

**The African Philosophy Of Development:
When Localism And Traditionalism Collide With Globalism, Is
“Tele”Communication The Answer?**

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Abstract

The paper distinguishes between African Philosophy of, and the Philosophy of African development. It argues that an African philosophy of development needs to be determined and influenced by the mores of traditional values derivable from proverbs, words, symbols and signs inherent to the local communities in African societies. ‘Tele’- communication from Western-owned media sources is not the answer to African development, in so far as those media contents are not grounded on the myths of the African societies, and do not facilitate a two-way exchange of meanings, messages, images and symbols between African and non-African cultures and values. I argue that communication is a function of a people cultures and value systems. When those value systems are not validated and integrated in any communication interchange, a sense of alienation results. When such thinking and perceptions of the African selves, cultures, and personalities are shared with other ethnic, national and racial entities across the globe, development would follow. I conclude that the globalization of Western value systems through the Western-controlled mass media communications systems and outlets is not development, but underdevelopment. I suggest an African philosophy of development influenced and determined by what and who Africans think of themselves in their local and traditional ways, as evident in representative African proverbs. My analysis is informed by Habermas’s communicative rationality, a discursive form of collective reasoning where community members discuss issues, problems or disputes from their personal experiences and linguistic competencies enroute intersubjective agreement.

Introduction

Any textbook on Africa is suffused with lamentations of underdevelopment. Since the common stock on Africa’s and African scholarship sounds like the swan song of African underdevelopment, poverty, famine, AIDS, social, economic and political crises, one must begin to wonder what went wrong after nearly fifty years of political emancipation from colonialism. The answers need not be far away from a keen observer. Africa was never freed from colonialism and imperialism. Instead, local and traditional

'imperialism' replaced foreign rule. This is oftentimes called neo-colonialism. To discuss local and traditional African philosophy of development, I would not be concerned, at least here, with the local and traditional power, cultural, political elites who replaced the Europeans. My interest here is to look at the pre-colonial Africa through their selected spoken proverbial language forms, and to seek to unearth the values inherent in those language styles, systems and forms, which made these societies extant, in spite of 1000 years of contact with Europeans. My assumption is that proverbs serve 'developmental' functions for pre-colonial African societies, and ought to be integrated into the discussions of African development, since development does not occur in a vacuum.

The belief here is that the language of the peoples who inhabited the African continent, as evident in their spoken and non-spoken modes of communication would afford the researcher an insight into the values and beliefs that informed their pre-colonial existence. From the discernment of those values, customs and beliefs, one would proceed to argue for a return to some of those values as the basis for an African philosophy of development. I am not advocating a return to an African past in its entirety. That would be romanticizing a past not there—it could be part nostalgia and part lamentation (see Obotetukudo, 2002c in press; Boym, 2001). That is never going to happen just as it is impossible to step into the same water twice. Colonialism, christianization, commercialization, and islamization have all combined to erode pieces of Africa's past. Yet, these outside elements have also enriched Africans' experiences and experiments in self-preservation and cultural conservatism (Nkrumah's *Consciencism*, 1970; Nyerere's *Ujama*, 1968).

Bodunrin supports the contention that proverbs could serve a philosophical function for the African philosopher. He writes: "There is no *a priori* reason why proverbs, myths of gods and angels social practices...could not be proper subjects for philosophical enquiry.... The African philosopher cannot *deliberately* ignore the study of the traditional belief system of his people. Philosophical problems arise out of real life situations." (1984, pp.12, and 13). Bodunrin needed not qualify his assertion with the adverb 'deliberately'. No African or non-African philosopher should ignore Africa's belief systems because from them emerges the stock from which African philosophy is built. Whether these philosophies are written or not, they are thoughts of a people.. Folklore is a body of people's traditions and knowledge on specific or particular subjects, issues, and concerns in their individual and collective experiences. Folk thought is folk wisdom, and is folk world of existence, and is their sense-making experience. By engaging this folk wisdom cognitively (in the naming of events and things), socially (situational contexts of performance), thematically (categorizing the events, places, things, and life occurrences), and expressively (using the spepcific linguistic forms of a particular culture or peoples), in an open-ended referentiality (Obotetukudo, 1997ab; Ben-Amos, 1977; Ong, 1967/1970, 1970, 1982;), the African engages himself/herself, the community, and thereby create knowledge and meanings pertinent to his lifeworld.

