Perspective on Welfare Rationalism in African Contexts: Freedom and Social Cohesion

by

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Abstract

In light of the economic and political history of Africa's present-day realities, this paper argues that conceptions of development, in their varying forms, and their conspicuous link with modernization imperatives of present-day economics, as well as the geo-political conflicts regarding sovereignty and territory (also linked to modernization imperatives) force African economic and political realities into dependencies that continuously devalue and limit their capacity to sustain both their material and metaphysical interests. The questions that arise from this dilemma have both a pragmatic and metaphysical edge to them, namely; is it possible to conceive of economic 'harmony' and 'sustainability' in a political environment which encourages morally relative and prejudiced, socio-economic competition? If not, what modality/rationale must exist to allow for the achievement of harmonious, developmental aims across current political and economic boundaries?Utilizing philosophical, sociological and economic perspectives, this paper seeks to highlight a recurring meta-paradigm and rationalization that undergirds most of Africa's knowledge-producing motifs; Welfare Rationalism. The aim is to posit this particular form of rationality in a global context, as the primary driver for developmental ethics, developmental economics, and developmental politics, in order to analyze the possible benefits and shortfalls. The paper concludes that positioning of *inter-dependence* based on Welfare Rationalism as a corner-stone of discourse on development, will encourage a progressive and unbiased outlook on culture, politics and economy, as well as practically facilitating a constructive ethos of 'modernization' and development.

The water I drink, the food I eat, the clothes I wear, the bed I sleep on, are all determined by politics, good or bad. Politics is about power and how it is used. Politics involves choosing sides in the struggle for power. So on which side are you?

(N. wa' Thiongo 2006: 87)

Introduction

Perhaps the most common idea complementing or at odds with understanding the past, present and future, has been the idea of development. Development in reality has represented itself in various ways, whether one is concerned about the environment, culture and spirituality/science, societal safety, or resource accessibility, in places that are associated with a 'progressive-thinking, developed world'. Freedoms and social cohesion in this context are privileged to those societies that manage to secure their interests for their development, and how they interact with each other for common ends. Therefore development, as a lived and expressed word, which invariably secures political, economic and social freedoms, has become the typical term on which the meaning of Asian, African, Western and South American-borne *civilization** is debated; and on which new laws are being designed, evaluated, applied or critically deconstructed.

Moreover the 'antithetic' context of development, underdevelopment, in its socio-economically exclusive contexts and experiences, challenges the nature of development theory and application, and renders it susceptible to its most fundamental lessons. It has been argued that amongst those that wish to be acknowledged as the 'progressive-thinking, developed world', there is a tendency to adopt a "self-righteous tone" which "…says more about the authors than about the problems of underdevelopment *(*however defined*)* which cannot be simply wished away" (Munck, R. & O'Hearn, D. 1999: 203). S. Amin radically expounds on this trail of thinking by stating that "Post-modernist critiques of 'grand narratives' (the Enlightenment, democracy, progress, socialism, national liberation) do not look to the future but return to an imaginary and false past, which is extremely idealized. In this way it facilitates the fragmentation of the majority of the population and makes them accept adjustment to the logic of the reproduction of domination by the imperialist oligopolies."[1]

In the context of these perspectives, this paper posits the following questions; is it possible to conceive of economic 'harmony' and 'sustainability' in a political environment which encourages morally relative and prejudiced, socio-economic competition? If not, what paradigm or rationale must exist to allow for the achievement of harmonious, developmental aims across current political and economic boundaries?

Second, this paper essentially argues that the debate on freedoms that compliment social cohesion, amongst African voices, is an important political, economic and cultural appraisal, in an increasingly unequal world. It analyzes how self-reflection and self-criticism regarding freedoms in the African mind (based on the historical legacies of current social, economic, and environmental crises) highlight and call into question the global relevance and meaning of modernization and development in relation to Person and Community, Private and Public space; and ultimately concludes by drawing out a theoretical framework for a proposed 'harmonious' future or destiny, in an African perspective.

T. Serequeberhan provides an astute introduction to this discourse on development when he asserts that

> … the enslaved and their free descendants do not struggle to reclaim some true past fixed identity. Rather, their struggles are directed at reclaiming humanity within the ambient that has negated it. In freeing themselves their efforts contribute in the humanizing of the very world that has dehumanized them. In this struggle what is articulated is, broadly speaking, a way of relating – that is, a sensibility, to the world that ontologically comprehends it as structured by and our own involvements in the world.
>
> (Serequeberhan, T. 2000: 74)

In this sense, it is disadvantageous to ignore the nature of critical theory on development and its freedoms, from within increasingly complex, globally-diverse epistemologies and realities. For example, 洪庆福 (trans.; Hong Qing Fu) in his evaluation of Confucian scholarship and how it had, and continues to bring into sharp focus questions of national identity and a national 'future' regarding Chinese society, annotates the secular thinking of a famous sixteenth century scholar Dai Zhen (1724-1777);

