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An Insight into the Dilemma of African Modernity and a Theoretical Response

This work sets out to articulate the different challenges, contradictions and dilemmas implied by what it means to be modern in the African instance and to explore different ways in which this dilemma can be resolved. The Africa implied is black Africa or what is also known as sub-Saharan Africa and by modernity I mean the worldview that has come about through forms of knowledge that arise from and are agreeable to human nature and has harboured a universal potential for freedom, for humanism, and ultimately, for progress. The paper will defend the claim that modernity in Africa is in a dilemma and will attempt to explain the root and nature of the dilemma. It will go forward to articulate the forms under which modernity in Africa will yield its desired dividend with the view that there is a need for what it calls "the African agency" (interpreted to mean constructing modernity in Africa with Africa's intellectual and cultural capital) through a fresh knowledge base for modernization to come through the cultural geography of African experience in line with the principles of freedom and rationality which are the cardinal principles of modernity.

Theory, Africa, Modernity.

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I<small>NTRODUCTION</small>

Interpreting modernity in Africa poses important theoretical challenges arising from the background from what is known to be modern gained its root in Africa. Such challenges arise from the way in which "the idea of Africa" (V.Y. Mudimbe, 1994) as it is known and accepted in modern/contemporary scholarship emerged and the forces that add to construct the present idea of Africa with which Africa is engaging modernity; the political and economic history of these forces, the recurring relevance of these forces and how these occupy a prominent space in an attempt to construct an African version of modernity. The other problem arising from this is the danger of interpreting what is known to be modern, entirely in terms of western modernity disregarding the non-western foundational base on which these items or values emerged and the fact that there are different forms of modernity such as "afro-modernity", "sino-modernity", "indo-modernity", "nippo-modernity" interpreted to mean the modernized versions of African, Chinese, Indian, and Japanese cultures (Chinweizu, 1993). Given that the new forms of life that are advertised as modern are severally dominated by trends, values, ideas and ideals that emerged from Western tradition and are not rooted in African tradition and the interplay of these forces in the construction of the knowledge process in Africa at the moment with serious consequences for African humanity at large, the need to conceptualize modernity in Africa in the manner in which it can effectively serve the cause of African humanity becomes an urgent one which needs a fresh theoretical input. The other problem arising from the idea of modernity is the problem of "false dichotomies" (Helen Lauer, 2003, p.7) between the traditional and modern in Africa which arises from the fact that "drawing a polarity between tradition and modernity sometimes connotes a unidirectional, asymmetric process of growth in capacities and achievements for nations faithfully struggling to fulfill some fixed *criteria* of civilization in order to grow (i.e. develop) from a stage of relative weakness and dependency to a later stage of relative strength and autonomy" (Helen Lauer, *ibid*; p.11). As a result of this there is this anticipatory disposition to the idea of modernity for which those values and ideals "which historically, are part and parcel of the human cultural legacy developed worldwide" (Ray Kea as cited in Lauer, p.12) are ascribed to the modern disabling a natural creative drive to human advancement and qualitative growth of human capital in Africa.

The purpose of this work is to provide an insight into the dilemmas implied by what it mean to be modern in the African instance by locating the extent to which the alienation of African modes of thought constitute a part of this problem and to explore different ways on how this dilemma could be resolved. The position that the work sets out to advance is that there is what modernity was supposed to mean in an African cultural context –that is, within the geography of African cultural experience which modernity never meant and for which it

has not served its desired role as the route to genuine development in Africa. The paper will defend the view that what is known to be modern in Africa has not involved freedom and rationality as they should arise from African cultural experience and that for this reason what is modern in Africa has advertised a false notion of freedom for which it stands to be known as an unworthy estrangement of black African civilization from the gains of modernity which should serve for the foundation of African modernity. It therefore argues that what is modern in Africa is not a product of the rational African world and that African modernity demands a fresh route through those values which can promote the African agency in the process of modernization.

The paper will attempt to look at the roots of the disarticulation of the human phenomenon in Africa through a distortion of the humanist principles of the African society; the displacement and replacement of endogenous African thought, culture and ideas with the views and philosophies founded on these trends and forces; and its implication for a modernization process in Africa; the crisis of thinking and imagination that is the product of this process and the crisis of identity and self definition that has resulted in the process. It will argue that there is the need to articulate or construct an African version of same without undermining the values that define the African humanity. By Africa, I imply black Africa or sub-Saharan Africa and by modernization I imply "change that is compatible with the present stage of human knowledge that seeks to comprehend the legacy of the past, that is sensitive to the needs of the future, and that is increasingly aware of its global context" (Ali Mazrui, 1996).

To achieve the aims of this study I will: (i) provide a summary of the idea of modernity; that is, the theory on which the idea of modernity is built,(ii) explain how a man centered world stand at the background of modernity and how this finds a worthy equivalence in the African worldview, (iii) locate the roots of the dilemma and dichotomy between the African world and modernity in its western version and explain how this amounts to "irresponsible modernity" (interpreted to mean modernity lacking in the ideals of responsibility and accountability). Finally, I will (iv) propose the need to institute a fresh rational culture grounded in the African worldview as an attempt at a theoretical response to the dilemma of African modernity. To do this, I will attempt to articulate what it should mean for the African to seek to be modern within the provisions of the African world; that is the terms and manner Africa could have wished to design and direct change as was obtainable by the manner of social interaction in African societies before the advent of the modernization which was interwined with the principles of colonization. It is in an attempt to locate these that I will articulate the route to African modernity .My view here is that there is the need for an autonomous knowledge base for Africa to achieve a reliable culture of modernity.