Conceptual Disentanglement

Several researchers have argued for the existence of such a concept as *African Philosophy* (Gyekye, 1995; Mudimbe, 1994, 1988, 1985, 1983; Oruka, 1990; Mbiti, 1970). Countervailing views have also argued against any foundations for an *African Philosophy* (Appiah, 1992; Bodunrin, 1985, 1981). A great many other writers, philosophers and anthropologists and Africanists have taken more eclectic views (Hountondji, 1983; Fortes and Dieterlen, 1965 Forde, 1954). So long as there are people's views of who they are, there are ways of cognitively and expressively making those beliefs known. Philosophy therefore becomes a way of making sense of one's world of becoming, being, existence, and seeing, relating, interacting, and interpreting the world in which one lives.

The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus of English Language (1996 American Edition), defines philosophy as "the use of reason and argument in seeking truth and knowledge of reality, especially of the causes and nature of things and the principles governing existence, the material universe, perception of physical phenomena, and human behavior;" and "a particular system or set of beliefs reached by this." Philosophy is also seen as a personal rule of life. Within this broad definition one sees points of views, beliefs, outlook, values, ideas, tenets, credos, ideology, and so on, as constitutive of any philosophy. But before I proceed, let me define my operational usage of key terms in this project:

(i). *Localism* as used here refers to the ways of the natives, not encumbered by the trappings of European and/or Arabic cultures. It refers to the aboriginal; the old cultures before the advent of the Arabic and Europeans influences. This is very nativistic. One may argue that such an African never existed because the African in antiquity was not documented. But we do know that there were civilizations before the written word was invented. (ii) *Traditionalism* is used here to describe the indigenous ways of existence. I use traditionalism differently from localism because a traditionalist has had some formal and/or informal contact with outsiders. The ways of seeing, doing, and being of the traditionalist differ from those of the localist due to the interjections, though not infiltrations, of elements of foreign influences. External influences do not predominate. A traditionalist could be one who is educated in foreign ways, yet practices traditionally indigenous and local beliefs and ways of seeing the world. Oftentimes, he/she becomes the intermediary, a go-between, between the natives and the new experiences of the new-comers. (iii) *Globalism* refers to the philosophy of making the entire world culturally, economically, socially and even politically accessible, and by inference homogeneous. It is the internationalization of production and services and world-wide access to, and of, finances by a relatively few nations or multinational corporations that are protected by their powerful nations. (iv) *African philosophy of development* put a premium on localism and traditionalism where pre-colonial values and attitudes are still recognized as indices for human association and relationship maintenance. (v) The *philosophy of African development* focuses on globalism. It is externally induced and managed. (vi) I have used 'tele' instead of "telecommunication" to make it distinctively clear that "tele" denotes a one-way sending, as in "telling" communication, while the "telecommunication " refers to the systematic utilization of the communication systems

telegraphically and teleelectronically to share meanings and messages between the interactants. Insofar as the African is only a recipient of the Western media messages, without a commensurate dissemination of authentic African experiences and cultures from Africa to the Western media outlets, there is no telecommunication, but 'tele'communication.(vii) *Development* in this project indicates progression, advancement in emotional and physical as well as socio-political stages of a unit of peoples or nations. It also connotes success and growth. When used this way, it is not limited to infrastructural acquisitions or erections. Instead, it means a maturation process, whereby one is able to do for oneself and the community one lives.

African philosophy of development essentially asks and seeks answers to these questions: Who are the Africans? What do Africans want? Where are the Africans? Where do they want to go from their present station in global interconnecting systems? Why are they where they are today? How can they get to where they want? What structures, physical and non-physical, are there that make it possible or impossible for the Africans to become who and what they always wanted to be were capable of becoming? To answer these questions one needs to begin to examine the language and symbols of the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial African societies.

Language says a lot about a people's culture and values. Language affords a window into the views and beliefs of a people, and hence their philosophies. A people is defined in and through their symbolic acts. To know a people is to understand the language they use to make sense of their lifeworlds. African peoples have languages through, and with, which others have come to know who, how, why and what their belief systems are. It is appropriate that the beginning of the study of African Philosophy be anchored on the study of their language habits and dictions. Language excites, exhorts, motivates, extols, entertains, praises and blames; it persuades, informs, celebrates, and memorializes. Through language a world is made and unmade. A world without language and symbols is a world without meaning, and is thus a non-existent world.

Benjamin Whorf's thesis on language and culture had since confirmed that the language of a people aids in understanding the culture and values of such a people. In a 1940 thesis, Whorf argued:

Every language...incorporates certain points of view and certain patterned resistances to widely divergent points of view....(L)anguage is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade....We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language. The categories and types we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds- and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significance as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way-an agreement that holds throughout our speech community

and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, *but its terms are absolutely obligatory*; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of the data which the agreement decrees....We are thus introduced to a new theory of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated.(1956, pp. 212-213).

