke points out that Africa is lagging behind in terms of development (Oke 2006: 334). Just like Oke did, Niyi Osundare notes concerning the African predicament that “Africa is the most humiliated and the most dehumanized continent in the world: her history is a depressing tale of dispossession and impoverishment” (Osundare 1998: 231). The challenge of development in Africa can best be portrayed in relation to post-colonial interference or influences, which, as Oke notes, “no sane person can contemplate today without despair (Oke 2006: 333).

We cannot conclude that African philosophers have not provided philosophies that could have helped to direct Africa’s development towards the correct trajectory. The problem seems to be more that of implementing the proposals put forward. For instance, over fifty years ago the “prophetic” Kwame Nkrumah called for and wrote a book titled *Africa Must Unite*. Rather than adopting his thought as the feasible route to development, many self-seeking African leaders described Nkrumah’s dream as impossible. His thought is referred to as archaic and impracticable or less effective in contemporary African society. A few decades after Nkrumah’s clarion call, some European countries formed the European Union (EU) for their collective benefit and for providing global leadership. Since then, American and Asian states have also come together, challenges notwithstanding. Africa is yet to make any meaningful progress towards a union government in spite of public acknowledgement of this need by some of its leaders – with the most recent being Mohammad Gaddafi, who was being referred to as anti-Western, and was killed over two years ago. The foot-dragging approach in the unification of Africa has given rise to rapid Westernization in the guise of globalization to exploit the continent in virtually all domains of existence. In the midst of the attempts to Westernize Africa, and in the face of a weak African socio-economic and political base, Nkrumah’s visionary appeal is now more urgent than ever.

In a similar manner, Nyerere stressed that Africa must not surrender control of the direction of its philosophy and economic development to international capitalist interests or international agencies dominated by the major industrialized states, as this would bring little advantage, especially to the poorest countries. His contemporary in Wiredu asked that even philosophy should be allowed to blossom, whether at the first-order philosophical level or at the professional philosophical level. Hence, Africa had to find ways to avoid being dominated by the developed countries, and this could only be done through their unity (Wiredu 1974: 47-50). Through his socialist theory, Nyerere contributed immensely to the growth of his country, and by extension, to the growth of Africa. He developed the outlines of the policies for his economically poor country. With the motto of *Uhuru na Kazi* (Freedom and Work), he at once mounted a major attack on what he considered as the three major enemies of his people – poverty, ignorance, and disease. Nyerere believed that it was unwise for a poor country to depend on the uncertain aid of the richer nations for progress. Instead, he encouraged his people to utilize their own strengths, especially their ample manpower, to develop their country on their own. His philosophy aimed to contribute to peace and stability in Tanzania in particular and in Africa in general, as he developed economic and educational opportunities in Tanzania while preserving human rights and dignity (Nyerere 1974: 19-25). He devoted much effort to two major issues – the search for justice and reconciliation. He was also one of the first African leaders to support the liberation struggle in Southern Africa.

It was not only these first generation African philosophers who used philosophy to shape Africa; later African philosophers have also tried to positively influence the intellectual aspect of African development. Similarly, philosophers such as Didier Kaphagawani, Abiola Irele, Idowu O. Williams, and Larry Diamond have suggested a new orientation towards reasoning concerning philosophy and development in Africa. This is the major task of Oke’s thought in his work *Cultural Nostalgia: A Philosophical Critique of Appeals to the Past in Theories of Re-Making Africa*. He suggests a new orientation in scholarship in seeking solutions to problems pertaining to philosophy and development in Africa. As against his predecessors – Nkrumah, Nyerere, among others – Oke notes:

Africa cannot afford to be going back in time. To “return” to the regimes of “decentralization”, “communalism” (“primitive communism”) and “de-monetization” will not only be counter-productive, but will further undermine the already weak and un-sustaining “philosophy”, structures and institutions now in place. Such a backward-looking step will amount to swimming against the flow of current global realities. In particular, to return to the past will amount to moving against the massive and fast-moving currents of globalization—a move that will only lead to

a further marginalization and pauperization of Africa in the significant productive and progressive activities of the contemporary world (Oke 2006: 341).