THE IDEA OF MODERNITY

Modernity is generally believed to be the worldview that came as a result of the achievement of certain ideas and worldviews which advanced the human race from a medieval/traditional conception of the world to a man/nature centered and derived world: one which provided forms of knowledge that arise from and are agreeable to human nature and harboured a universal potential for freedom, for humanism, and ultimately, for progress. In this regard the ideas of Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes, Albert Einstein, Galileo Gallilei, Isaac Newton and John Locke, were all instrumental to the birth and growth of modernity. Renes Descartes for instance is known to have opened the door to this worldview when he advocated for a scientific and mathematical approach to reality and achieved the theses "I think therefore I am". The implication of Descartes' position, which shall not bother us much here is that rationality is the basis for our humanity and that we can only claim that we are human to the extent that our reason has allowed and enabled us to say so. We have no reason to claim that we are what our reason have not said we are.

The liberating and modernizing effect of Descartes' wisdom became quick and instantaneous. Other thinkers such as Baruch Spinoza, Williem Leibniz, Thomas Hobbes, David Hume and Immanuel Kant all came, to affirm or deny Descartes in one way or the other. Ironically, any important mind that attempted to deny the validity of Descartes' position was consolidating his idea because it demanded a form of thinking to do that and that was the essence of the Cartesian position which was meant to institute a rational route to human advancement. To think anything anyhow will conveniently fit into Cartesian wisdom in so far as such thinking was the basis for denying anything or denying Descartes. But it was not just the ideas per se but the wider consequences of the idea that gave birth to modernity. Hence this idea influenced other important theoretical achievements such as those of Robert Boyle, Michael Faraday and Lord Kelvin etc, in the physical sciences.

Modernity can be broadly captured as a world of knowing or nurturing nature (knowledge of and application of the laws of nature) and "naturing" knowledge or nurture (that is, reshaping or responding to the imperatives of human nature in a manner that will promote the basis for more knowledge of nature). Arising from the above claims we can map out six ideals around which modernity is grounded. These values demand that:

i.   A more scientifically world view should be preferred
ii.   A more innovative manner of thinking should be desired
iii. Scientific knowledge should be applied (technologized) to address human needs and desires.

As they relate to naturing nurture, they demand that;

iv.   The human society should be more rational

v.   The human society should be liberal/open

vi.   The human society should be more secular

Summarily, these strands of ideas mean that modernity implies (a) scientification or scientization of humanity and (b) humanization of sciences or the re-positioning of the human nature in such a way that it becomes a viable agency of creation, willfully creating and solving problems, which by so doing it anticipates and responds to the unfolding challenge of existing in a changing world. Hence modernity amounts to what can be called the functionalism or functionalization of the human agency through creative humanism and as a result of this, is expected to define the extent and limit of human problems through the qualitative knowledge that will address these problems. For this reason, modernity demands in the words of J. L.Hamel (2008)

> …the sacralization of the scientific method and a science-based or evidence-based knowledge order, the recognition of the full freedoms and rights of individuals (autonomization) as an important driving force for advancing scientific cultures and for accessing modernity .and the renovation of technological codes(codification)for facilitating technological processes and its anticipated gains include;
> Secularization/ rationalization/ disenchantment/ demystification/ enlighten
> (Jacques L.Hamel, p.2).

From the foregoing, the quality of modernity would then lie in the extent to which man as individual or as collective, realizes and secures their place in the world and becomes also as dynamic entity in the world through a profound expression of values in favour of human nature. By man as individual, I mean each human person and by man as a collectivity I mean as a freely chosen body or association of individuals.

Modernity as Man Centered World and its Equivalence in African Worldview

At the beginning of this work I credited the rational foundations of modernity in its western brand to the brilliant ideas of the French philosopher Renes Descartes. I did this not because a similar idea to that Descartes may not have been held in the history of human intellection before Descartes but because his position was a deliberate design to institute a whole new world of thought with profound signification and implication to produce desired effects on the pattern and ordering of human reasoning.

Before Descartes, African thought and culture (to the extent that it is now known) have held a theory of life itself considerably humanist; one which harbours a potential for a form of thinking that could spur a people to seek for a man-centered and man desired world. The South African intellectual Steve Biko captures this when he said that "…in all we do we always place man first". (Biko as cited in T.Metz, 2009). It as a result of this that morality in Africa is grounded in a form of communitarianism which to a large extent, is a man-centered ideology (K. Gyekye, 1998; PH Coetzee (ed.), 2001; C.Nze, 1989; T. Metz, 2007, P. Ikuenobe, 2006; B.Bujo, 2001).The kernel of this idea is that, as T. Metz (2007) puts it;

> An action is right insofar as it promotes a shared identity among people grounded on good-will; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to do so and leads to encourage the opposites of alienation and ill-will.

The implication of this theory is that *shared identity* and *good-will* are the basic principles which African morality tends to defend. Arising from this, one can hold that core African values such as co-operation, consensus, reconciliation, commonality and related values sought by the African all serve to defend the principle of good will and shared identity. One can further hold that since morality spans nearly all of social life and forms the background of which all other social, political, economic achievements are weighed and measured it is safe to hold that this moral principle provides the background to understanding and interpreting all that should be considered good or bad within the mental universe of the African world. Thus, it is expected that other values as variously held by Africans: "sense of human value", (O. Onwubiko, 1991, G. Onah cited in Metz, 2007); "sense of hospitality", "sense of the sacred", and "the sacredness of life", "sense of community" "sense of good human relations", "sense of identity" (O.Onwubiko,1991) are all geared towards defending these principles. Thus, the relevant position to note in relation to our discussion is the fact that African worldview to the extent that it is known to human memory had haboured the thesis that the other is a relevant component of being human and that man is at the centre of the moral and intellectual African world. In a classical statement in this regard John Mbiti (1969) had held that for the African "I is in the we and we is the I". The negritude theorists were later to interpret this creed to mean "I dance the other I feel the other", as. This position is reflected in a cluster of works on African history, thought and culture (Oliver Onwubiko, 19991; John Mbiti; 1970).

