

## INTERCULTURALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICA'S COLONIAL AND DECOLONIZATION EXPERIENCE

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### Abstract

*A world in which cultures are related to one another on the basis of equality, in which they exist in mutual respect and recognition of one another's cultural identity and rights has remained a dream yet to be realized. The need for such a world and the dynamics of such trans-cultural relations form the central themes of intercultural discourse. In this paper, attempts are made to examine intercultural principles in the context of Africa's colonial and decolonization experience. The paper examines the intercultural approach to philosophizing with a view to showing how the colonial situation in Africa ran riot of its requirements. It also highlights the role of interculturality in the decolonization process and argues that this philosophical orientation proffered great potentials for dealing with the challenges of the newly independent African states as well as the pressing issues in contemporary Africa such as peace and security, religious intolerance and development problematic. Concerning the former, the politico-economic systems of Sedar Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe are explored as models of interculturality.*

Key Words: Interculturality, colonialism, African socialism, consciencism, neo-welfarism, decolonization.

### Introduction

In a world marked by uneven development and characterized by assorted forms of economic, political and cultural aggression, there can be no better time for intercultural dialogue than now. The invasion of new models in our society, the dominant form of education that disdains the indigenous knowledge and language, the powerful influence of the media and the intrusions on our traditional way of doing things are some of the elements that threaten the total annihilation of our culture. It is in recognition of these challenges to culture that interculturality advocates a shift from the domination of one culture by another to promote a plurality of culture that respects differences and fosters the ethic of solidarity and mutual enrichment and not of exclusion. In this paper, an attempt is made to critique colonialism in Africa from the perspective of interculturality. It also highlights the role of interculturality in the decolonization process. It argues that interculturality involves building bridges with persons and cultures outside one's own and that this enabled African leaders at the early stage of independence to construct politico-economic systems for meeting the challenges of the newly independent African states. The perspectives of Senghor, Nkrumah and Azikiwe are explored.

### Intercultural Philosophy: Thematic Concerns

Terms such as dialogue and polylogue are central to intercultural philosophy championed by Heinz Kimmerle and Franz Wimmer respectively. It is an orientation that sees philosophy as being culturally bound and affirms that communication is possible between different philosophical backgrounds. Vanguard of this philosophical method contend that contemporary philosophizing is dependent on a variety of cultural frameworks

and that philosophy originated not only in Europe but elsewhere (Wimmer, 1996, p.1) including Africa, as well as America, Asia and Europe.

Following the above, many philosophers can validly speak of their works in reference to their own context or culture, consequently giving birth to such nomenclatures as African philosophy, Asian philosophy or Indian philosophy. This implies that diversity of philosophies focusing on their similarities and differences for the purpose of mutual self-examination that ensues in mutual enrichment is preferable.

The basic question of intercultural philosophy as Wimmer couched it is: “how can philosophy, which can never be expressed independently from linguistic and conceptual tools coming from particular languages and cultures aim to provide us with universally true or valuable answers? For Wimmer, intercultural orientation aids our argumentation not to recede in relativism since such ways will be found in cooperation rather than separation.”

Flowing from the foregoing, it could be argued that intercultural philosophy provides a new conceptual framework that has been employed in thinking, understanding and relating to other cultures. It is in this regard that some philosophers who are convinced that Western philosophy has dominated the philosophical landscape started to via into intercultural philosophy to urge dialogue and communication among cultures.

The need for a philosophy of intercultural hue grew out of the attempt to forge a dialogue among assorted philosophical world views situated in other cultures such as Africa, Asia and china. Vanguard of this approach have grown weary of western philosophy because of its centrist tendency and its inability to deal with differences and other cultural philosophies, to make it possible for other cultures to contribute to core meanings and understanding of philosophy. One can understand intercultural philosophy then as space given to other philosophies to speak.