> Dai was no voice for the development of one's own propensities and inclinations, in his pointing out that desire is the basis for discovering truth. Indubitably, however, it was a call for studying things objectively and basing truth claims on acute observation of concrete evidence, not just on sheer philosophical speculation. As to how to gather publicly verifiable proof as test of knowledge and truth, Dai did not hesitate to ask that people actively go into such practices as music, ceremonial and farming. There would be no hope for peace and harmony, he stated, should people fail to learn from practical experiences and to solve practical problems.
>
> (Hong Qing Fu 2004: 209-210)

Although current developmental models adopted by China's current governing 'classes' might draw sharp criticisms from concerned observers, the exercise of being acutely aware, according to Hong Qing Fu's study of 'Confucianism in cross-cultural dialogue', about the pragmatism of experience in its cultural variety is an imperative that cannot be ignored. Wang Yi compliments this rationale by stating that for the prospects of 'neo-Asianism' as a social, political and economic paradigm to deliver greater freedoms and social cohesion, the "task… is to explore ways to ensure respect for different cultures, religions, systems and ideologies on the premises that the basic norms governing international relations and the universal values of mankind are upheld and to pursue mutual amity and harmony on the basis of peaceful coexistence among different countries, nationalities and groups in the region" (Zhao Jinjun et al 2008: 18).

To avoid overstating the value of human freedoms and agency through experience, German social scientist, J. Habermas, acknowledges that it is not a human social novelty in espousing or claiming to represent ideal perspectives and futures, nor is it a sociological revelation to understand why societies desire a self-aggrandized sense of change; he asserts that in the ongoing process of non-physical and physical change, society at large that *must* be continuously aware of "new" socially-active critiques – based on what has been currently observed to be an "implicitly inculcated definition of normality, according to which crises of consciousness are not crises, disturbances in socialization are not disturbances, privatized (physically internalized) conflicts are not conflicts, susceptibilities to political culture are not susceptibilities, the erosion of value-orientations and forms of life are not erosions, constitutional violations are not constitutional violations – but instead merely leftist fantasies that have been blown out of proportion by the media" (Habermas, J. 1987: 11-12). This, according to Habermas, had to be understood as "problems (*he*)* would trace back less to subjective conditions than to the colonization of the life-world by an economic and administrative system that has assumed a life of its own" (Habermas, J. 1987: 12).

Post-modernist thinker, J. Derrida, also reminded the reader/listener (in an interview with F. Ewald) that, "everything is 'drawn' from experience (live, daily, naïve or reflective, always thrown against the impossible)…", and which according to him

> …there is always, and I believe that there *must be more than one* language, mine and the other (I am greatly simplifying) and I must try to write in such a way that the language of the other does not suffer {*souffrir*} because of mine, that it puts up with me {*me souffre*} without suffering from it {*sans ensouffrir*}, that it receives the hospitality of my language without getting lost or integrated in it. And reciprocally, but reciprocity is not symmetry – and first of all because we have no neutral measure here, no *common measure* given by a third party. This must be invented at every moment, with every sentence, with no guarantee, no absolute guardrails {*garde-fou*}. Which is to say that madness, a certain "madness," *must* watch over each and every step, and eventually must watch over thinking, as reason does also.
>
> (Biesta, G.J.J &Egea-Kuehne, D. 2001:72)

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H. A. Giroux then leads this dialectic of critique on to a possible conclusion. For Giroux, "matters of historical contingency, context, and social transformation are both primary considerations in fashioning any viable form of cultural politics and crucial to developing a language of critique and possibility as self-critical as it is socially responsible. Changing historical conditions posit new problems, define different projects, and often demand fresh discourses… Any critical theory both defines and is defined by the problems posed by the contexts it attempts to address" (Giroux, H.A. 2001: xx). In other words, one can never overstate the argument that when analyzing the development of social cohesion (state-to-state, or people-to-people), contested between needs and desires in their historically-driven, cultural and political diversity, it is crucial to take into account and *assimilate* the growing body of conflicting interests attempting to address the current crises of inequality.

For knowledge production to serve 'universally democratic' functions and freedoms, it must continuously challenge its culturally-rooted reality, and 'sanctify' epistemological diversity. It is only then that political, social, and economic freedoms *serve* consensual, compassionate, egalitarian, and emancipatory motivations. It is within these processes that the globally repressed and so-called 'non-progressive elements' of social change may see their "inestimable advantage"; and thus "speak for human values in opposition to the barbarous irrationality of a competitive society and to the autocratic rule of private economic empires, state bureaucracies, vanguard parties, technocratic-meritocratic elites, or whatever other monstrosities the future may hold" (Chomsky, N. 2003: 157).

These perspectives and observations, if understood in their simplicity, argue that critique, re-evaluating, de-constructing, and re-constructing specific social, political and economic paradigms and institutions inevitably adds to the development of greater freedoms and social cohesion. Africa and its Diaspora, through its intellectual, physical and spiritual reality speaks to the human crises of self-identity, political order and its functionality, economic inequalities, ideological oppression/repression/suppression, and environmental degradation. The questions that arise from these manifestations are; what and how does one understand, learn and respond after living with status quos that do not serve their development interests and initiative? In what ways have these experiences/ manifestations shed light on global issues of personhood and community, private and public space? With these contemporary, philosophically-centered observations and questions in mind, it would prove useful to briefly highlight the distinct trends of thought and action regarding modernization and its imperatives within the African world, as well as how these imperatives have affected freedoms and social cohesion within African contexts.