In a similar manner, rather than engaging in an intellectual discourse that lacks focus, Gabriel Massi argues for a special role for the public intellectuals or philosophers in Africa, in his work *The Role of the Public Intellectual in an African Context: Naming the Present*. Along with the rest of the world, Africa is experiencing major challenges in philosophy, whether political, economic or cultural aspects. However, contexts differ and there is a special need, given the history of Africa, for public intellectuals to “name the present” and identify the forces that are shaping the future. One way of getting this done is through genuine philosophical means. Gabriel Massi offers his account of the particular forces that African intellectuals have to focus on, and identifies what is perhaps the most central issue, such as the problem of the lack of disciplinary unity among various cultures in Africa. He argues that many theorists have given accounts of the African situation with little positive results. In effect “African Studies” are in disarray (Massi 2011: 47-49).

Massi suggests that we focus on how to cope with philosophy, change and development. This is a simple suggestion, but possibly has profound implications. Massi considers change in two ways, and asks how Africans can avoid being the passive victims of philosophy and change. He points out the complicity of African intellectuals in their negative reaction to change, seen in their mass emigration from Africa to Europe or USA for teaching and residency. Then, by contrast, he points to the positive ways in which philosophy and change may be responded to, and challenges intellectuals to make their contribution in this regard. Their role should be to use intellectual reflection to philosophy and change the present *Krisis* into a *Kairos* (Massi 2011: 51-52).

Kwasi Wiredu, according to Sanya Osha (2005), is another important African philosopher who has made a great contribution to the philosophical and intellectual development of Africa. Wiredu, for Osha, is very aware of the need for a desirable African mode of selfhood within a broadly modern framework, through which Africa can truly develop (Osha 2005: 5). Wiredu’s work “Conceptual Decolonization in African Philosophy” represents a suitable summation of his philosophical interests in African development. Here, Wiredu emphasizes the need for the missing “conceptual decolonization” in an African mode of reasoning (Osha 1999: 157). Decolonization involves a tough task of recovering some fragmented traditional heritage of the people. Appealing to Fanon’s conception, decolonization is considered an essential phenomenon for all colonized peoples and most especially “a programme of complete disorder” (Osha 1999: 157-158). Nevertheless, unlike Fanon’s “violence”, Wiredu’s decolonization focuses more on a purely practical interest in doing philosophy to positively effect the change and development that Africa needs. This is not to say that Fanon had no plan for the project of decolonization in the intellectual sphere. Connected with this project as it was then conceived, was a struggle for the mental elevation of the colonized African peoples (Osha 1999: 158).

However, as compelling as Wiredu’s contribution is, Osha argues that Wiredu’s penchant for working with and through the languages of Africa (particularly Akan/Twi) as a basis for scrupulous critical comparisons with Western philosophy imposes too narrow and binary a focus for a conceptually comprehensive assessment of the disastrous historical, social, economic, political and psychological consequences Western imperialism continues to inflict upon Africa. Osha therefore rejects what he terms Wiredu’s insistence on “analytic philosophy” as an adequate vehicle for conceptual decolonization, and embraces instead a more Continental philosophical approach as a basis for arriving at a new strategy. This involves elements of hermeneutics (“deeper” understanding) and of postmodern and postcolonial thought, and an insistence that an appreciation and account of historical and social contexts are essential if the mode of reasoning in the African context is to have the liberating and developmental impact that Osha argues it must. Along the way he provides stimulating critical synopses of the work of an impressive array of contemporary philosophers and intellectuals such as Paulin Hountondji, V.Y. Mudimbe, Ngugi Wathiong’o, to mention just a few.