It may not be wrong to ask how rigorous it would have taken the African mind either as individual or as a collectivity to arrive at this position or whether it was a product of formal educational achievement such as was the case with Descartes. But this might again depend on the kind of meaning we ascribe to formal education as distinct from western education. The fact that Africans harboured ideas with strong humanist potentials implied by modernity

is the important item in our study for this is the necessary basis to begin to explore the roots of the divide occasioned by modernity in its western version since modernity operates in favour of the same principle which the African world is known. The other important point to note as arising from this is that themes such as good will which forms the central theme around which relevant minds such as Immanuel Kant (1770) established the ethics of modernity is not alien to Africa. The relevant question therefore, is how and why did a theory of man that sought to place man at the centre of reality conflict with the African world that is essentially humanist? The answer to this question may be found in the mode and manner which modernity was introduced to Africa. In Africa, modernity came through institutionalized slavery, imperialism and outright colonialism; all of which carried varying degrees of violence. Even the Christian religion that accompanied these forms of modernization and advertised different values from these cannot be said to be anti-colonial by the kind of intolerance it accorded to non-Christians.

The second source of the dilemma of African modernity are the values that the modernity set out to defend and promote. These include the values of inequality and inequity which it instituted as a measure of progress. According to these values (or vices as the case may be) human measure and worth should essentially and fundamentally be measured by difference and divide. These have had very negative consequences for African culture for which it cannot provide such functions of culture as "providing a world view for a people; acting as standards of evaluation; acting as the condition for motivation; serving as a medium of communication; providing the basis for stratification in the society; functioning as the agent that determines the production pattern of a people and defining the identity of a people". (Ali Mazrui, 19980, p.47).

Modernity in Africa has to a large extent meant a threat to African culture in all its forms and this is the basis of the conflict between the ideals of western modernity and African culture which was basically humanist at least in orientation. For example African culture which should have served as basis for social stratification despite the presence of modernity in Africa never did so. In the traditional African society, the society was categorized into four main classes: women, children, the youth and the elders. The elders were further considered a highly privileged class to the extent that they commanded moral and spiritual authority. They were also regarded as a repository of knowledge and wisdom. Hence the wisdom of the Malian Philosopher-historian Mbate Pa who noted that "the death of a sage in traditional Africa amounts to the burning down of a substantial library(cited in Ismail Seregereldin, 1992) or that of Ishmael Serageldin who referred to it as "closing of a window of a past.". In modern African society culture no longer serve as the basis for social stratification. In contrast to the traditional society we witness a society where the class structure is shaped around western education or economic strength or in terms of

participation in foreign cultures. Thus, we talk of the elites and the non-elites or the masses and the bourgeoisie. In this new basis of social stratification, morality is radically distanced from wealth in contrast to African traditional society, which married both values.

In the earlier part of this paper I outlined certain scientific values as being constitutive of modernity. The scientific values sometimes claim to be totally alien to Africa. It is in this sense that Robin Horton (1974) "contrasts scientific attitude with traditional African culture, which according to him, is protective of existing system of ideas."(Cited in G.Sogolo, ed. A.P.J Roux and P.H. Coetzee, 1994, p.183).While it cannot be argued that traditional ideas in Africa and even elsewhere are often protected the question in relation to Africa is the extent to which this is the case. For instance most of what is called tradition is often borrowed from other communities or other social systems.In this regard it may not be right to recommend for the African a change of attitude in all aspects of his life for him to be modern or scientific in the modern sense of the term. There is strictly no conflict between such African values as respect for elders; greeting the other and reverence for constituted political or moral authority (such as is part and parcel of the African moral world) and seeking to account for some causes or sourcing for some explanation of events both of which are scientific values. Thus, it cannot be strictly held that there is an inherent contradiction between a world of human relevance such as is implied by modernity and the African world. What appears to be a major problem is the extent to which these values are ready to cooperate with each other; that is the extent to which modernity in its western version is prepared to serve the cause of the African world without undermining the inherent values and ideals of the African world; that is the values without which this world would not survive in the first place. Thus the point to note is that the dilemma which modernity has found itself in Africa arises from the extent to which reason itself, is properly conceived especially in relation to man in Africa. To understand this clearer I shall proceed by making a distinction between what can be called the science of reason and the arts of reason.

The science of reason implies the principles that human reason are fitted to know; the values and measurement by which human reasoning is found to be valid and precise; the criteria for validity for which an item can be considered valid and as that which should come within the regime of what is rational. Science of reason refers to such principles of reasoning as facts, truths, ideas which are demonstrated through certain criteria such as verifiability; demonstrability, objectivity or perhaps probability. The science of reason means that human reason itself must be placed within a domain on which it can be valid to say that it is functioning properly or not. What this means is that whatever is to be considered reasonable is found admissible within a scientific standard for which it should be open to verifiability.