Clearly, intercultural philosophy gives one the impression that philosophy can be done in a non-strait jacket fashion and that it involves devotion to the concerns of other philosophies besides western philosophy. It points to devotion to specific cultures in one’s philosophical activity. The intercultural philosopher views dialogue and polylogue as veritable means of reaching out to other cultures apart from his own in an attempt to understand or benefit from the other. Beyond philosophical confines, the term interculturality is being used in other fields: religion, peace efforts etc. Intercultural orientation tries to give meaning and space to other cultures; it tries to build bridges among cultures while denouncing ethnocentrism.

Turning to philosophy specifically, interculturality is the viewpoint that philosophy is culture bound and is not the preserve of any one nation. Specifically, it affirms that the place from which we do our philosophy is our condition or culture as racially different people. It takes cognizance of the mixture of cultures. It is thus, a contribution to a new understanding of pluralism, a new way of valuing and embracing diversity and difference. As a philosophical method that situates and locates cultures, interculturality delineates the finite alternatives one has for thinking, conceiving and expressing our philosophy. Consequently, interculturality is something worth pursuing in order to preserve our cultures in the midst of so many conflicting cultures. As a communicative strategy, intercultural philosophy impacts on mainline philosophies as these pertain to issues of life. It helps philosophers of non-western or European origin to assert their identity in the midst of the globalizing community

and other forms of domination.

### **Basis of Interculturality**

Interculturality takes specific indigenous cultures as the source of philosophical enterprise. It affirms the capacity of the philosopher to reflect on his culture and attempts made against certain debilitating experiences in the past. For example, slave trade, colonialism, wars, corruption, leadership problems, poverty. It shies away from any assumed “common experience”, which seems to mask differences, to pretend that there is one way of knowing for all and sundry. It does not see our experiences as fixed and universal. Many a critic may suggest, following this that intercultural philosophy leads to total relativism. However, this is not the case. By insisting on cooperation, mutuality, dialogue and polylogue, the isolationism inherent in individualism, superiority inherent in claims of uniqueness, hegemonic effect of false universalism, all of which are intrinsic elements of absolute relativism dissipates (Isasi – Diaz, 2003, p. 70).

The dialogue and polylogue, which are methods employed in intercultural philosophy insist on making philosophy or culture more open, openness becomes the core value of interculturality and the search for ways of an ever more inclusive culture. In no way is the specificity of intercultural philosophy to be taken as “anything goes” philosophical attitude. It should rather be seen as a denunciation of inadequate and false universalisms that ignore specific issues and challenges of periphery cultures. It is also a rejection of the denunciation of one culture as it was during Africa’s encounter with Europe. It is an attempt to make one’s unique experience count, to question the truth spoken by those who have the power to impose their views as normative. It is an insistence for the need for shared beliefs and strategies that affect the human condition.

It is a way of understanding philosophy by situating it to our peculiar cultural environments. This contrasts from the attempts to see philosophy as being about universals instead of what humans do in their struggle through life. In this way, it challenges the absolutization of mainline philosophy (western philosophy) as normative. It rather uses culture as the source of philosophical reflection.

The west in their encounter with Africans arrogantly disparaged the ways of native Africans as uncouth, savage, and primitive. This attitude was inconsistent with interculturality, which calls for recognition of one culture by another as a credible culture and positive reservoir of values. It was devoid of every sense of embracing diversity that makes it possible for very different elements to influence each other to the point where each is reformulated, maintaining its own specificity but not without taking into consideration the specificity of the other elements. It was a contact based on unequal relationship.

Reflecting on the central theme of intercultural philosophy, Kimmerle and Vincent Shen agree that it is inadequate to do philosophy through the pigeonhole of western philosophy and that every culture has its specific type of philosophy, which deserves equal treatment. Kimmerle exposes the characteristics of interculturality to consist in the fact that it is guided by the methodology of listening, equality and difference. Shen throws light on the epistemological strategies by means of which intercultural philosophy can be undertaken. These are the strategy of appropriation of language, which means learning the language of other traditions of culture and philosophy and strangification, which means the act of going outside of oneself and going to the other cultural context.