How philosophy has contributed to Africa’s quest for development

As noted before, since philosophy helps in developing a comprehensive system of thought about all that exists, this help can be predicated on a method with which we can perceive the contribution of philosophy to issues pertaining to people and society. Philosophy has come a long way in African life, as it has helped in addressing many issues. One issue which philosophy has helped Africa address concerns the formulation of measures to tackle neo-colonial strategies which are bent on making Africa continuously dependant on the wealthy countries of the West. If it were not through the aid of philosophy with its tools of analysis, criticism, seeking and inquiring, rigour, and scepticism, it would have been improbable, if not almost impossible, for people in Africa to understand and contribute their views to the events happening around them. Just as philosophy was used to transfer the views of the West to Africa, philosophy became a tool in the hands of some Africans like V.Y. Mudimbe, Okpewho, Placid Tempels, Moses Akin Makinde, Peter Bodunrin, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor, Segun Oladipo, Kwasi Wiredu, Didier Kaphagawani, Odera Oruka, Kola-Owolabi, Larry Diamond, Claude Ake, Joseph Omoregbe, Sophie Oluwole, Segun Ogungbemi, Wole Soyinka,

Chinua Achebe, Sékou Touré, Paulin Hountondji, D.A. Masolo, Kwame Appiah, Kwame Gyekye, Moses Oke, Jonathan Chimakonam, Obi Oguejiofor, Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, etc. to reject, re-write, and evaluate the gains and certain impediments making Africa lack development in philosophy, science, economy, and politics. In this regard, one way we can understand how philosophy has contributed to Africa's development is the presence and the exaltation of reason, analysis, rejections, and forward-looking perspectives by different and sometimes opposing evaluations of African philosophers.

Development through the aid of philosophy can be understood as an attempt to re-shape the African destiny in which people currently live, and for the sake of future endeavors. This is reminiscent of what K.C. Anyanwu has said concerning the impact that philosophy is having on development in Africa. He holds the view that development in Africa has come of age. Development in Africa through philosophy explains the moral praiseworthiness and blameworthiness of the possible solutions to the problems experienced in African governance (Anyanwu 1981: 23).

Although one may find it very difficult to accept the persistent cry of some Africans that Africa has been subdued by the wealthy countries of the West through their "development programmes," this cry is a derivative of the neo-colonial names such as "globalization," "one global family," "universalism," and "one racial family," that were constructed to check Africa's rate of development. The truth of such description may be contingent, but it is appealing. A counter-view is that a lot of countries or continents have developed by introspection. Many developed nations have trusted their capacities to succeed or develop over time. They have also developed by offering what is indigenous about them to the outside world. Anyone who does not have what he has personally made, and which he/she can sell to other people outside his/her presence in the global market is a waste of time and resources.

Serious stakeholders in the world market come there with their indigenous products that secure for them a genuine place on the table of importance. For example, the Chinese, as of today, do not practise democracy, but their system of government is so unique that to fault it would be preposterous. The reason is simple: the Chinese stood their ground on the things they manufactured and on the system of government that seemed to them to be best practiced.

If we consider what S.A. Ekanem asserted in *African Philosophy and Development: Contemporary Perspective*, that in the documentation of the historical development of the world Africa has been tacitly ignored (Ekanem 2006: 85), then we would be wary of the path that Africa is taking towards attaining development in philosophy, science, politics, economy, culture, etc. The reason for this, he (Ekanem) says, is simple: Africa has no cognitive power to engage in worthy (philosophical and) developmental strides (Ekanem 1985: 86). It is noteworthy that scholars such as Makinde, Bodunrin, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Cesaire, Oladipo, Hallen, Senghor, Niekirk, Sodipo, Irele, Oke, Oruka, Kaphagawani, Wiredu, Omoregbe, Oluwole, and Gyekye have emphasised how the African reflective activities (which is known as philosophy) have been used to add value to the development of the African society. However, the specific instances of how philosophy has transformed Africa have been laid bare through giant developmental strides that political philosophers such as Nkrumah, Nyerere, Senghor, Awolowo, Azikiwe, Cabral, Fanon, Garvey, to mention a few, have made in their respective regions or countries.