By arts of reason I mean those skills, forms, shapes or even sizes human reasoning may take to mark or celebrate the science of reason or the achievement of reason in a

certain direction. These are marked or protected by certain structures such as tradition, culture or custom. Arts of reason refer to the signs and symbols of human achievements that advertise the rational achievements of man; that is those items that advertise what man has made from his environment or through the science of reasoning. Arts of reason is not strictly scientific except perhaps in the sense that it has been held by Austrian philosopher Paul Feyerand; as that which should not be harboured by one method. An example might serve to illustrate this claim better. While the science of reason knows that the sun shines and illuminates the earth, it falls within the arts of reason to associate this light with divinity to the extent of worshipping the sun. Furthermore, while self appreciation is human for which love is a scientifically acceptable value within the regime of psychology, it is only within the arts of reason to say that giving someone flower promotes and satisfies this human desire and promotes love in a given tradition. In a way we can say that while the science of reason arise from inner human longings; the arts of reason arises from what people have made of their world.

The distinction between the science of reason and the arts or reason is important because it provides an insight into the root or genesis of the dilemma of African modernity. As it relates to Africa the implication of this is that the dilemma of African modernity could be located in the extent to which the science of reason has been applied in the African context that is, in favour or disfavour of Africa; that is the extent in which scientific validity has been applied in favour of African worldview.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT PERIOD AS THE ROOT OF THE DILEMMA OF AFRICAN MODERNITY

Whereas the ideas of Descartes were germane to the birth of modernity, there are important truths about Descartes which may have been ignored and for which modernity soon became a distorted enterprise leading to what should amount to irresponsible project in Africa; that is one that was not ready to be human enough in affecting a positive consequence on the people whom it is admittedly designed. To capture these truths, let us raise some relevant questions from Cartesian thesis "I think therefore I am" (i) What should it mean to think and how should this be defined? (ii) Who should be in a position to define this and on what grounds? (ii) Did Descartes achieve this idea because he was French or because he was a thinking human being? (iii) Why did Descartes not say I think therefore I am French? I should think that to think would mean thinking anyhow to the extent that it serves the basis for any claim to an "I" or any claim to an "it"(in so far as the it is made to stand for a subject).In response to (ii) I also submit that any one who thinks anyhow fits into

the Cartesian dictum for which only by application of the science of mind can such thought be weighed perhaps to know whether it fits into certain verifiable standards and measurements but that without the application of this, there is no justification whatsoever to relegate the ideas of the other. It is on this ground that Descartes could not have said I think I am French because it would have limited the impact and quality of his truth for which it could have turned out to be just a French truth that cannot fit into or function within the entire human regime of truths.

I seek to ask and answer these questions because they provide insight on the distortion of modernity in Africa. The wisdom of Descartes soon became an alienating achievement creating humanity almost out of Descartes. It soon became as if Descartes did not make his statement as a human being wishing perhaps that anyone who thinks (any how or anything) should fit into his thesis. I say "any how" or "any thing" because Descartes thesis did not qualify thought as such as much as it made thought itself the basis of thinking anything as existing or justifying thought.

Part of the dilemma of African modernity can be located on the extent to which this idea has been interpreted in relation to Africa. Modernity in Africa came as misleading positions that came in form texts, histories and interventions that defined modernity first as domination and for which there strictly was not distinction between modernization and colonization or undue dominance. For this reason modernity even as it signified a human response to change meant something else for the African; it became necessarily inhuman or at best poorly human in its intervention in Africa and took the shape of what should not be associated with man in Africa. In relation to texts, the alienating nature of modernity was most prominent during the enlightenment of the period of philosophy. The period of enlightenment is the period that produced thinkers such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Locke, Hume and kant who "challenged the traditional modes of thought concerning religion, government and morality" (S.E.Stumpt, p. 290) with the belief that "man must control his own destiny …and do …everything possible to enlarge that control" (Lester G.Crocker ed. p.3) who wanted to develop what Hume called "the science of man" (Copleston, p.17). However, alongside this project, they also harboured provocative ideas on man for which the enlightenemnt could be described as an age that saw to the "racialization of reason and man" (interpreted to mean when race defined reason and man). For instance Hume wrote:

> I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites There
> never was civilized nation of any other complexion than the white, nor even any
> individual eminent in action or speculation. No indigenous manufacturer among
> them, no arts, no sciences…. Such a uniform and constant difference could not
> happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original

distinction betwixt these breeds of men. (Emevwo Biakolo, in P H Coetzee and

A P J Roux, 1998,p. 2)

Similarly, Kant wrote :This man was black from head to toe a clear proof that what he said was stupid" (Cited in E.C.Eze ,p.215) just as Montesquieu wrote "It is hardly to be believed ,that God who is a wise being should place a soul, especially a good soul ,in such a Black and ugly body". (*Spirit of the Laws,* Vol.I Bk, as cited in S.E.Ogude,1983: 109). I shall not border to articulate the fallacies in these ideas such as providing assertive positions on Africa based on suspicion (Hume) or colour (Kant and Montesquieu). I consider these as being too clear enough in the citations.

This captivity of reason in favour of race reached its greatest height in the works of the German philosopher Fredrick Hegel. According to him "the Negro exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state". In what has been justifiably called a "hateful attitude towards Africa" (Innocent Onyewuenyi, 1993:10) Fredrick Hegel further wrote:

Africa proper as far as History goes back, has remained – for all purpose of connection with the rest of the world- shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed within itself- the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night. Its isolated character originates, not merely in its tropical nature, but essentially in its geographical condition. (GWF Hegel, 1956, p.19).