Dialogue is essential to interculturality. This involves the unity of action and reflection of the dialoguers for the purpose of transforming and humanizing the world (Freire, 1972, pp. 61-62). It presupposes that the participants in the dialogue recognize each other as equals and abhors the imposition of the truth of one person on the other; it is not an instrument for the domination of one culture or person by another. Humility also characterizes dialogue and this requires that no party in the dialogue should consider himself as the owner of truth or be closed or offended by the contributions of others. Clearly, self-sufficiency is incompatible with dialogue for at the point of encounter, neither should claim to have the monopoly of wisdom or be totally ignorant. What we have are individuals who are attempting together to learn more than they now know (Freire, 1972, p. 63).

Undoubtedly, dialogue presupposes an open mind, an acknowledgement of other possibilities or alternatives different from one's own. This overrides the bigotry and fanaticism that ethnocentrism begets. Mutual enrichment and self-actualization are likely benefits of interculturality through the instrumentality of dialogue. It is from this perspective that this paper looks at the colonial situation and the decolonization process in Africa as well as the various politico-economic systems adumbrated by Senghor, Nkrumah and Azikiwe.

### **Interculturality and the Colonial Situation**

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the African continent was confronted with a new historical epoch. That epoch, which was to last for seventy years was that of colonialism. It marked a turning point in the social, cultural, economic, and political fortunes of Africa. The contact between western imperialism and Africa did not augur well for the native African from interculturality viewpoint. It was such that the invading force (imperialists) considered their ways to be the best and only way (the ideal), which must replace the mode of life of the natives. This formed the basis of their effort to change the mode of life of native Africans and remold them in the image of Europe. Ngugi Wa Thiongo (2009) has noted in this connection that wherever they went in their voyages of land, sea and mind, Europeans planted their own memories on whatever they contacted. This was done by renaming towns and individuals. Africans were given European names. This was done to submit Africa to Euro-American memory and identity. This process of stamping their memory on the mind of Africans was also executed through language. Africans were made to speak the language of conquest other than their own. This led to what Ngugi refers to as *linguicide* and *linguistic famine* or *linguifam*. *Linguicide* is conscious act of language liquidation.

The French were quite brash about this as portrayed in their colonial policy of assimilation, which entailed making the African as much European as his black skin would allow. Besides the political control and economic exploitation, there was concerted effort made by the French to erode the cultural identity of the colonized. Cultural identity refers to the sum total of the cultural reference through which persons and groups are defined and wish to be recognized. The colonized was urged to become like French people – have a good mastery of French language, an appreciable dose of French literature, philosophy and culture. This was achieved through the mechanism of studies in France. The Portuguese had a similar policy of assimilation. Ultimately, this aimed to clone French and Portuguese people respectively, wherever the two colonial powers had dominion.

This led to the loss of African identity as their teaching, writing and arithmetic had to be accompanied by the adoption of western dress, names, food, and lifestyle. What took place

was an organized repression of the cultural life of Africans. Amilcar Cabral (1998) has said that the culture of the people is an undeniable reality in works of art, as well as in oral and written traditions, in cosmological conceptions as well as music and dance in religions and belief as well as in the dynamic balance of economic, political and social structures created by African man. Everything about this culture was despised and denigrated as barbaric. The Europeans embarked upon what Frantz Fanon called the enterprise of deculturation.

This was unmistakable in the attitude of the early missionaries to indigenous institutions and beliefs. They saw this process of deculturation as a divine assignment and were ready to risk death for it. Charles P. Groves (1969, p. 488) gives a deep insight into what transpired:

The early missionaries in other words came as censors of the Africans and in preaching their ideals, the emissaries of the gospel were usually fortified by the unquestioning belief not only in their rightness but also in the depravity of so many indigenous institutions. Tribal collectivism, the power of spirit mediums, witchcraft beliefs and ancestral worship had to go for all were impure. The African had to become a new man. In order to bring about this spiritual regeneration, the early missionaries were willing to risk incredible hardships and death.