The Modernization Imperative

> Fanon's call for a redistribution of wealth and technology beyond the rhetorical pieties of "moral reparation" is a timely reminder of the need for something like a "right" to equitable development (controversial though it may be) at a time when dual economies are celebrated as if they were global economies.
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> (Fanon, F. {H. K. Bhabha - Foreword; 2004}: xvii)

Cultural expression in its multiplicity within the African world has been, and continues to be inspired and defined by the historically-driven circumstances of on-going modernizing initiatives. It is argued that the realities of this cultural expression would be the phenomena of music as revolution or devolution, dance as catharsis and exercise, custom and rite as acknowledgement and atonement, literature and conversation as an emotionally reifying connection between cause and effect. These all represent fundamental aspects of the African world's freedom and reality, and arguably for humanity in general. Also, these realities are an indication of how cultures adapt to the pressures of capital (its accrual) through media, state, and the global monetary system and 'market-places'; coupled with the growing desire to transfer the processes of calculation and probability from the human brain over to the processing power of the micro-chip/nano-chip.

The combination of these pressures, within current conceptualizations of development and modernization, adversely affect the African majority. They are both startling and stifling, largely affected by covertly and overtly-influenced fratricide based on inconspicuous rivalries. Military excesses that manifest in 'god-complexes' encourage an all-consuming culture of 'each to his own', in what most African people have come to understand as a struggle to survive a 'rigged' global economic and political order. Material poverty (in terms of the now standardized, but rather infamous indices regarding material wealth, according to the 'Bretton Woods Institutions'), inefficiency and incompetency at many levels of civil society service, crime, disease, war and other political, economic and environmental maladies within the African world concurrently express and evoke local, international reactions and responses, and ultimately highlight the recurring 'factuality' of modernization.

K. Wiredu frames these realities in the following manner; "… independence was sought with the aim of building viable *modern* states in Africa. This purpose, of course, is the purpose of modernization. But modernization involves changing old ways of doing things. Thus, a tension develops between cultural nationalism and post-independence times.

On the one hand, there seems to be a desire to return to the roots, to old ways of life; yet, on the other hand, there seems to be desire to change the old ways along lines established, in some cases, by foreign peoples. The question is; 'Is there a real compatibility here?'" (Wiredu, K. & Gyekye, K. 1992: 60).

This question continues to pose serious challenges for scientific research and policy-making in Africa. Encouragingly, it has also produced concerted ideas and efforts, of which K. Wiredu acknowledges to be at most, philosophically-grounded in their nature. However, the greater part of the African intelligensia continues to *accept* a prescribed 'trajectory' regarding modernization. Insufficient attention is paid to making the critical distinction between the conception of modernization as currently being conceptually *dependant* on particular philosophical epistemologies and their historicism, and technological *development* as a modernizing *consequence*; all of which were and still are entirely influenced by the increasing secularization of human society, the causes and effects of economic interaction and production, "…law, state-craft, mores, language, etc" (Wiredu, K. &Gyekye, K. 1992: 60).

Modernization in its physical reality (whether intentional or not), within the rubric of development, is the sum total of rationales that enforce socio-structural or socio-functional ideologies which, until today and more often than not, advance the 'Language of Dominance'. The utilization of technological development as modernization's *raison d'etre* is and has often been a weapon wielded in the struggle for political power.[2] This in essence has translated into what has become the technological 'colonization' of mind which, allied with the cultural assault on the African reality, inevitably fuelled and continues to fuel the polemic of superiority and inferiority. This becomes a major contestation of freedoms as a result, because the logic concludes that one society is inferior, and the other superior.

For the aspiring bureaucrat, civil servant or technical expert in what is understood to be the 'Third World', these dependencies and complexes are acknowledged, but seen as unavoidable according to the vogue of market liberalism (neo-liberalism), and the states, institutions and corporations *in control* ('legal' or otherwise) concerning the accrual of capital, and production of scientific knowledge or 'high' technology. For example at a superficial level, according to C. Freeland, it is not difficult to see how "China and the U.S., so often framed as rivals, actually look like twins. Both countries are preoccupied with domestic growth: China sees itself mainly as a poor country that needs to get richer, while the U.S. is grappling with a painfully slow recovery from financial crisis. But the chosen paths to growth at home in each of these countries – a weak currency and an export-led economy for China; monetary expansion and perhaps a weaker currency for the U.S., too – are unwelcome in much of the rest of the world."[3]

Delving further into the argument, D. W. Nabudere posits that the current power (or level of control in this context) that capital now possesses "…arises from the fact that it wields *state power* on its side, with power now poised *against labour*, which alone has the living *capacity* to expand the quantity of commodities while they are in production by *transferring* to them *new value* out of their sweat and brawn" (Nabudere, D.W. 2009: 91).

In the end, according to Nabudere, this reality finds its conclusion in a state of affairs where "…this exploitation of labour by capital finally becomes the cause of its downfall, for the ensuing *struggles* that emerge between capital and labour make it increasingly difficult for capital to realize growing profits unchecked" (Nabudere, D.W. 2009: 91). The state 'bailouts' in Europe, protests/labour strikes and lack of agreement between citizens and governing structures/representatives in Southern, Eastern, Western and Northern Africa/Middle East (and South-Western and Eastern Europe for that matter), as well as the growing issue of state and food security worldwide are all symptomatic testaments of the increasing fragility in the current economic template and its political representatives.