I have chosen to cite these characters on the western intellectual scene and their views on Africa to illustrate how the revered heroes of enlightenment wrongly portrayed Africa, the persisting influence of which sowed the seeds of the distortion of modernity in Africa and which lasts till date. Thus, we can see an inherent contradiction in an age that produced thinkers who were singularly devoted to advance the cause of man but who at the same time were not ready to accord such place to man in Africa.

Perhaps the question at the moment is the extent to which Africans themselves have reacted to this generational harm. One should have expect that works such as those of Fredrick Hegel especially those that relate to world history to be banned or outlawed from African curriculum of studies by now, especially as they represent the opposite of the project of African modernity (interpreted to mean a conscious effort to advance ideas that would advance the cause of man anywhere through a relevant application of intellectual achievements of the African world). Yet, even as this should be the case, it is still more likely that new minds in Africa would know more about Hegel than as they would know about the quality of African achievements. Thus in a way there is what can be called an effective hegemony of the African mind with the effective cooperation of Africans themselves at the

moment which has led to a consequent overdependence of this mind on non-African modes of thought and knowledge and this is part of the source of the problem of modernity in Africa. While there is what can be justifiably called a deliberate desire to enrich an inferior mind in Africa in favour of the project of alien modernity, there is what can be called a form of self-colonisation by Africans at the moment for which a fundamental attempt to address the problem of African modernity, if it is going to be successful, must lie on the extent to which relevant steps are taken to reverse this trend.

In an important essay entitled "Exorcizing Hegel's Ghost: Africa's Challenge to Philosophy", Olufemi Taiwo (1997) wrote: "Hegel is dead but the ghost of Hegel dominates hallways, institutions, syllabi, institutional practices and journals of Euro-American philosophy". I hold that Hegel 's works are not making wrong impact in the Euro-American world alone but through what amounts to be a domineering tendencies of western culture and wisdom to other parts of the world as well. A few years ago, this author witnessed a scene in an Asian middle school where in a history class children of the Asian world taught by a German teacher mirrored almost entirely Hegelian ideas about Africa (even at the twenty first century when Africans are competing effectively as individuals with other blocks of the world)

Before Hegel was born some important works have been done to project the values of black African civilization through which Hegel could have had a relevant idea of African humanity and written works with less dangerous consequence for modernity in Africa. One of such works was the autobiography of the Nigerian Igbo slave entitled *The Interesting Narrative of Olauda Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African* published in 1780. Equiano's work is a work that provides an insightful account of the level of social and moral organization of his Igbo-African society before he was sold into slavery and from which one can interpret the level and quality of social interaction which are also some of the values that are represented by the modernization process of today. This book was translated to Dutch in 1790, to German in 1792, to Russian in 1794, republished in the U.S in 1791 and 1792. (For further details see Chima Korieh, *Olauda Equiano and the Igbo World,* 2009)

Hegel was born in 1770 in Stuttgart (Germany). By 1801 he began his active intellectual life and published his first work. By 1818 he took a chair the University of Berlin where he wrote his now (in) famous book on the philosophy of history*;* where he instituted a generational harm against reason and African humanity. By this record it is clear that if Hegel had applied the curiosity of a philosopher he is believed to be to know much about Africa he should have read Equiano's book which was already translated to German language in 1792, nine years before his academic life and twenty years before he wrote this book where he misinterpreted and misrepresented Africa.

To yet demonstrate the dilemma of modernity in Africa ;that is that of operating under and with a false and dubious idea of man in Africa for which it has remained a dilemma in Africa let me articulate yet another early encounter of African civilization with modernity yet on African soil.In 1956 a Belgian catholic priest published a book entitled *Bantu Philosophy* .This treatise which set out to interpret the worldview of the Baluba people of Congo was published as a philosophical justification of the difference between the worldview of the Baluba people of Congo and those of the western world and an effort to account for this difference within the realm of philosophy. Fr. Tempel's work opposed ideals of the colonial administrative policy in Congo which portrayed the African as "an empty vessel, requiring education in the spheres of religion and civilization in order to be rendered truly human" (Moya Deacon cited in PH Coetzee and APJ Roux, 2002, p.103.) .The provocative and revolutionary nature of his work did not go down well with the colonial powers in Congo; hence "his banishment from Congo by the Colonial administration and the catholic church due to their notions of Tempels as posing a threat to their policies and practices." (Moya Deacon cited in PH Coetzee and APJ Roux, 2002, p.110) The intellectual offence, or so it was conceived on Tempels is that:

> If the African was recognized as having a "philosophy", the African could, by implication, be said to have civilization. This notion presented a threat to the superiority of the European, as justified by enlightenment philosophy, as well as to the economics of the colonial mission.(Moya Deacon cited in PH Coetzee and APJ Roux,2002, p.110).

Thus, despite the fact that Tempels wrote primarily to guide the Europeans on how to accomplish their mission in Congo; the fact that he designated the Bantus as philosophical people, people who had reason and justification for the way they thought and lived, did not portray him in a positive light. Hence his work did not achieve any form of relevance and acceptance from his people.

The summary of my views so far is that the dilemma of African modernity finds its root on the idea of the modern as it is made to relate to Africa; that is, modernity as it was designed to encounter Africa. By this I mean that modernity in relation to Africa was not human enough in the African instance as it did not recognize even the minimum of what should amount to and would have defined African humanity. Hence such project of freedom such as modernity became intertwined with a "pre-modern", "rather medieval" or non-liberal project such is meant by colonization. Thus the case with Africa was that there was a clear paradox with modernity in Africa as that which was promoting modernity (promoting freedom) through colonization (denying freedom). All these were made possible through the structures

through modernity was designed and instituted in Africa and have led to the dilemma of African modernity.