What makes Whorf's thesis still relevant today, and even more so in the context of my discussion here, is that he conducted his series of studies in the Hopi Language of Native Americans. The gist of his argument is that every language predisposes its speakers to see, believe, hear, experience and interpret the world in certain ways peculiar to the language habits of those respective communities. The implication here is that even the non-written languages of 'tribal Indians' have the capacity as well as the obligation, like the languages of 'tribal Africans' or any group of symbol creators and symbol users anywhere in the world, to create meaning, knowledge, and a philosophy, to guide their ways of living, seeing, and being, relevant to their experiences. Language use therefore, influences the way humans everywhere think and categorize their experiences. In songs, music, dances, wars and victory songs, praise-songs and poems, marriage and birth rites, and even in death dirges, people learn of accepted habits in their communities, the notions of justice, social and moral standards of heroism, communalism, family values, loyalty, love, hardwork, friendship, and so on, language encapsulates, preserves, conserves and transmits a people's ways of life.

Proverbs remain one major means of African communication. Proverbs are evidentiary. They provide articulate community members a stock of knowledge from which to draw compelling and persuasive as well as informative discourse forms to win assent. In proverbs, the world of the African comes alive and prevails in science, metaphysics, logic, religion, rationalism, emotionalism, medicine, health, economics, politics, human relations, birth, trade, child-rearing, family relations, farming, industry, living, dying, and all the other human endeavors ever known to humans(Mbiti, 1970). Africans have used proverbs to amend, reverse, encourage, and educate the young and the old. Proverbs as oral narratives have invariably functioned to subvert untoward behaviors, while at the same time, they have functioned to affirm and re-affirm the identities of the African (see Akporobaro and Emovon, 1994; Scheub, 1985; Finnegan, 1970, especially, pp. 389-425). The stories that were told to the African child in the formative years under the tree at dusk may not necessarily be told in those contexts anymore. In whatever modes they are told, these stories still matter in the lifeworld of the African child. A lack of writing does not incapacitate a philosophical mind.

Rituals of initiation, circumcision, marriage, death, birth, progress, change, cultural affirmation, renewal and divination; the lores of incantation and libation; the mythical lores and legendary epics, and African stories of genealogies, can, and should be told today in houses and homes with telecommunication equipments as the facilitating modes and means of cultural experiences and

interactions. These new modes as new channels for transmitting the African knowledge and wisdom of the past can still make these stories come to life, from the mouths of the story-tellers who are still Africans and well-respected members in their communities. These words of elders have, since antiquity been and do remain words of wisdom in African communities.

According to Gyekye (1995), “ philosophy of some kind is behind or involved in the thought and action of every people.” Every culture produces a philosophy. Gyekye argues:

But as a result of the lack of writing in Africa’s historical past, the indigenous philosophical output of African thinkers, in the traditional setting, has remained part of their oral tradition and has come to be expressed also in religious and sociopolitical beliefs and institutions...the best and most seminal approach to dealing with the question of philosophy in African culture is by way of analytical elucidation and interpretation and critical evaluation of concepts and beliefs in traditional thought (p. xxxv).

The philosophical elements in African thought and beliefs can best be revealed through a systematic analysis and dissection of the forms, styles, and systems of communication in ‘classical Africa.’ Social realities are given meaning and validated, or even challenged and reconstituted through language, signs and symbols. Symbols and signs of development, progress, change, growth, self-governance and sustenance are present in Africa’s language and symbol systems. Gyekye concludes: “Philosophical concepts, ideas, and propositions can be found embedded in African proverbs, linguistic expressions, myths and folktales, religious beliefs and rituals, customs and traditions of the people, in their art symbols, and in their sociopolitical institutions.” (1995, p. xxxv).

Since a people’s values constitute their philosophical systems, and these philosophies are expressed in their languages and other cultural symbols, I will, in the next section, select African proverbs from various parts of the continent, to demonstrate the presence of real philosophy of development ingrained in the language systems of the African. I would argue that an African Philosophy of development predated the modern western view of a philosophy for African development predicated upon imported models and tele-communication hardwares.