Concurrently, and in the background to this afore-mentioned *global crisis* of production and value, the technological advances made for the purposes of efficiency and predictable eventuality become the intellectual property and preferred tool of *control* in exclusively defining the course of modernizing initiatives. For example, in the 2010 United Nations Technology and Innovation Report regarding 'emerging African food security', under the auspices of contextualizing the 'developing world's' tendency to be highly vulnerable in food crises, the authors list the causes as being "low agricultural productivity, the current economic crisis, and adverse weather to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, civil strife and war."[4] A little further on, they then conspicuously narrow down these globally *inter-related* crises, and state that in fact, "rather than a 'global hunger epidemic', the world faces a proliferation of localized instances of chronic food insecurity." But then curiously enough, with an embarrassing sense of irony, the authors later attempt to explain that some "semblance of hope for the future of African agriculture is emerging", by *encouraging* the emergence of new *cash-crop* ventures of which Kenya served as a primary example; "In Kenya, *floral exports** now threaten to surpass coffee as the country's leading cash earner, while tens of thousands of Kenya's small holder farmers grow and export French beans and other vegetables to Europe's grocers."[5] In an attempt to simplify, but not vulgarizing the argument; if the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) had it in mind to really address the crises in question, the necessary critique and response to the monetary-system dependency and free-market liberalism they allude to is noticeably absent in their analyses.

The report then goes on to recommend that 'a transfer of technology and diffusion of agricultural technology' must be fundamentally based on first ensuring that there is access to credit, which in-turn would enable farmers to purchase and utilize the necessary technology and bio-technology to produce "bumper harvests" for the local, regional and global market. NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and international relief organizations are then supposed to pick up the 'ethical tab' in case anything goes wrong (natural disaster, civil strife or war, 'financial crisis'), that would adversely affect the development deal.[6] It is precisely this short-sightedness and conflict of interests in which debt, statist rivalries and the technological dependencies that these prescriptions create keeps the 'Third World' under systemic and systematic *control*, which is both ideological ('isms', privatization, law etc.) and institutional (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, state reserve banks and the military).

It inadvertently compels the 'Third World Citizen' to re-constitute their long-term 'developmental outlook' in which economic and political 'isolationism', within the global forces of interaction, production and value, and thus, is most appealing. It has long been argued that a developmental outlook based on the 'isolation' of economy, amongst competing economic interests, reinforces rivalries and exclusivity as the basis for assessment, judgment and action. Economic and political freedoms cannot be fully realized as a consequence. Hence arguments calling for a move away from the epistemological dependencies that currently define economic, political and social realities have necessarily become pertinent.[7]

It would prove useful to take a short historical step backwards at this juncture, to get a better conception of the historical circumstances that define current modernization initiatives and freedoms, as well as how the *control* of these initiatives frames current reactions and responses to technological, economic and political development and social cohesion.

Historical Circumstance and Reality

Some apparently astute, scholastic representatives of history in the Western world (and African for that matter) have claimed that the recent African intellectual record has been grossly partial in how it has interpreted the impact of the colonial crusade in the African world.[8] However for the African mind, to ontologically root Africa's immediate past with its present crises would seem a most logical step given the incontrovertible nature of colonialism, and its psychological and physical effects (Fanon, F. 1986).

A. J. Njoh thus begun his informative work on town planning and social control in colonial Africa by stating that "for colonial authorities, each opportunity to influence spatial form and function was seen as an occasion not only to solidify their grip and control over the colonized but also to reaffirm preconceived notions of European supremacy and power" (Njoh, A.J. 2007: 1). Thus although varying colonial powers adopted various autocratic attitudes and methods (economic, cultural and/or 'racial') in entrenching their interests, the factuality of the colonial exercise is that it established material contingencies which 'hardwired' the technological advancement of its native subordinates.

Colonial town planners and administrators inadvertently failed to fully escape or adequately adapt to the functional historicism of the 'ecoscape' (the indigenous social and physical landscape in this context); and thus invariably ignored what K. Marx (and many others) understood to be material, historical contingencies of human agency.[9] Njoh explains that as opposed to constructing spatial realities according to linkages between the modalities of a particular culture's aesthetics and the necessities of interaction and production within the culture's epistemology and ontology, the colonial authorities (French and British in his study) paid little attention to the meaning of functionality within indigenous rites and customs which defined space and value; paid scant attention to the health and sanitation of the indigenous population; forcefully limited their options and capacity to farm, live and interact creatively with the land; and 'educated' the indigenous populations in so far as they understood how to maintain the structures and functions of the colonial political and economic project, in whatever specificity.[10]