A Theoretical Response to the Dilemma of Africa Modernity

By dilemma of African modernity I imply that modernity in the African instance is not taking its proper form and for this reason it could be said to be a captured idea (implied to mean, that which has been made to stand for ideas, values, visions, meanings, etc that are different from what it is meant to be). The view implied here is that modernity in Africa at the moment is an aberration, a mimickery, a false and dubious ideal, one which nearly almost, negates the philosophy and wisdom of modernity. The view I express is that modernity in Africa has all the features and trappings of pre-modernity, medievalism and perhaps what in a more tolerable mode can be called neo-modernism or false-modernism; that is a form of modernism that advertises modernity while harboring a heart heavy with rubrics of pre-modernism the clear proof is the poor quality of African freedom and the pronounced nature of in-humanism that characterize modernity in Africa.. This adulterated form of modernity is one which, as Hamel (2008) puts it, manifests itself mainly in "the simple ownership and display of modernity's most visible technological products, tools, appliances, gadgets and gizmos".

Arising from the goal of freedom as that which places the human phenomenon at the true position to locate, realize and define the human essence, it is plausible to hold the view that all cardinal principles of modernity gravitate around the principle of freedom. Freedom in this sense implies the freedom to act in favour of a reasoned choice and the freedom to withdraw from action through a reasoned choice. Written texts that respond to or discuss the project of modernity in Africa such as those of Obafemi Awolowo,1947; Kwame Nkrumah 1973; Nelson Mandela 1964; Kenneth kaunda 1962; O. Odinga 1968; Abiola Irele,1982; Kwame Gyekye 1998, etc, respond to the demands of freedom either in its political demand or in its economic, social, psychological or moral demands. The freedom to act in favour of a reasoned choice is the liberty to explore the world and to take the quality decision as may be important to advance the desires of the will. The freedom to withdraw from an option is that which enables one to reject that or those occurrences whose consequences foreseen or otherwise will obstruct the advancement of one's interest. Thus the goal of freedom either way is to let the self be" - either to become what it inherently is or has the capacity to be or to be by not being what it is not meant to be.

Regrettably freedom has not played its desired role in Africa because it has not engineered the creative energy needed to realize proper human growth in Africa. It is doubtful if the notion of freedom available to Africa and arising from its encounter with

modernity is adequate to carry the weight of African modernity. This is because this notion of freedom is mainly political but does not adequately confront even the forms and pattern of the politics under which this idea of freedom is gained. Kwame Nkrumah said: "seek yee first political kingdom and all other things will be added to you". But fifty years after political kingdom, not much has been added to Africans in terms of quality growth of their humanity to what should amount to African modernity. The reason for this lies mainly in the fact that political kingdom is basically a product of rational kingdom and without constructing a reliably project of reason and intellection is nowhere possible to achieve anything out of a political kingdom. Thus it remains questionable the extent to which Africa herself can develop from the political kingdom she did not construct or one that was constructed without any in-put from the rational world of Africans.

From the foregoing one thing distinctly runs through our claims; that is the fact that the idea of modernity available in Africa amounts to an alienating modernity, that is one which is not in a position to advance a reliable course of development in Africa; one in which the notion of freedom is not accompanied with those values that should or can permit a reliable rational culture. The summary of my view is that the dilemma of African modernity finds its root on the idea of the modern as it is made to relate to Africa; that is, modernity as it was wrongly designed to encounter Africa. By this I mean that modernity in relation to Africa was not human enough in the African instance as it did not recognize even the minimum of what should amount to and would have defined African humanity. Thus, there was a clear paradox in modernity that came to Africa, which is that of promoting modernity (promoting freedom), through colonization (denying freedom). All these were made possible through the powers and structures through which modernity was designed and instituted in Africa and these accounts for the dilemma of African modernity.

In the light of the foregoing it is therefore important to attempt to establish the limits of the relevance of the current idea of modernity in vogue in Africa. To do this I have deliberately ignored the need to establish the details of the extent to which modernity has failed in Africa. I suspect that such facts are scattered across relevant journals in African politics, African economy and African education. For a summary hint on this, it is important to note that with some 650 million people, sub-Saharan African's combined GDP is somewhat smaller than that of Belgium with a population of 10 million (Michael Radu, 2003). Furthermore while about three hundred thousand African professionals are working in Europe and America, Africa spends about four billion dollars per a year importing 100,000 foreign professionals (James karioki, 2005). The Nigerian philosopher captures the burden of African modernity better when he holds that;

> Africa is looking like a basket case.The entire map…is littered with debris of
> rogue states, failed governments, violent successions, ….and villains and

victims, violently repressed secessions, interminable wars, interminable rows of wandering refugees endemic diseases, endemic poverty, hopeless debt burdens, ugly slums desperate recourse to religion and magic, massive unemployment for youth..

(Okere cited in J.O. Oguejiofor, ed. (2004):4).

and for this reason, Africa, as he goes further and say,
Leads the world in virtually every form of crime against good governance, child soldiers, child amputees, child labour, mass graves from forgotten but enduring civil wars, mass graves from the epidemics of ebola, lassa fever, and now AIDS, not to forget malaria our perpetual scourge (*ibid*;J.O.Oguejiofor (ed.):4-5).