It is evident from the above that what happened between the imperialists and Africans was a case of two cultures interacting but not on the basis of equality. It is equally clear from Groves' account that the attempt to retool the minds of Africans and change their values was informed by the fact that for many Europeans at that time, what was uniquely African was short of the ideal and inconsistent with what they considered to be rational and true and that happened to be European values. Believing in the superiority of their religion, race, economy and culture, they tried to order the world culturally, economically and politically in line with Eurocentric world view. Said (1993, p. 17) has said in this connection that this superiority required the colonizers to carry the vocation of converting and ordering the world toward their own identity. Ramose (2006, p. 360) makes the point that one of the ways the colonial conquerors maintained their political superiority over indigenous conquered peoples upon seizing their territory was "to refer to the kings or political heads of their societies as "chiefs in order to avoid equating them with European kings". Further, he affirms that this was done to make them "act as guardians of the law of the conqueror (Ramose, 2006, pp. 359-360). Ultimately, the aim was to diminish their status and make them puppets in the hands of the colonial administrators.

Furthermore, the African conception of reality, knowledge and truth was suppressed while subjecting their lives to the overbearing governance of foreign epistemologies that ultimately led to the killing of their native knowledge systems. At the same time their value system was dislocated. In the African value system, humankind was seen and treated as the centre of the created universe. All other beings were on standby for the service of human beings. Aja (1997a, p.353) has noted in this connection that people's happiness and even their survival depend on the degree of the harmony between them and other beings or forces that inhabit their world. Moral goodness thus, had ontological dimension and to do wrong means not merely to be individually in disharmony with the order in nature, but to harm and disorganize this order itself. All this was supplanted by material and cultural conditions of self-aggrandizement (Aja, 1997b, p. 536) and liberal/individualistic ethic. This is what Ramose (2002, p. 36) refers to as the commission of epistemicide and valuecide respectively.



On the side of the African this condition led to the loss of identity.

Flowing from the foregoing, one can rightly affirm that what transpired between the Europeans and the native Africans in their interaction was incompatible with dialogue, respect for other, equality of persons and consequently, inconsistent with interculturality. The colonial situation was in itself a negation of what Africans would regard as theirs: their cultural identity, personality, and ways of doing things. When Kant's categorical imperative is brought to bear on this situation, one can rightly say that it ran riot of that imperative. That is, the imperative that says that humanity is to be treated as an end and not as a means. Kant's imperative is the demonstration of respect for others: their individuality, identity, culture and destiny. At the same time, it condemns the exploitation and degradation of one man by another. Colonialism was a negation that encountered its own negation in the decolonization process following the Second World War. The synthesis in this dialectical triad came about with the politico-economic constructions of early African leaders.

### **Interculturality and Decolonization in Africa**

Historically, interculturality impinged on the decolonization process in Africa. To begin with, Africans who fought side by side Europeans during the Second World War got acquainted with the home environment of the colonial overlord and realized that Africans had nothing to be ashamed of. What they garnered from comparing the two cultural frameworks, their differences and similarities enabled them to reach the conviction that colonialism was unfair and unjust. Africans woke up and forged a common front to fight colonialism. This took the form of what Shen (1998) referred to as the epistemological strategy of strangification. As already noted, strangification is the act of recontextualization, of going out of one's own cognitive context into the context of strangers.