Communication of African Delevopment in Selected African Proverbs:

Proverbs	African Country/Ethnic Origin	Language/	Value Embedded
1. Pity killed the francolin	Congo/Nyanga		Generosity with moderation pays
2. Much silence has a mighty noise	Swahili		Patience pays
3. A chief is like a dust heap where everyone comes to deposit his/her rubbish	Hausa-speaking West African States		Deference; regard counselor/adviser
4. The man with deepest eyes does not see the moon till it's fifteen days old	Hausa		Too narrowly focused that the obvious eludes him
5. The strength of the crocodile is in the water	Thonga		A strong man does not stand alone but with his kinsmen.
6. If a boy says he wants to tie water with a string, ask him if he means the water in the pot or the water in the lagoon	Ewe/Ghana		Courage, discipline respect;
7. The want of work to do makes man get up early to salute his enemy	Hausa		Hardwork; pragmatism
8. One who excretes on the roads will find filies when he returns	Yoruba		Eschew evil deeds that follow you
9. To do one's duty is to eat the prized fruit of honor	Nigerian		Responsibility; hardwork pays
10. If a load is too heavy for someone to carry, one would be better off allowing the ground to carry it			Prudence; survival knowing when to fight or run, or ask for help
11. A person is a person through persons	Xhosa/South Africa		Interdependence; teamwork; collaboration

The above representative proverbs point to the existence of concepts of development in the repertoire of African language forms. The incorporation of these content and forms of African concepts of development is indispensable in any telecommunication transfer.

A communication system that fosters Africa's development, be it cultural, spiritual, religious, economic, or political, must be a reflective one. That reflective communication is wrapped in philosophical presuppositions of the African personhood, made whole in the community in which the African lives (Nyasani 1997, pp. 51-57). The assumptions are that there are unique processes of thought that are African; and that Africans organize and categorize their world from a strictly indigenous socio-cultural milieu.

Nyasani refers to an "African mind" and its characteristics. In his summation, the African mind is a product of the "cultural edifices and "cultural streams" arising from the African cultural traditions and environmental conditionings. These are not peculiar to the African. Every civilization or culture is a function of its environment. But what makes the African ways of seeing, perceiving and communicating its development, aspirations and features unique, is the commonality of themes of development that cuts through all of African languages and cultures, as well as in the ways they interpret and relate to development. These are made known in the languages or proverbs referencing hospitality, friendliness, consensus and cooperation, hardwork, perseverance, tolerance, sympathy, social cohesion, responsibility, honesty, dignity, and a sense of community as opposed to individualism, as I delineated above. But Nyasani, like most other modernizing Africans, sees adherence to these precepts as causing 'stagnation or stalemate in (Africans') social as well as economic evolution" with very grave social consequences, "especially where the process of acculturation and indeterminate enculturation is taking place at an uncontrollable pace." (1997, p.130).

A communication for the African development anchored on African philosophy has to recognize the interdependence of persons on others for the "development" of the self and hence, the entire community. Development in the African philosophy does not correspond to modernization or modernity. Rather, it is the development of self in relationship with the other(s). This view presupposes the self is made real in contact with others. The Africans, any all humans, develop the relationship with each others. This is an original African thought. It is made manifest in several of the proverbs I listed earlier in this paper. Similar thoughts have been articulated in Martin Buber's (1996) philosophic conceptions in his text, *I and Thou*. It is instructional to contrast the Western European and American philosophies of the self, where the self is wholly individualistic and resides inside the person.

In African thought, the person or the self is "outside"; but evolves only in the company of others. That is, the African self subsists in relationship to the others. The others consist of the natural as well as the environment he/she finds and relates with. The African self, while not out to alter its environment, would not hesitate to do so if and when the collective demands. Thus, while the African self may not

necessarily be as “ravaging” as the Western and American adventurers in “taming” nature, it does not preclude the fact of appropriating nature for the benefit of the community. The African who acts in consensus with the community to change the world or his/her environment is not destroying the environment, as much as he/she is advancing the will and doing so for the general good of the community. From that, he/she discovers the self and enlarges the community’s prospects for self-rejuvenation and self-preservation. To understand this philosophic world-view of the African is pertinent in the development communication for the new mind managers who think the Africans are not enterprising and adventurous (Nyasani, 1997).

Nyasani thinks the African individual does not know how to maximize his/her relationships to the benefit of the self outside of his/her immediate community’s prescriptions and proscriptions of behavioral norms. He sees the individual African as existing in a “quasi-dissolution into the reality of others,” (p. 60), where the “me” becomes the ‘we’ at all times for the sake of restoring balance of the wholeness of the community (pp. 81-82). My contention is to the contrary. The African self and his/her world are inseparable. In that web of mutually assured continuity and production and reproduction, the African develops, enhances, and consolidates his/her identity and personhood. The community empowers and enlarges; it enhances and facilitates growth and progress for itself and the individual African.