Another African scholar of repute Achille Mbembe (2001, p. 8) captures the African condition metaphorically when he empathizes with the western world to call the African situation "dead ends" as kofi Awoonor (2001) submits that the horror of modernity in Africa is such that "Africans are the first people in modern times made to deny their personalities and who by series of traumatizing and truncating acts and thought process deny their very identity". The down ward turn in African development in modern Africa arising from what now amounts to a false marriage between alien institutions and traditional patterns of social organizations in Africa is further validated by the position of Middi Mugyenyi (1987:151 cited in G.Sogolo,1996). Speaking of what became of Tanzania shortly after political independence and the failure of the country's attempt at a socialist ideology of development as exemplified in the Arusha declaration of 1967, he writes:

When the political music played, progress fell rapidly behind objectives. Production declined rapidly. Services collapsed. Infrastructure suffered. Income tumbled. Taxes increased. Supplies fluctuated or vanished.The cost of living jumped. Bureaucratic bottlenecks multiplied. Efficiency nose-dived. Foreign debts mounted. Self-reliance wobbled badly. Disillusionment set in..

In the midst of such gory picture of the continent coming from scholars from different nations of sub-Saharan Africa it cannot be argued that modernity has failed in the African instance and that what it means to have relevant modern structures are not lacking in Africa for which there is the need to articulate an alternative theory of modernity. Okere is a Nigerian, Awoonor is a Ghanaian, Mebembe is a Cameroonian and Mugyeny is a Tanzanian. Thus these scholars are nationals of four different countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. If any these scholars was not directly influenced by the crisis of modernity in his country he could as well have been influenced by his country to hold a different opinion, if there was any. What perhaps should be the worry is not contest the crisis of dilemma of modernity in Africa but to examine whether a reliable insight into the root of this problem has been achieved. As a way

of addressing this problem, I shall in the remaining part of this work attempt to address this problem by examining the extent to which this is the case. Thereafter I shall formulate what should serve as an alternative and reliable path to a functional modernity in Africa. First off, I shall locate the quality of other theoretical attempts made in this regard and wherein the relevance of my proposal lies.

Discussions on the subject of African modernity often revolve around some attempts to react to one form of the modernization process or the other. Such works often include or reflect issues that relate to or revolve around development in Africa and are found in political or economic texts in Africa such as those of Samir Amir (1972; 1973; 1975; 1977) and Claude Ake (1978; 1996; 1996b) or fall within a broad range of post colonial discourse of scholars such as Abiola Irele (1982; 2007) and Joseph Ki Zerbo (1965).In addition, there are also specific theoretical attempts to capture in broad terms ideas that could define and direct modernity. This have come through such through such scholars as Chinweizu (1978); Helen Lauer (2003); Olufemi Taiwo (2009); Jacques L. Hamel (2010); Abiola Irele (1982); Kwame Gyekye (1993) Emmmanuel Chukwudi Eze (1998).

What many of these works have in common is the attempt to articulate the problem of modernity in specific terms or through positions that define the roots of the crisis that underlie modernity. For instance, Helen Lauer (2003) locates this problem in what she calls "false dichotomies" between what is known to be modern and what is known to be traditional while Abiola Irele (1982) advocates for a form of alienation of aspects of African worldview in favour of western thought as a solution to this problem. Similarly the Nigerian philosopher Chinweizu (1978) recommends a form of traditionalism as a solution to the problem.A fundamental problem belies these attempts and this has to do with what Achille Mbembe (2001; p.11) has called "the methodological question of applying the same "conceptual structures and fictional representations used precisely to deny African societies any historical depth as radically *other*," in the conception of modernity in relation to Africa.

The basic view I shall canvass in this section of the work is that addressing the problem of false modernity in Africa demands an African agency which could come about by erecting a fresh knowledge base for Africa to address the need for a different conceptual scheme in the search for an African modernity. To do this let me ask this question: how would Africans have wished to articulate their project of modernity which is not reflected in the project of modernity at the moment? To answer this question I note that Africans would have desired a form of modernity rooted in their culture and tradition; one in which their language and worldview serve as the foundations of change; one in which the salient aspects of their values are retained.

The idea of modernity that would have served the cause of Africa is one in which change which is a vital aspect of modernity is made to come to terms with some of the ideas

and values that serve for stability and cohesion in the African world; one characterized by what Kofi Awoonor (2001)has called "the inner resourcefulness that dominates the social imperative and permits the construction of a humane society in which we all are our brother's keepers".Africa would have wished for a modernity characterized by a more productive and responsible notion of freedom. Thus in brief African modernity should amount to that which is freely chosen option to advance one's thought and culture through a scientific application of reason; one which will organically establish a valuable coherence between forms of thought that will respond to different imperatives of human desire in Africa be they political, moral, social or economic; all of which will be agreeable to human nature as they have found expression in the African cultural world.

In the light of the foregoing it can be seen that a socially and morally relevant knowledge stands as the foundations of desired project of African modernity. Such knowledge base will come about by constructing a humanly relevant but socially acceptable scientific knowledge of the African world that does not contain dominant hegemonic constructs that are believed to be universal but are basically rooted in one world tradition. Such knowledge could be achieved when (i) Knowledge is made to defend the values of the African society from where they are achieved and (ii) When African values are properly interpreted within the regime of values that are worthy response to the imperatives of human nature and the human mode of being.