If we also consider the explications of Moses Akin Makinde in *African Philosophy: The Demise of a Controversy* (Makinde 2010) that philosophy exists in Africa, and Didier N. Kaphagawani's *What is African Philosophy?* (Kaphagawani 1998) that philosophical development should be allowed to blossom in Africa, it is easy to perceive why philosophy in Africa may have been cornered to a first-level discourse. Philosophy can sometimes be radical, critical, analytical, etc. to the extent that it becomes violent in criticizing itself, the society, individuals, etc. But it appears that the needless pursuit of traditions, folklores, culture, sage philosophy, and nationalistic-ideological philosophy with little or no pursuit of professional analysis of philosophical problems in Africa may have caused this setback.

Critique of some theories about the African philosophical quest for development

Examining some strategies employed by different African philosophers, given their views on what philosophy and development entails, deserves appraisal. This would help in establishing the notion that Africa itself seems not to be doing enough to engage in the things that could make the continent significant. In examining the works of different philosophers, we may come to appreciate the divergent views employed by them; however, what we call philosophy and development entails much more than what many of them have said.

For instance, Kwame Nkrumah, in *Class Struggle in Africa*, has presented us with the evidence of the African philosophical quest for development which appears appealing, but the route to this development which he posited, by all empirical means, appears difficult to recommend. It is presented in the following:

Africa and its highland, with a land area of some twelve million square miles ... could easily absorb within it, and with room to spare, the whole of India, Europe, Japan, the British Isles, Scandinavian and New Zealand. The

United States of America could easily be fitted into the Sahara Desert. Africa is geographically compact, and in terms of natural resources, potentially the richest continent in the world (Nkrumah 1970: 13).

While considering the implications of the form of development called absorption, it is important we state that Africa's ability to absorb major countries or continents of the world on its vast area of land does not, in any way, represent a model of development which is to be followed. The first implication of this theory of absorption is the rate at which over-population would fill the continent to a state of being comatose. Sékou Touré, Leopold Senghor, Nelson Mandela and many other political thinkers or rulers have acknowledged this framework, because the capacity to absorb others may present an advantage for development. However, this does not amount to development because over-burdening a location with an uncontrollable amount of people may spell doom for development and advancement. Moreover, Nkrumah wanted development, but thought that development, first and foremost, entails the ability to absorb others.

Be it as it may, developmental policies and perspectives for advancement go beyond Nkrumah's description of absorption. Though this may not be a fair criticism of Nkrumah given his giant strides for the development and advancement of Ghana, the African region and for pan-Africanist studies, Africa could not afford to be jettisoned for over-population since its ills and demerits are real but troubling. Moreover, from his (Nkrumah's) life and career, we could perceive his niche for the study of neocolonialism, where he concluded that the feudal and violent forms of colonialism had outlived their utility (usefulness), and through that, propounded a progressive linear model of development. This model of development differs and is opposed to the Marxist-influenced model of development. The second implication is the question how the absorption of other continent(s) by Africa would help in the development and advancement of the philosophy (in the rigorous, skeptical, critical and analytical sense) in and/or of Africa? The response to this question may be difficult to attain. Precisely the way Africa manages her resourcefulness in terms of philosophical upbringing and orientation is pathetic. Much attention, in most cases, is paid to cultural development and teachings rather than serious philosophical development. Most times, criticisms are seen as rude and disrespectful rather than something to be welcomed for the sake of social development.

Another form of development lies in the ability to prospect for resources that are available. A major proponent of this view is Ali Mazrui. He opines that,

Estimates of Africa's resources are on the whole tentative. Not enough prospecting for resources under the ground has taken place, but it is fair to say that Africa has 96% of the non-communist world's diamonds, 60% of its gold, 42% of its cobalt, 34% of its bauxite, and 28% of its uranium. Africa's iron reserves are probably twice those of the United States, and its reserves of chrome are the most important by far outside the United States (Mazrui 1980: 71).