Similarly, African intellectuals who traveled abroad for professional training returned to apply and adapt the ideas they garnered from their host cultures within the context of African experience. Such political statements as the Declaration of the Rights of Man issued by the French National Assembly and the American Declaration of Independence of 1776, which emphasized certain universal principles as equality, liberty and fraternity exposed in grand style the double standard of the colonial intruders. Their acquaintance with the writings of men like Jean Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Paine and other social theorists caused them to awaken to the injustices of colonialism. They utilized the very weapon that the colonialist used to exploit and oppress Africans to fight colonialism. This informed the assorted philosophies for Africa including negritude. Their existential and social analysis utilized the conceptual schemes and ideas of continental philosophies for reflecting on African condition at that time, which included the colonial situation and the challenges of the newly independent states.

The role of this crop of African intellectuals in political liberation and decolonization of Africa and their analysis of the asymmetrical power relations/knowledge in terms of which Africa is marginalized as the inferior "other" of European culture cum political structures cannot be overemphasized. This enabled them to not only reflect on, interrogate and interpret other cultures but also to engage in critical self examination that would transform one's prevailing condition. This was true of Senghor's African socialism, Nkrumah's Consciencism and Azikiwe's neo-welfarism.

## **Senghor's African Socialism**

Senghor's perspective reflects a three fold process that captures the erosion of the African cultural identity through colonial contact and the rediscovery of this distinct identity. With this, the African found himself in a better position to make a choice as to what to absorb from the cultural contributions of East and west and what could be retained from his own pre-colonial past. The new society adumbrated by Senghor rested on three pillars:

1. An inventory of traditional cultural values which involved studying the mythical past.
2. An inventory of western civilization and its impact on traditional civilization. Works of novelist and playwrights were to act as the repository of inventory reflecting the effects of colonialism on cultural patterns of behavior. This was intended to yield a symbiosis between several cultures neither of which should dominate the other but all of which should be complementary to the others.
3. An inventory of our economic resources, our needs and potentialities both material and spiritual. The foreign contributions, whether adapted to the African cultural or economic realities.

Senghor does not see western or eastern nor African civilization as the universal civilization. He highlights the humanistic tinge in negritude and asserts that it accommodates the complementary values of Europe and the white man, all other races and continents. For Senghor, the aim of this revised negritude is to fertilize and put more life into its own values, which shall embrace all mankind (Omi & Anyanwu, 1984, p. 227).

Clearly, Senghor's position reflects interculturality. Precisely, he affirms the uniqueness of persons and right of such to be different from others as well as the right of a people to its own culture. On account of this, it will be wrong for one culture to impose its values on another. He creates room for cultural intermingling and advocates openness of mind that accommodates the good in other cultures for mutual enrichment and complementarity. Thus, one perceives in Senghor an advocacy for cultural contact devoid of domination but one that aims at cross fertilization. In the modern globalized world, vehicle for achieving this goal include the mass media, means of transport and international political contacts. Through this means, people from different nations, races, creeds and social classes can get to know one another and invite one another to dialogue (Omi & Anyanwu 1984, p. 232). Senghor's therefore, appears to be a sort of ideological synthesis consisting of a balancing act between traditional cultural values, which are needed in order to maintain a sense of African identity and western values. All this reflects interculturality.

## **Nkrumah's Consciencism**

Nkrumah shows how the original attitudes of traditional Africa were distorted by the economic and political ideals of the colonial powers as well as by the religions imported by them. His aim was to construct a new philosophy that sought to achieve harmony among all these foreign influences. He called this philosophical Consciencism. According to him:

With true independence regained...a new harmony that will allow the combined presence of traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Euro Christian Africa, so that this presence is in tune with the original humanist principles underlying African society. Our society is not the old society, but a new society enlarged by Islamic and Euro-Christian influences. A new emergent

ideology is therefore required, an ideology, which can solidify in a philosophical statement and at the same time an ideology, which will not abandon the original humanistic principles of Africa....Such a philosophical statement I propose to name Philosophical Consciencism (Nkrumah, 1970, p.70).