In addition, a most debilitating aspect of the forced epistemological re-configuration concerning cultural primacy, interaction and production was the debasement and relegation of matrilinial modalities and value-systems. Women in most parts of African society who, in a most sacred sense, tempered and controlled adverse patriarchal tendencies/excesses of power, who for the most part enjoyed impartial or even higher regal and ceremonial status than their male counterparts, and were equally responsible for conscientiously sustaining production cycles (economic and social), were silenced through the anthropology and patriarchy of Western science and philosophy. This preponderance was well-noted by N. Nzegwu, in her exemplary exposition of feminist-orientated thought and being within an 'African Philosophy' of culture. Nzegwu assuredly observed that "… the Western explanatory system fundamentally influenced the ethnographers' observation of the dominance of fathers, and inevitably reinforced the interpretation that fathers were the rulers of families."[11] In essence, once forcibly bound to these epistemological straight-jackets of economy, polity and culture, the resulting existentialities were concurrently a matter of consequence. W. Soyinka thus testified that:

"… black Africans have been blandly invited to submit… to a second epoch of colonization – this time by a universal-humanoid abstraction defined and conducted by individuals whose theories and prescriptions are derived from the apprehension of *their* world and *their* history, *their* social neuroses and *their* value systems" (Soyinka, W. 1976: x).

The African post-colonial economy and polity in the mid-twentieth to late-twentieth century, reacting and responding to what T. Mkandawire described as "the Adjustment Experience", inadvertently became scientific, economic and political extensions of the socio-economic/political fluxes occurring within the geographies of the imperial mother-countries.[12] For the Western constructs of modernity and post-modernity to have had maximum impact, a particular rule of law governing moral relations between individuals in African society had to have gained a firm institutional footing. For O. Taiwo, the peculiarity of this quandary was twofold (regarding the moral autonomy of each person);

> …the capacity to have her own conception of the good life and the right to realize it so long as she does not impair another person's right to the same; and the impermissibility of affirming the supremacy of any particular conception of the good life over others. Both principles combine to deny to the modern state any right to force upon its citizens its conception on the good life. In the area of politics, these two principles yield liberal democracy in its many forms and in law; they are manifested in the institutionalization of the rule of law. These are the fundamental elements of the political discourse of modernity that failed to take hold in Africa….
>
> (Taiwo, O. 2010: 157)

The reasons for the ensuing propensity to diminish the colonially-inherited rule of law and the limiting of its parity within twentieth/twenty-first century Africa are plentiful, and thus cannot be sufficiently detailed in this paper. However concretely institutionalizing indigenous 'mores' and laws, was either conspicuously absent or was not given sufficient time to manifest in post-independence Africa. By invariably ignoring this fundamental factor of moral definition, affinity and practice (due for the most part to the growing pressures of capitalist industrialization and accommodation of Western legal /political/cultural value-systems), political and scientific organization, action and accountability suffered immense constraints and incongruities. Nevertheless, L. Senghor's counter-conception of 'Negritude', K. Nkrumah's ideological platforms in the form of 'Consciencism' and an 'African Socialism', and J. Nyerere's socio-political pro-activity in the form of the Ujamaa indigenization project became well-known (in both congratulatory and critical senses) articulations and representations of indigenous appraisal.

P. J. Hountondji, through self-reflections on his intellectual motivations during the mid-twentieth century, post-independence Africa era, laid bare what he conceived to be the intellectual challenges that faced the newly independent states;

> The myth of white superiority cannot be effectively combated by holding up against it a counter-myth: a sound critique of imperial ethnology and of its mythology has, on the contrary, to start by linking the latter to its foundation, namely, the real and material relationship of force between so-called primitive societies and European societies.
>
> (Hountondji, P.J. 2002: 84)

These epistemological schisms that gave rise to distinct phenomena of critique and action articulated a revolutionary element within contemporary African conscience, and easily found a home in the politics of the post-independence African state; in what was becoming a new crusade against the thralls of Keynesian-inspired economics.

The sum total of this self-critical fervour regarding indigenous knowledge systems and how such systems had to imbue scientific thought and progress typically found its praxis (amongst many others in recent times) in discussions such as that between J. A. I. Bewaji and M. B. Ramose; in their scathing critique of W. M. J. van Binsbergen's essay regarding Ramose's understanding and use of the southern African concept of *Ubuntu* (Ramose, M.B. 2002). Both Bewaji and Ramose agreed that a fundamental dynamic of the socio-political and economic crises that begot (in the post-independence era) and continues to beget African people (and a greater part of the neo-colonial world) is the 'struggle for meaning'. However Bewaji was of the opinion that there was a "greater weakness" in Africa's contemporary socio-political and economic response toward its realities. He indicated that this weakness lay in the fact that

> …the struggle for reason is only carried out by a certain segment of the African academy. The majority of African intelligentsia are cowed into acceptance of their own inferiority or even inferiority of their rationality on the one hand, and on the other, hardly has any African political leadership engaged the struggle for reason. Thus, while Ramose is right in indicating the effect of the struggle for reason as the basis of the insuperability of the multitude of problems facing Africa and Africans, he has not blended into the equation the fact that the struggle is not a universal one. That is, there has not been a universal recognition of a struggle that must be engaged and prosecuted by all means necessary by those in the African leadership positions (in education, religion, business, politics, arts and the sciences) who would determine the success or failure of the effort to liberate Africa from external oppression and hegemony. The continued cultural enslavement of the mentality of African societies derogates from the struggle for reason.[13]