The implication of Ali Mazrui's explication can be found in what another philosopher asserts with respect to African development. For many years now, according to Segun Ogungbemi, "African countries namely, Nigeria, Libya, Angola, Egypt, Gabon, etc. have been producing crude oil for sale to European and American markets in large quantities. Apart from mineral resources and oil, it is believed that Africa ranks among the world's largest agricultural producers" (Ogungbemi 2007: 28). Given Ali Mazrui's and Segun Ogungbemi's acknowledgment of Africa as a major suburb of natural and mineral resources coupled with the agricultural capacity, the problem that both of them have failed to see is that these resources have not stopped Africa from been perceived as a sleeping giant and a suburb of irresponsible leaders providing far below par leadership. Africa has also been perceived as a suburb of first-order level of philosophy, which Wiredu, Kaphagawani, Makinde, etc. call ethno-philosophical lifestyle and upbringing. Moreover, despite her abundance of natural, human and mineral resources, Africa is still ranked very low in terms of philosophical, scientific and technological development. It was once the case that people in Africa (Yoruba: as case-study) developed tools and locally made guns to hunt animals, protect themselves and their families, and fought wars. It was once the case that ethno-philosophy thrived in Africa. How come Africa has failed to develop or advance beyond the production of local guns despite all major civilizations advancing beyond their first-level productions? And how come Africa is still moving in circles around the ethno-philosophical method of doing African philosophy? The reason (why) may be difficult to perceive or the perception of one difficulty may not, in any case, represent the totality of the problems facing Africa.

In his address titled *A Stable and Secure Nigeria: An Asset to America*, delivered at the meeting with United States on Foreign Relations, Washington D.C. on November 10, 2014, Professor Ade Adefuye (Ambassador of Nigeria to the United States), accused the United States of not supporting Nigeria in her fight against terrorism despite the fact they have both come a long way in their relationship and that a Bi-Annual Commission Agreement was signed in 2010; whence the last point of agreement is premised on food, security and agriculture. There are certain implications to be derived from Professor Ade Adefuye's speech. One: is the United States responsible for terrorism in Nigeria? And, two: of what strategic importance are Yobe, Adamawa, and Bornu states of Nigeria to the United States of America? It can be further implied that, as far as we know and that the records, the United States is not responsible for terrorism in Nigeria. A lot may be

said here in order to force the hands of the United States to come to Nigeria's aid, such as "be your brothers' keeper," "love your neighbor/another country as yourself," "defend humanity," and so on. It is important we note that the United States is not an extension of Nigeria and the Nigerian state has to take the full responsibility for the presence of terrorism on her land. If we go back to the question of how come Africa has failed to develop or advance beyond the production of local guns, then the array of problems facing Nigeria and Africa at large will certainly become apparent. Corruption which has its cohort in misappropriation of funds, inconsistency in government's developmental goals and programs, abandoning the developmental programs of the past dispensation of leaders because of politics of calumny, and so on, are aspects of the problems facing the neo-colonial Nigerian state. On the second question, it is obvious that Yobe, Adamawa and Bornu states of Nigeria are not oil-producing states, they are not known for producing globally reckoned scientific academicians, literary giants, iron rods for prosecution of global wars, and they have no ties with the friends of the United States like Israel, France, Britain, Germany, etc. The presupposition here is that these states of Nigeria have no strategic importance to the United States.