If these African thinker eschew the ‘dissolution’ of the African self into the reality of other Africans, what makes it proper or acceptable for them to be submerged by the reality of non-African others? Furthermore, if the African, nay everybody, becomes in contact with the others, why should not the African associate with those others to become ‘developed’? Here again, I have to resort to a globally accepted aphorism that, “No man (human) is an island.” The African philosophy of development should that and cannot prosper in a vacuum. It needs the cross-fertilization and cross-pollination of African concepts of development and those of other peoples. There has to be a foundation upon which these ideas can be erected and/or weighted. While it is demanding of the African to live with what confronts him/her, it also imposes a ‘restraining order’ of some sort on the new information and communication technologies ‘peddlers’ to beware of the ‘flight by night syndrome’.

The Africans’ desire to maintain cohesiveness and cooperation with nature, self, and others have been mistaken for docility (Nyasani, 1997, p.113), complacency and passivity (Shalita, 1998, p. 10). The so-called passivity is synthesis-seeking (Senghor, 1966). Synthesis-seeking is order-maintenance. It fosters continuity, predictability, and change on an axis that sustains, affirms, re-affirms, and identifies with the norms, values, beliefs, and expectations of the collective. Since development implies, and in fact demands, change, it is fair to assume that African local and traditional philosophies that perpetuated dependency and perceptions of docility and stupidity must also change to reflect the new development paradigm. But this new development has to be done using the ‘softwares’ of interpersonal

communication development existing in African relational modalities, and not imported 'hardwares' for development.

In the first wave of mass media of communication and telecommunications diffusion of innovation into the developing world, for example, it was believed that new media technologies would convey development information and persuasive messages from the government agencies to the public in a downward and hierarchical way. But it was later found that 'development news' occupied an insignificant portion of the content of mass media in developing countries (Rogers, 1976, p. 135-138). The conclusion was that innovation news was best communicated by interpersonal channels more than by mass media outlets.

In *Communication and Development* (1976), Everett Rogers had postulated the passing away of the dominant paradigm of communication and development. The thrust of his argument was that the new model for development communication needed to consider issues of communication gap between information rich and information poor nations, the content of mass media messages about development, and the limitations of the social structure on developmental communication effects (pp.121-148). While tracing the evolution of that dominant paradigm, Rogers listed the major academic and historical influences on the old conception of development: the Industrial Revolution, capital-intensive technology, economic growth, and quantification, which he defined as the per capita income, as the main index of development. Within this old paradigm, more was better; bigger was better; and development could be measured and quantified in numbers. But development is not a finite concept, even though it was then thought to be infinite then. Rogers noted with reference to the World Bank's indices for growth: "Local communities...would be changed eventually by such development" and "their advance was thought to be dependent upon the provision of information and resource inputs from higher levels" (1976, p.124). Whatever the outcomes, the development model of the 1960's through 1970's sidelined and scorned the local and traditional elements in its development equation. It presumed material well-being could be measured and quantified. Human values of self-worth, pride, dignity, justice, and responsibility to self and the community were denigrated; and did not, in Rogers' words "fit on a dollar-and-cents yardstick" (p. 124-125). The resurgence of communication and information technologies as the panacea for 'development' of underdeveloped countries under the guise of globalism is old wine in a new bottle. A philosophy of development that appropriates the values of the recipient countries is a philosophy worth pursuing. Anything short of that perpetuates marginality. Globalism, like mass media communications and technology of development, is mechanistic, linear, and atomistic. It is a one-way, and a top-bottom model of development from the industrialized to the less developing nations of Africa.

The 1980's saw a paradigm shift toward equality of distribution along issues of unemployment rates, the localities where technologies were implanted, widening gaps between rich and poor nations, information rich and information poor, and dependency, among many others. In fact, common criticism

against the old paradigm was its ethnocentric origins. That is, that the old model only sees the standards of the Western world as capable to determining the lifeworlds of non-European nations. Suddenly, there was the suggestion for the developing nations to begin to think small (Schumacher, 1973). Schumacher attacked high technology criterion for third world development. He advocated "intermediate technology" as most practicable in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Intermediate technology need not be hard-core machineries and telecommunication equipments. Instead, they could be, and often are the softwares that are derived from the content of the local and traditional media of communication and group cohesion (Obotetukudo, 2002 under preparation). Examples of intermediate technology included self-development activities in small villages in rural Africa, Korea, or China. This model eschewed the top-down approach to development where, the Westerners and their sophisticated technologies "tel" the locals and natives "what is best for them. That is 'tel-communicate' to them what the people at the top believed the people at the bottom needed. Rogers explained that it was "what government does to and for the people. Decisions were made by the national government in the capital city and then implemented through development programs that were carried out by government employees who contacted the public (at the operational level) in order to inform and persuade them to change some aspect of their behavior." (1976, p. 138). This old model was inherently mechanistic and atomistic. It was a one-way linearity model of communication, a top-to-bottom trickling-down hyperdermic model. It failed to frog-jump African nations to the same level as the Western capitalist nations. It failed because it was not built and nurtured on a foundation of African philosophies of who Africans are, what Africans want for themselves; and what they can do and become by themselves.