To this critical observation, Ramose was acquiescent. However, Ramose went on to *remind* the reader that aside from the philosophical peculiarities of Western democracy (in so far as it dialectically encourages "adversarial" politics and not "consensual"), a relativistic moral apathy borne out of the displacement of value in the intrinsic capacities of all things living (human in this context) as money became the means to an end, and the end in itself, created a 'poverty' of both physical, and non-physical dimension.[14] Thus to mitigate or eradicate the pathology and psychoses of poverty, and to avoid misinterpreting the quasi-religious nature of Western Constitutionalism and the polemical nature of its 'rights-based' logicism; popularizing *indaba** that is historically and culturally grounded, and that is without the use of 'culturally exclusive parameters' (indigenous institutions and rites that are that are functionless in relation to certain developments in technology and social awareness) is important. This is therefore why there has been concurred conclusion and emphatic calls for the empowerment of indigenous linguistic realities.

In this lengthy quote, Ramose's summation regarding the metaphysical rationale of the 'living-dead' (through the Diasporic and Africa-wide practice of ancestral veneration) highlighted some important points, namely;

>…The living-dead belong to a different sphere of being, namely, the domain of the ontology of invisible beings. They are, however, recognized as real and not as phantoms of the imagination. Accordingly, their belonging to a different sphere of being does not preclude real contact and interaction between them and the living. This renders them "this worldly" in the sense that they are part of the oneness making their relationship with the living possible. (ii) The living-dead relate and interact only with the members of their extended family. They are neither available nor accessible to the whole community at large. Unlike in the Western political theology, here there is no one single god with which the entire community identifies. There is no universal, transsocial and transcendent god of the political domain as a whole. On this basis, the constitution - written or unwritten – cannot be the god of the political domain. The living-dead are recognized as simply "higher", "better" or "greater" but not as "all-high", or omni- in the sense of being infinitely superlative in every respect. In this sense the constitution does not have, in the political philosophy of Africa, a metaphysical character. The will and the wish of the living-dead are decisive in the practice of African politics.[15]

Thus for Ramose, in his critique of the modern African politician;

Instead of seeking guidance and protection from the Western liberal democratic constitutionalism many African politicians and elite resort to their living-dead. Once these latter have spoken their word must be obeyed and respected. Consequently, even if, for example, an indigenous African politician has acted contrary to the conventions of the Western political model he/she would not take the honourable course of resignation from office. To do so would be disobedience and disrespect to the word of the living-dead. No doubt the politician would appear to be unduly stubborn and even foolish in the eyes of those who fail to recognise that the privacy of the of the sphere of the ontology of invisible beings makes it unnecessary for him/her to declare that he/she is acting in obedience and respect to his/her own gods; the living-dead. It is precisely the confidence that one is duly protected and must obey which impels one to disregard even the "rule of law". This practice is prevalent and intense throughout many parts of Africa. It speaks to the urgent need to adapt contemporary African politics to African traditional religion.[16]

Superficially, this critique appears to be 'sarcastic' in its play with words. But the conceptual reminder could not be clearer; 'personhood' cannot put together two apparently diverging senses of an ethical standard, and identity inevitably cannot find harmony/social cohesion.

Thus without intentionally vulgarizing an animated 'philosophy of consciousness', it is to mean that encouraging the politics of "*ubuntu / botho*" would produce ontological and epistemological freedoms that void nihilistic futures. If pragmatically adhered to, the notion of freedom in the *being* of person (humanness), and the moral lessons attained from the progressive acts of *be-ing* a person (humanity), can constructively intertwine with historical circumstance.[17]

However what has evaded this particular 'philosophy of consciousness' is its existential compatibility with the international community (in its plurality), to which it has been inextricably bound. The purposeful distortions of history in this highly technological age, continues to compel Western scientific development to adopt universalisms that fail to compensate for the paradoxical nature of its triumphs. In this regard, a pro-active engagement in advancing welfare rationality may not be a legally imperceptive / lofty, pseudo-holistic reason to pursue greater freedoms and social cohesion within a 'rubric' based on *ubuntu*; rather welfare as a rationale within the context of *ubuntu* continuously acknowledges - praises or apologizes - exhaults or amends - atones, thus encouraging and facilitating mutual respect and amity.

Welfare Rationalism in Context: Community, Space, Person

> It is obvious that in the modern world liberal democracy cannot satisfy the emerging political and economic demands that are a result of new forms of social awareness. It is no accident that nowadays the defenders of the status quo can hardly find a place to meet anywhere in the world. Wherever they go, they are literally followed by hundreds and thousands of protestors. It would seem that the old order has to yield a place to change not only nationally but also internationally.

(Mafeje, A.M. 2002: 11-12)

Welfare rationalism in its various paradigmatic guises (utopian / ism, communitarian / ism, egality / rianism, etc.) is a conception of rationality behind consciousness that has been blatantly robbed of its agency, and freedom of expression over the millennia. This growing reality of cynical individuality under the guise of creative independence is increasingly frustrating for the African youth of today who quintessentially represent more than half of Africa's total population. There is a desperate search amongst youth to find a physical purpose in a world that is increasingly being robbed of its ability to feel, digest, and respond to what certain rationales suggest/condone. This gives credence to the radicalism of the age. This in-turn has fundamental and dire consequences for attempts at formulating 'freedoms' under the banner of international *law* in that it continues to polemically distort and detract conscientious activism and action, critique, conciliation and creation.