My view implies that proper exercise of reason within the African world in favour of modernity would be successful when knowledge is made to achieve meaning and relevance within the demands of an African world and to protect and promote the specific values and ideals, which knowledge within the African cultural world is meant to defend and uphold. This position find justification in the fact that "there are cultural forms within which the human mind finds expression" (Abiola Irele, 2007) and without the insertion of knowledge within these cultural forms knowledge would hardly serve as a worthy agent of change and given that freedom and knowledge are central to modernity it cannot be anticipated that Africa can achieve modernity without such knowledge base. I therefore argue that the trust of knowledge within the African world is to defend the communal principle of the African society and that knowledge should attempt to provide a vital link between the communal ethics and the African society and the inner desires of man and the goals of human society. Thus, there is the need to devote some focus to these primordial structures and conceptual scheme and achieve a corpus of endogenous knowledge to march the demands of African modernity. The Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu has provided a clue to this form of knowledge which could lead to what should amount to decolonization of modernity in what he called "conceptual decolonization" (Wiredu, 1995). The idea of conceptual decolonization implies

thinking about issue and ideas first in the African world or as it should be known within the African rational world first.

Conceptual decolonization according to Wiredu means "two complimentary things". First:

> Avoiding or reversing through critical conceptual self-awareness the unexamined assimilation in our thought …the conceptual framework embedded in the foreign philosophical traditions that have had impact on African life (Wiredu, 1995).

And the second is:

> Exploiting as much as it is judicious the resources of our own indigenous conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditation on even the most technical problems of contemporary philosophy (Wiredu, 1995).

Wiredu states further that:

> The negative is of course the reverse side of the positive. But we cite it first because the necessity for decolonisation was brought upon us in the first place by the historical super-imposition of foreign categories of thought system through colonization (Wiredu, 1995).

The need to decolonize modernity through this measure is imperative because as that which was entangled with the colonial project in Africa, it is scarcely difficult to separate modernity and westernism in Africa as a result of which the first viable step in this regard is to achieve a certain level of conceptual freedom in Africa as a way to address this problem.

According to Wiredu (1995), the superimposition of alien categories on African thought system has distorted "indigenous thought structure out of all recognitions" (Wiredu,1995).Thus he attempts to establish an important connection between the conceptual damage on African mode of thought and contemporary African realities and observes that the current cultural crisis of modernity in Africa derives from a certain intellectual anomaly in contemporary African experience which arises from the general "interplay between an indigenous cultural heritage and a foreign cultural legacy of colonial origin" (Wiredu,1995).

But as part of conceptual turn in African thought through decolonization there is also the need for a supplementary measure to this which should come by way of conceptual Africanisation. Conceptual Africanization is the attempt to source for and develop ideas within the cultural resources of the African world to determine which ideas within the African world that will be relevant for African modernity. This idea believes that by conceptual

contrast of ideas and values within the African world, a body of valid knowledge can be achieved to respond to the demands of social evolution within the modern African society; ideas which are better suited for adoption within the multi-dimensional demands of African modernity. By multi-dimensional demands of African modernity I mean the political, economic, social, moral, etc demands of modern Africa.

Conceptual Africanization implies building concepts from indigenous African world-view to promote greater cohesion and understanding in Africa. It is a conceptual dialogue that comes about when two or more cultural units of Africa contrast their ideas and concepts, by highlighting their similarities and differences with the view to providing the basis for self-understanding in Africa and exploring the basis for a better alternative in the construction of modern African ideas. The imperative for this is to explore from within the various cultural units of Africa, the basis for solving some of the social, political, moral and economic problems confronting Africa which the alien cultures are not in a position to solve.

CONCLUSION

Recall that at the beginning of this work I submitted that modernity is essentially a product of certain man-centered idea in the history of human thought. I also stated that modernity is a product of certain revolutionary ideas in human thinking which came through important minds in western civilization. I wish to conclude my study with the view that African modernity cannot come otherwise. African modernity can only come through what should amount to an African agency anchored on a form of revolution on African thought desired and designed from within; that is a form of modification in the knowledge industry of modernity in favour of the cardinal principles of the African world, especially the man centered ideas in Africa. It is on such principles that Africa can build on its corpus of knowledge that will carry the weight of African humanity in its modern demands. This position does not mean that Africa should not accept or adopt relevant human legacies that have come from the western world especially from the world of science. My position is that whereas Africa may adopt and accept some scientific models from any civilization there should be the desire to re-ground her modernity on certain ideas that serve for and promote an African knowledge base on which the acceptance or rejection of any item could be authentically valid and perhaps original enough in a favour of the expression of human nature in the African world.

It should have been clear through this work that my focus has been on the social and moral invention of the African world as the route to African, modernity and that it is on this basis that I advocated for intellectual re-invention. I have found it worthy to locate the road to African modernity through this way because modernity is primarily a human-based project

and it can only function in any cultural contest to the extent that the idea of man has been faithfully and productively articulated for which relevant values have been invented in favour of the human worth and value. What the African world needs as the route to her modernity is primarily a re-invention of the idea of man in the African world and relevant knowledge in favour of the idea achieved. This requires an African knowledge base that will produce ideas in the humanities that will truly humanize Africans in the modern demand of the term. Thus whereas a scientific knowledge and spirit is relevant knowledge to African modernity the focus should not just be on any form of science or one that is out just to conquer nature as end (since such science may seek to conquer man as well) but one that can subordinate itself to human principles and serve the goal of addressing human needs. Such scientific turn should then seek to incorporate the relevant values of the African world to institute a relevant scientific world in Africa that would be anchored on an African philosophy of science. This is the measure I recommend as the route to African modernity. This recommendation still demands to address other issues such as (i) the language question in carrying out such project of conceptual turn in African thinking (ii) the multi-cultural nature of African societies and institutions. All these are further issues to address and possible areas to explore in to further elaborate on this proposal but they do not negate the urgency for the positions canvassed in this work.

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