Furthermore, in the global reckoning when it comes to adorable or refined practice of democracy, proper management of money or natural resources, welfare of the people, security of lives and property, and philosophical orientation, etc. Nigeria's integrity is minimal, low or cannot be noticed. Moreover, regarding some of the things that we have at our disposal, like oil and gas, it may be argued that they are of interest to developed nations, but other things like national thieves and armed/unarmed robbers in the name of leaders of the nation, misappropriation of public funds, electoral fraud, illegal spending from the treasury of the state on private things, and so on, are things that most serious developed nations or any serious-minded individual will not appreciate about most African nations and their leadership. To go back to the question of what strategic importance Nigeria is to the United States, Samuel Huntington writes that:

If poor countries appear to be unstable, it is not because they are poor, but because they are trying to become rich. A purely traditional society would be ignorant, poor, and stable. By the mid-twentieth century, however, all traditional societies were also transitional or modernizing societies ... The more man wages war against "his ancient enemies: poverty, disease, ignorance" the more he wages war against himself (Huntington 1968: 41).

If one needs to argue against Huntington's position, it is pertinent that one should remember the reasons why Africa (Yoruba, as case study) has failed in advancing beyond the production of local guns to kill or hunt animals in the forest or bush. Why have we stopped advancing the course of our own philosophy and development? Why do we steal our own money (public funds), act as if we are saints and deposit such stolen funds in Swiss banks, build houses and hotels in the Caribbean Islands, buy houses in UAE, etc? Why have we stopped investing in scientific developmental activities rather than killing political opponents and misappropriating our public funds? Why can't we invest in things that will aid or ease development in the future rather than spending four years to patch roads, construct bridges on small rivers, and practise the politics of distraction, calumny, thuggery, nepotism, funding people to/for holy pilgrimages, and upholding monarchy in a democratic republic? Huntington's position that "the more man wages war against "his ancient enemies: poverty, disease, ignorance" the more he wages war against himself" could not be disregarded and should not be ignored. Moreover, recent events and actions portraying African leaders as the ones undermining the development of philosophy in Africa and its various societies have been blamed on the Western imperialists. This blame presupposes that the lack of preparedness for leadership rather than rulership by the African leaders, needs to fall on others rather than the leaders taking responsibility. This attitude, they say, was caused by colonial overlords.

Another model of development that has no major role to play in the enhancement and improvement of philosophical thinking and upbringing in Africa is when the people have turned themselves to blame-agents. Here, accusing fingers are aimed at others instead of the accusers taking responsibility and rising up to change the misfortunes of Africa. This model is common nowadays. A model of development that is also common currently is the reception of foreign aid by African leaders and African nations, which portray Africa and Africans as beggars, wretched, and persistently expectant. This model of development, in a way, kills the use of one's brain, kills every attempt toward scientific and technological development, and encourages dependence rather than independence.

Since we are to show evidence of the philosophical quest for development in Africa, the models of development and the role philosophy should play, which has been discussed, questions are in order. However, does it mean that Africa is not developing? The term 'developing' is a present continuous tense. It neither represents a present tense nor a past tense. It is a term which may never allow potentials to be fulfilled. It is neither the word 'develop', 'developed' or 'developers'. It refers to a persistent lock in a state of begging and hoping. However, if we look at the language of the African nationalists and early political philosophers like Nkrumah, Senghor, Nyerere, Awolowo, Azikiwe, Touré, etc. before independence, they had one song: Africa must be free – from colonial oppression, post-colonial influence, and economic slavery of the colonial masters. The problem with these nationalists was that they directed all their energy toward the socio-

cultural and political emancipation of Africa without looking for a way in which Africa should consistently be free from mental (un-philosophical), academic, and economic slavery. This may be a reason for the emanation of the word 'developing'. Thus, while considering Karl Marx's view that "not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois state; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overseer, and above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself" (Marx & Engels 1998: 43-44), it is important to note that Africa cannot attain self-realization when the productive strength and the manufacturing ability is considerably lacking and consistently locked in misappropriation of funds, corruption, taking the monies stolen from many African nations abroad, and playing politics that kills. Africa is constantly locked behind the bourgeois manufacturers of the West because of their destructive attitude towards Africa. In every civilization lies the invention of a wheel. The wheel, to a great extent, proclaims the birth of a new civilization or development. Africa has yet to do this.