Nevertheless, for a welfare rationale to suffuse the episteme of consciousness, one must bring the discourse on scientific and technological progress back to its basic philosophic foundations. Hountondji, in contextualizing his current understanding of an African 'appropriation of knowledge' and its production, forthrightly acknowledges that "…the scientific and technological treasure today controlled by the North was in fact created over the centuries by the participation of all peoples" (Hountondji, P.J. 2002: 244). This acknowledgment was based on the argument and understanding that in order for anyone to posit and reify 'meaning' and 'productivity' that is globally relevant and progressive, there must be no "…monopoly of wisdom; every people has one that springs from the depth of the ages, that is anonymous, implicit in various degrees, that belongs to no one in particular, but is lived and practiced by all" (Hountondji, P.J. 2002: 87).

However, this fundamental requisite for inclusive dialogue and action (to avoid what A. Cesaire and Hountondji termed intellectual 'extraversion' and duplication), was and is still being stubbornly negated. At the level of the individual in which the practice of science establishes its frame of reference and reality, the relativistic claims to a true, purposeful meaning of science and its relation to reality (and progress) has become nihilistically restricted.

A. Sluyter, like many others, understands and concludes that it is in this state of phenomenology in which "the real punchline… is political and anything but esoteric or irrelevant: despite the fact that no epistemological basis can ever exist for claims to absolute objective understanding, such claims have justified global westernization and increasing power over more and more aspects of everyday life" (Sluyter, A. 2002: 219).

Hence what is called for is a brief, *clear* annunciation of what can *practically* exist insofar as how the youth of today understood the sensibilities of their immediate and omnipresent ancestors:

- The invaluable nature of humanity within its ecological *cradle* trumps the materiality of the financial system and its corollaries.
- For productivity to accentuate this notion, the premises for production must lie in the presupposition that the *entire* human population is *in* a *crisis* of identity, economy and political organization.
- Productive interaction must then move toward variations of *barter*, under the rubric of resource utilization and the stabilization of necessities, given the 'psychosis of consumption' already present; which then enables a globally relevant, conscientious development of technological capabilities.
- Human, intellectual and material mobility (migration) at local, continental, or trans-continental levels must not be burdened by the politics of sovereignty and nationality; as there is an increasing demand to address the varying degrees of material *inter-dependence* that are being mapped out locally, regionally and internationally.
- The conception of violence as intrinsically omnipresent must be countered by a complete global rejection of the military and its theoretical progenitors and enforcing appendages (prisons, police, asylums, weapons, etc.); as society at large begins to accept that each and every human being is a morally active agent in the posterity of peace and prosperity.
- A cultural appraisal highlighting 'similarity' and 'familiarity' of family / community (concurrently celebrating the well-springs of cultural rite and custom in the plurality of language and culture) must take a global platform and be a global priority; mitigating and eradicating the propensity for media and its social extensions to sensationalize exclusivity and propagandize polemicist agendas.
- Last but not least, the devolution and eventual deconstruction regarding the conception of financial currency as a quantitative measure of value; as human metaphysical and physical interaction becomes reflexive in its motivation to heal and restore its environment

With equally brief exposition, H. O. Oruka was sagacious in elucidating the first point by concluding that "the human species is… incomplete, unfulfilled and unsustainable unless it emerges intrinsically intertwined with all members of the planet's biodiversity. This ends up to be ecological monism as the truth or reality that explains human life and its connection with the totality of nature" (Oruka, H.O. 1997: 245). This is in no way a tall order to *accept* given the gravity of existing pressures on the environment and the state of humanity within these pressures. Thus for acknowledging point two and facilitating the progress of point three, C. Odora-Hoppers is unambiguous when reminding the anglophile world that "… historical meanings of the active verb 'consume' are now condensed in the daily modern practices of consumption. 'Good consumerism' simply extends and legitimates our impulses to destroy, to ruin ourselves and our environments, to waste away our natural and social inheritance, to produce, decay and rot!" (Prah, K.K. &Teka, T. 2003: 162). G. Mikell edits an empowering, gender-reifying discourse on participation and value thus capturing the intent and value of point four and five; "African women often perceive ethnicity as a dependent and falsely inflated variable in conflict – one that in and of itself has little danger. They credit the volatile national and global economy with generating tension that is manipulated by governments and leaders (whether Europeans or Africans) to *heighten* competition between groups over shrinking resources and thereby achieve their desired ends. ... Women stress that they have always worked with multiethnic groups to achieve their occupational or religious or community goals, and they are prepared to continue this at even higher levels" (Mikell, G. et al 1997: 32).

In understanding the implications and reifying of points six and seven, there are variables of inter-dependence that need to be emphatically agreed upon; E. C. Eze's emphasis is thus clear when he states that "instead we should aim to show that, among philosophers of science as among philosophers of language and of multiculturalism, the answer to the question of 'What is reason' – or applied concepts like objectivity, truth, knowledge, thing-in-itself, etc – is far from being one, distinct and clear. We should also show that the available answers, many of them quite good, indicate that 'reason' (and so objectivity, truth, etc.) is better spoken of in the plural" (Hountondji, P.J. et al 2007: 182). The totality of these sensibilities and actions may speak to a new ethos in the welfare of all things living, and whose sense of freedom and form of social cohesion encourages constructive futures.