The new African philosophy of development model I am considering, on the other hand, takes into consideration peoples needs and wants, as articulated in their symbols and language of existence. It focuses on self-development, with a completely different role for traditional African communication systems than in the usual top-down development approach of the past. It seeks to empower the African audience members to the extent that their ways of speaking and being are central to development.

New Communication And Information 'Tel-Communication Technologies For African Development:

Structural changes in the communication of development have been phenomenal in the wake of telecommunication innovations of the 1980's to the present. It makes the interpersonal model of communication most pertinent in the African philosophy of development. With interpersonal modes in African communication of development one cannot but talk of stories, proverbs, music, dancing, drumming, singing, and all other styles and forms of orality that bring peoples together in a

communion of ideas and dreams (Ong, 1977, 1992). For one, African communication channels rely more on face-to-face mode. Nevertheless, there is an increasing trend toward electronically generated and manipulated modes of communication (De Roy, 1997, pp. 883-1000). This heightened trend is now moving toward new information and communication technologies, made up of the internet, hardware, softwares, telephones, computers, databases, and related other aspects of the World Wide Web interactivity. (Akpan, 2000, pp.1-16; McAnany, 1980). The question that plagues Africanist and African scholars today is whether more efforts need be directed at the new communication technologies as panacea to Africa's development, or to other more pressing issues confronting the continent (Akpan, 2000).

The new information and communication technologies via the "modern connections" as Akpan (2000, p. 1) describes African countries scramble to be connected are likely to be constrained by the need to provide the basic needs for survival as a people, in contrast or in competition with the "real" or "perceived" need "to be part of the global network society." Underdeveloped countries have been this road to 'development' before in the wake of diffusion of technological innovations in the 1970's. Then, there was the call for a New World Information Order. The so-called South rejected the imposition of a telecommunication model from the North. It is the belief of the new urge to jump on the bandwagon of new information and communication technology that Africa, the most technologically poor of all the continents, would not be left behind this time around. The new wave challenges Africans' assumptions about themselves and what they are capable of becoming in the new world where information and communication means more than the natural resources one possesses.

The presumption seems to be that there is a direct relationship between information and communication access and development. According to De Roy (1997) there is a direct connection, and therefore is necessary for Africa:

These technological developments in networking and communication infrastructure are not a luxury they are a priority for Africa as they comprise considerable and tangible stakes: stakes of power, because nowadays being on the information highway gives power; economic stakes because of the huge investments involved with new information technologies; technological stakes in the choices being made over infrastructure and methods of connection in Africa; and stakes in the research sector to develop the new information technologies according to the priorities, needs and expectations of the African continent (p. 892).

Elements of the new development model are: (1) the quality of distribution of information, and socioeconomic benefits; (2) popular participation in self-development planning and execution, usually accompanied by decentralization of certain of these activities to the local village level; (3) self-reliance and independence in development, with an emphasis upon the potential of local resources; (4) integration of traditional with modern systems, so that modernization is the syncretization of old and new ideas, with the exact mixture somewhat different in each locale (Rogers, 1976, pp. 130-133).

Subsumed here is the need for Africans to be producers of their own knowledge and then package such to other parts of the world, else, there will be a continuous domination of the flow of information and the softwares that make for quality and equality of distribution. Mutuality or reciprocity of distribution is a guarantor of economic, social, cultural, and political development between the participating countries or corporate entities. To the extent that experts have agreed that information and communication are vital variables to economic growth (De Roy, 1997; Rogers, 1976; Lerner, 1958), the flow must not be one-sided.