Evidently, Nkrumah does not pretend that the old African society had given way to other influences. His main focus was how the various influences (Islamic, Euro-Christian) could be harmonized with the original humanistic principles undergirding the traditional African society. He achieves a sort of synthesis, which ensues in a much more improved new society. What Nkrumah has done in his philosophical Consciencism is consistent with the principles of interculturality. He does not elevate the traditional values to the position of superiority while arguing for the preservation of some of its aspects. He maintains an open mind, acknowledging the good in other cultures that could complement whatever that was lacking in the indigenous culture.

His was an attempt to elaborate a systematic African Marxist theory. He erects his philosophy on the pillars of Marxist dialectics and materialism. Thus, his Consciencism turns out to be a restatement of the classical arguments of dialectical materialism. The core of Nkrumah's adumbrations lies in what he calls categorical conversion. This is defined as the emergence of self-consciousness from that which is not self-conscious. Elaborately, it implies the derivation of mind from matter and quality from quantity (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 20).

In line with interculturality, Nkrumah makes the point that philosophy should not be apprehended outside of one's social location. In other words, the raw material for philosophy in Africa should be constituted of Africans' existential conditions. This should be matter for reflection and the stuff out of which the intellectual content of our philosophy is constructed. Thus, his definition of philosophical Consciencism as "the map in intellectual terms of disposition of forces, which will enable African society to digest western and the Islamic and Euro-Christian elements in Africa and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality (Mutiso, 1975, p. 644).

### **Azikiwe's Neo-Welfarism**

Before building his neo-welfarist ideology based on the ideas drawn from socialism, capitalism and welfarism, Azikiwe highlighted the strong and weak points of these alternative but opposing systems. He defines a welfare state thus:

A state is said to be welfarist when it prescribes minimum standards and provides equal opportunities in education, health, housing, pensions, rehabilitation....A welfare state protects-and promotes the social and economic wellbeing of its inhabitants, through systems of laws and institutions (Azikiwe, 1980, p.76).

Azikiwe finds the parallel of the welfarist state in the extended family system, which is indigenous to every African society. Welfarism appears very attractive to him because it promotes the principle of mutual aid on humanistic basis. Nevertheless, he does not accept welfarism as complete and adequate because of its shortcomings. He focuses on what he delineates as neo-welfarism. In constructing this ideology, Azikiwe eulogizes the eclectic approach even as he blends elements drawn from socialism, capitalism and welfarism. In this



connection, he affirms that “any person or group can add, subsist, multiply or divide any idea and adapt it to their situation or historical circumstances (Azikiwe, 1980, p. 111).

In some ways, the eclectic approach is in tandem with interculturality in its recognition that something of value can be found in apparently opposing systems and that such valuable elements can be appropriated and blended in order to achieve a better understanding of the issues involved. Implicitly, it entails dialogue or polylogue as the case may be, which are all essential ingredients of interculturality. What Azikiwe sees in the eclectic approach, thus, opposes dogmatism and rather yields to openness of mind for the purpose of understanding truth as it unfolds in its ever fragmentary form as revealed both by experience and reason. Dogmatism, an attitude of mind that cognizes truth as being absolute and only apprehended through one way is in direct opposition to interculturality as the latter promotes more tolerance for that which is different and compromise through dialogue and polylogue.

This perhaps, was what Wimmer referred to as tentative or transitory centrism in his discussion of his four types of cultural centrism. He notes in this connection that this type of centrism allows both the conviction of being right and openness to basically different views of others who are equally convinced of being right. In this respect, plurality rather than conformity is thought to be fundamental and no concrete stance of thinking is held to be final but provisional. Wimmer is convinced that this approach to issues may lead to processes of mutual influencing, persuading and convincing each other.

Thus, in the discourse, every participant remains a centre but none of these “centres” is held to be the definite stand. Everyone fundamentally agrees that there may be views and insights different and even contrary to his or her own. When there are sufficient motives, to dialogue, each “centre” will try to convince the others or some of them (Wimmer, n.d, online: 4).