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http://mg.co.za/article/2011-02-18-siliva-zulu-pictures-of-an-imperfect-past/ (Visited on 22 February 2011).

Endnotes

* The question of 'civility' and 'civilization' is, and always has been, a bone of contention amongst many. Africanist discourse on these issues has been especially vocal. So I invoke this word to try and steer the current discourse from conceptions based on mastery of intelligence (type1/2/3 civilization), to conceptions based on what aspects of 'civility' bind societies, and ensure sustainability.

[1] Amin, S. (2010) *The Battlefields Chosen by Contemporary Imperialism: Conditions for an Effective Response from the South*. Monthly Review Foundation. This paper can be found online at:
http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/amin070210.html. (Visited on 12 December 2010)

*My emphasis.

[2] A classic case would be the Cold War saga in the twentieth century.

[3] See C. Freeland. (2010). *What's good for the world is bad for the U.S. and China*. Reuters online.
http://blogs.reuters.com/chrystia-freeland/2010/11/12/whats-good-for-the-world-is-bad-for-the-u-s-and-china/ (site visited on 12 November 2010). In another article, this time from the Mail and Guardian (South Africa), there was a response to these currency disputes and adjustments from South Africa's former Minister of Finance, P. Gordhan. See Sapa. (2010). *Gordhan 'concerned' by US Fed Move*.Mail and Guardian Online.http://www.mg.co.za/article/2010-11-06-gordhan-concerned-by-us-fed-move (site visited on
8 November 2010)

[4]United Nations.*United Nations Technology and Innovation Report 2010; Enhancing Food Security in Africa*, pg 2.This document can be found online at:
http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/tir2009_en.pdf (Visited on 1 February 2011)

* This is my emphasis. I do this to highlight not only the paradoxical absurdity of such a solution, but to also highlight the actual type of solution; floral exports having nothing to do with directly dealing with food shortages except capitulating to, and maintaining 'credit' dependencies.

[5] Ibid. 2

[6] Ibid. 69

[7] See Adesina, J. O. *Return to a Wider Vision of Social Development: Social Policy in Reframing a New Agenda*., and Lebakeng, T. J. *Discourse on Indigenous Knowledge Systems; Sustainable Socio-economic Development and the Challenge of the Academy in Africa*., in CODESRIA Bulletin 2010 Nos. 1 & 2., CODESRIA. This document can be found online at: http://www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/CODESRIA_Bulletin_1_2_2010_Eng.pdf (Visited on 4 January 2011)

[8] See Duignan, P. & Gann, L.H. (1975). For a contemporary slant to this annunciation, see AFP.,*Is colonialism still to blame for the DRC's woes?*Mail and Guardian Online, (2010).http://www.mg.co.za/article/2010-07-04-is-colonialism-still-to-blame-for-the-drcs-woes (site visited on 14 March 2011)

[9] See Backhaus, G. & Murungi, J. (2006). For an 'amoral' account on the propensities of social cohesion regarding town-planning in the colonial era, see Foglesong, R.E. (1986). Foglesong ironically, but reluctantly confesses that "… planning in a democratic-capitalist society is seen as both necessary and impossible." pg 15. Also see pp 242-57.

[10]Njoh, A.J. (2007). Op Cit. pp 30-103. Also see Rodney, W. *The Colonial Economy*.pp 332-50., in Boahen, A.A. (1985).

[11]Nzegwu, N.U. (2006). *Family Matters; Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture*. State University of New York Press, Albany, New York, USA.pg 24. In a recent article, P. Zvomuya highlights the distorted depictions and representations of AmaZulu modalities by anthropologists and 'ethnologists' in the Mail and Guardian (South Africa). See Zvomuya, P. (2011). *Siliva Zulu; Pictures of an imperfect past*.Mail and Guardian Online.http://mg.co.za/article/2011-02-18-siliva-zulu-pictures-of-an-imperfect-past/ (Visited on 22 February 2011).

[12]Mkandawire, T. &Soludo, C.C. (eds.). (1998).pg 49-85. Also see Prah, K.K. (2006), pg 87-174.

[13] See Bewaji, J.A.I. *(Part II)Beyond ethno-philosophical myopia. Critical comments on Mogobe B.Ramose's African Philosophy Through Ubuntu*, pg 390; in Bewaji, J.A.I & Ramose, M.B. (2002). *(Discussion) The Bewaji, Van Binsbergen and Ramose debate on Ubuntu*. South African Journal of Philosophy 2003, volume 22(4). This document can be found online at:
http://www.ajol.info/index.php/sajpem/article/viewFile/31380/23353 (site visited on 25 February 2011)

[14]Ibid. 407.

* A simple translation of the word *indaba* would be 'meeting' or 'news sharing' - although popular, the contemporary English translation and respect given to this word does not convey its political and moral weight, as it organizationally formalizes what normally is an essential conversation and response to everyday life and its moral challenges.

[15]Ibid. 408.

[16]Ibid. 408.

[17] Ibid. 409-410.