Africans can assist the other parts of the world to enhance their knowledge about African values and its peoples, if and when Africans produce and market information and communication content that depict those values Africans hold dear. Akpan writes, "if African countries have control of and access to knowledge, they will be in a stronger position to compete with the rest of the world." (2000, p.4). I have taken this "knowledge is power" inference further by stating that these power bases are present in African proverbs and other modes of African communication. Because proverbs function as evidence to the ways of making meaning and validating the cultural nuances of African societies. they need be included in Africa's search for meaningful power in its development model in the twenty-first century. Africans and the other parts of the world that are exposed to African knowledge-based data could be empowered and transformed by African news items, plays, operas, dances, myths of origin, soaps, sitcoms, movies, drmas, literatures that capture the themes of development. I write this paper in the English language. Yet, I speak other Nigerian and other European languages. Afrcan philosophy of development can borrow from all other cultures and experiences to enhance its developmental paradigm; but it cannot afford to abandon its own while it totally accepts outside cultures in this rush to be connected to the gloal network of new communication and information technologies. A modality that supports mutually assured diffusion needs to be put in place.

Communicating African Philosophy Of Development

The African philosophy of development I have sought to outline in the preceding sections seeks to integrate the philosophy of African personhood, as communicated in their language forms and systems. I have used selected proverbs to guide my analysis. The communication of development I have proposed in this paper hinges on the need for community survival and preservation. That , in itsself, is rooted in African philosophy and content of its values espoused in the respective languages of a diverse continent. I have argued that these values are found in the proverbs that encourage hardwork, perseverance, cooperation, industriousness, enterprise, respect for the authority of law, elders, constitution, adventurism, courage, community norms and attitudes. While some of these are conflicting, they are not mutually exclusive of the lessons of living in all of human civilizations. African philosophy of development must be searched for, seen and found from within. When the inner self is

satisfied, that is, by the interiorization of self-development in its contact and interaction with others, the other selves benefit.

In order to fully integrate the African philosophy of development, a new definition of development reflecting the exigencies of the African experiences and experiments in the post-independence eras must be revisited. In this paper I have conceptualized development as the participatory and integrating processes and capacities of African personalities with their environments, to effect cultural, social, economic, and political advancement for the community of persons who have control of their space to become what they want. Subsumed in this conception of development is freedom to choose and use one's own linguistic forms to define the self and the community one lives. There cannot be development devoid of the peoples' sense of who and what they are and would want to be. These aspirations and perceptions of selves are best revealed in the language of a people.

The language-based philosophy of development discussed here is informed by Habermas' idea of participatory communicative action and argumentative rationality (1998, 1979). Communicative action, according to Habermas (1979) is "oriented to observing intersubjectively valid norms that link reciprocal expectations." He adds, In communicative action, the validity basis of speech is presupposed. The universal validity claims (truth, rightness, truthfulness), which participants at least implicitly raise and reciprocally recognize, make possible consensus that carries action in common." (p.181). Thus, communicative action because of its consensual implicatedness, engenders support from all. That, according to Habermas, "can secure motivation," from both speakers and listeners. People identify with the speech event that affirms and recognizes their place in their world. This has everything to do "with the truthfulness of intentional expressions and with the rightness of norms." The decisions reached are believed readily and accepted because the people actively took part. It is grounded on the practical wisdom of the people as acting on their own for the understanding of their world. I must point out that this conception is different from Levi-Bruhl's (1923) condescending legacy of the collective consciousness in fragmented societies, which he dubbed as "participation mystique," because proverbs are open-ended and straightforwardly ambiguous. Proverbs permit the citizens to evoke their reflectivity while making sense of the hidden meanings embedded therein. The embedded meanings invite contests of ideas, and in the process knowledge is shared understanding results, and both the self and the collective are "developed" (Obotetukudo, 1997ab). These proverbs are appropriate to specific topics and themes that the community members intuitively understand. Proverbial lores, like all other genres of orality in traditional societies, follow implicit rules of performance, sequencing, content appropriateness, and timeliness; they are ritualized and routinized. They are focal points in the tradition, and thus imbibe the norms and beliefs of a group.

I have used samples of proverbs only to demonstrate the connection of language to development in African thought. In this language-based philosophy of development, African nations and other Western

nations become co-equals in the exchange and sharing of information and communication artifacts with each other. This model is a far cry from the “either-or” perspective of the globalist perspective.

Rather than simply receive information from the western world, African nations would also send an equal amount or volume of information to the western worlds. The courage and the discipline to compete and become co-equals result from invoking those cultural values that celebrate Africans' dignity, ingenuity, entrepreneurial spirit, enterprise, adventurism, and not just docile receptors of hand-outs of technologies from the industrialized nations. This mutual exchange would, in my opinion, compel African nations to produce value-based news and programs in all communication genres, to disseminate same to other nations with whom they exchange communication and information. In fact, imported information and communication materials would have to be integrated and adapted to suit the local and traditional expectations.