Precisely, if we are to concisely address the strategic importance of Nigeria or Africa to West, we greatly need to assert that most things that we call our own are the things that any developed nation can do without. What is the point that the Western powers would want to help Africa to develop since Africa can perpetually be their market place where all manners of products (fake or genuine) or any other thing can be dropped or dumped? If it is quite needed that a feeling about Africa's quest for philosophical and scientific development should be sounded or given, a lot of things have to change about the African orientation. One: the way we practise and develop ourselves in philosophical thinking, lifestyle and orientation. Similar to this is the way we perceive ourselves as inferior-minded. Two: the way we blame others for our mistakes, woes, troubles, lacks, inabilities, wrong use of brain or mental activities, political overbearing on matters that are at best good for the waste bin, the blame-game, misappropriation of funds and corruption, and the taking of monies that were to be used in developing Africa to banks in Switzerland, banks in the United States, Britain, and to tourist centres across Europe, Asia, Latin America, etc. should stop. Three: there should be development in education that has long-lasting effects. Four: there should be the creation of formidable institutions in which no one: monarch, president, governor, minister, pastor, bishops, imams, traditional worshippers, etc. would be above those institutions. Five, there should be a drastic reduction in the salaries of political office holders and their allowances for wardrobes, cars, houses, health, travelling, family, sickness, sitting, standing, bending, sleeping, crawling, and other forms of allowances should be discouraged. This would help the intention for holding political office or election into various public offices be 'less fancied' or discouraged, since individuals are meant to work and serve the public rather than looting the money that belongs to the public. The removal of such would make individuals prefer to have their names written on marbles, gold plates, and so on. Six: more attention should be paid to scientific development. This will not aid the view that most African icons are story tellers (literary giants) rather than scientific oriented individuals or nations. And seven: Africa should stop begging. German civilization started from somewhere, so also the American, Italian, and Chinese civilizations. Africa should develop their local "guns" into formidable weapons that can help their military fight wars against rag-tag local bandits called terrorists, etc. There is no end to development and there is no final stop to it. Development comes in various modes and it can only be acquired when there is no misappropriation of funds and when philosophical orientation and energy are not diverted, wasted, shot down, ill-prioritized, etc.

Conclusion

Disagreement in opinion, which is in itself a hallmark of philosophy, about the way to go in terms of modes of reasoning in Africa, must not be seen as a problem but rather an advantage to intellectual development in Africa. This encourages individual inventiveness rather than mental limitations that its absence may bring. In other words, like in other races, even in its evaluational ambivalence, philosophy, as this study has shown through the contributions of some philosophers, contributes immensely to the development of Africa. The problems facing Africa are expected to be taken away from the purview of the European invasion of Africa. The problems should, at best, be internalized, so that their resolution can be found without wasting much time. Similarly, the implication of the problem which was raised that the persistence of African problems is due rather to the unwillingness on the part of the African leaders to adopt properly the contributions philosophers have made to African development, is something most African leaders might deny.

One limitation is that, if care is not taken, this study could be interpreted as a political narrative on the lack of economic and political development in Africa. Another limitation is the way the study could be interpreted as political rhetoric that is mostly embedded in the sixties and seventies in Africa. Nevertheless, this study is novel, in the sense that its theme is very relevant and important to the discourse of philosophy. The precarious state in which Africa finds herself is not because of the inability on the part of the philosophers to proffer solutions, but is owing to the unwillingness and failure on the part of African leaders to adopt the solutions proffered. Hence, inasmuch as the growth of philosophy is allowed to become poor and weak every time in Africa, and when the views of philosophers on how to resolve socio-

cultural, political, educational, and scientific problems are neglected or pushed aside in Africa, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to foresee the growth of philosophy and development as we would have wanted it in Africa.

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