The language-based model I have discussed here is integrative as well as interpretive; it is communal and continuous. It is interactive of the old, the new, the very modern, and the futuristic, thereby enhancing or facilitating an interpretive and relational community of equals in information and telecommunications diffusion. This model has the potential to ameliorate the vexing problems of domination and periphery. The end result is the re-organization of African thoughts, mind-sets, and philosophies, toward an interiorization of development, and by extension, a heightened consciousness of self, and about *The Other* (Habermas, 1998; Buber, 1996). The more an issue is subjected to personal thought and public scrutiny, the less privileged the actors from the multinational telecommunication complexes, and the more egalitarian the outcomes for the native, local, and in fact middling indigenous Africans.

CONCLUSION

In the 1970's through 1990's, many African countries thought following in the model of gigantic infrastructures would translate into development. This did not happen. Gigantic infrastructural constructions do not communicate development if there are no corresponding values of maintenance, security, conservation and prevention; love of oneself and what one has earned, and the collective will or desire to preserve such for succeeding generations. These values are embedded in African folklores and other language and symbol forms. It is about time that the features, content and descriptive characteristics of these unique African linguistic forms and experiences be integrated into the new communication and information systems imported from abroad.

Many African nations today can barely support their governments, nor can they pay the salaries of their workers, due to the estrangement of international debts. African nations were told roads and railways and airports were essential for development. They borrowed monies from foreign banks to erect these infrastructures. They could not maintain them to profitability because Africans lack a

maintenance culture. The airports today are non-functioning. The expressways are dead traps. The values that support self-dignity, integrity, responsibility, accountability, hardwork, self-determination and not toleration to the point of docility and complacency or to the point of self-annihilation, should be incorporated into the new communication and information technologies in which Africans are investing their monies. The language of globalism and world telecommunication diffusion is predetermined. It is an either/or statement from the western industrialized complexes, spelling doom for the non-western societies that do not adopt and abide by the western dicta for development. The basic attitude in the globalist perspective is that Africans must be helped and liberated by western norms of progress and advancement. The other western assumption is that Africans have nothing to offer the West. This is reminiscent of the first wave of Europeanization. Technology, like Christianization and commercialization, they reason, would civilize Africans. Africa's cultural difference is assigned a single category—that of Savagery, poverty, disease-ridden, crisis-prone, and hence dependency and infantilization.

A discourse pattern that stratifies and bi-polarizes is never dialogic; it is orthodoxical. Here, the sender believes he/she is secure in her/his knowledge of the correct means of converting and developing the African. He/she invents the philosophy for African development, and not a philosophy of African development. The former is devired from the others' own values own values, experiences, and models of history. Thus, the African is reduced to the least common participant.

The language of western technological diffusion, wrapped in globalism symbols, displays five characteristics: (1) derision; (2) refutation or systematic reduction of all that is non-western; (3) pragmatism—often supported by a demonstration of what has worked for the Western world—historical coherence, infrastructural development, and transformative ideal, a kind of “you too can be like us!”; (4) the only path to material, cultural and economic or political advancement/development is through the orthodoxy of the western models—the supremacy of the western experiments and experiences to all other human experiences; and finally; (5) the language of conformity, deference, submission and humility to the principles that have worked (De Roy, 1997; McAnany, 1980;).

While I do not reject the introduction of western technologies to Africa, I have argued in this paper for a participatory model, where both sides equally trade their softwares of knowledge and development, constitutive of each others' values, myths and postulates of being in their respective worlds. In this perspective, no one world view predominates and pre-determines the other. In the particular instance of the African experience, I have argued for the integration of those values found in all African languages as foundational to motivating and persuading or informing the African to become and exist in the world. Language legitimizes and socializes cultural values of a people. Language, I argued, constitutes the barometers for the knowledge and philosophies that would guide and govern Africa's development path. To abandon African thoughts and philosophies of existence, being, and doing in

their lifeworlds, as found in their language and symbols forms, is self-annihilation. If one does not respect and regard oneself, no one else would. It is my submission that the acquisition of technological or telecommunications hardware is not the answer to Africa's (under)development. Technological acquisition does not correspond to development. Rather, it is how these equipments are appropriated to suit the local and traditional expectations, demands, wants, values, and visions of the receptor societies that make the tele-communications work for them, and foster sustainable development in words and deeds. Imported tele-communications technologies need not be used indiscriminately to decimate nativist and local values. Instead, they need be approximated to advance local cultures that in turn aid in the development of the society's senses of who they are, had been, and would want to be, and thus accelerate the rate of social, cultural, political, economic, and technological developments.

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