Thus, the basic attraction of interculturality is basically communicative, dialogical form of knowledge production or problem solving. This immediately raises the following questions: does power free communication reign? What about the violence, commercial interest and manipulation, which shape the world of discourse and power? If one looks closely at the oppressor/oppressed relationship and certain levels of inequality, one cannot but conclude that all are a function of asymmetries of power. However, organizing the world along the lines of intercultural principles will provide the much needed opportunities for each person or culture to have a space and a voice. Subsequently, this paper explores some of the potentials of interculturality in terms of peace and security, overcoming vertical violence, religious intolerance and development.

## **Potentials of Interculturality**

### *Peace and Security*

Peace is not just the absence of war. It also connotes respect and tolerance between people. It is germane to indicate at this point that different cultures and civilizations have assorted interpretations of peace. Interculturality impresses it upon one to look at peace and conflict situations in Africa using theoretical, empirical insights garnered from other cultures, copy what can be copied, modify what can be modified for effective conflict management and peace. At the same time, it does not denigrate the indigenous approaches to conflict resolution and peace building. Thus, it assumes that no one is an island as far as peace and

security issues are concerned and that cultures can be gazed into with respect to how they have harnessed the various approaches to conflict resolution and peace building.

As opposed to the prescriptive model, which transports, exports and imposes what are assumed to be universal models of conflict resolution applicable across all social and cultural contexts, interculturality would rather emphasize ownership, Africanness and relevance in conflict management and peace building. Ownership here means involving the participation of Africans in the conceptualization and practical development of peace programs. Africanness emphasizes the fact that such a program must be developed with specific African orientation in mind and as such reflects African reality using relevant African indigenous approaches to peace and conflict resolution. In terms of relevance, it emphasizes that any program developed should be essential to Africa in terms of uniqueness and context specificity. This does not however, mean that it cannot be conceptualized to reflect global issues and debates that challenge Africa (Francis, n.d. 30).

Much of peace interventions in recent decades have been entirely anti-thetical to indigenous and traditional practices regarding them as contradictory to the enlightened intentions of liberal peace. But intercultural peace encounter provides opportunity for lesson learning exercise between different African traditional peace making techniques. The approach is not unilateral but is one of dialogue and complementarity.

#### *Overcoming Vertical Violence*

Dialogue as a strategy of interculturality calls for the overcoming of vertical violence between oppressors and the oppressed: between men and women, rich and poor, white and black. Oppressed groups are not in a position to dialogue with oppressor groups because the process of dialogue only functions where there is a position of equality and trust (Russell, 1974, p. 68). In interculturality, women and men, black and white, poor and rich, developed and developing nations have ample space to move into a new relationship with each other, in which oppressor groups are not only advocates of the oppressed but also willing to come to a new understanding of how their access to power hurts the rest of the group. Sexism, racism, classicism, imperialism and domination are all contradictions that oppose daily the modern world. In light of these, interculturality is particularly important to the life and health of the society and the world in general. Peace and harmony can come to the world, new lifestyle can come to the world, which eliminate domination and submission and express cooperation.

#### *Overcoming Religious Intolerance*

Proponents of absoluteness of philosophy – western philosophy- are convinced of its superiority in comparison with other forms of philosophy. Advocates of this traditional immutability affirm the superiority of one model of philosophy. The same heart disposition when extended to religion explains the high degree of intolerance among religious faiths. The multiplicity of religious beliefs and the large numbers of Muslims and Christians call for concerted efforts through inter faith dialogue to get all citizens to respect one another's religion and to expose them to similarities and connections between them if any. Such efforts will help to prevent religious conflicts that have dogged many third world countries including Nigeria.

### *Development*

In a world marked by uneven development, intercultural techniques are useful in conscientizing the West on the peculiarities of development problematic as this pertains to the developing nations. The hitherto Eurocentric paradigm of development that exaggerates the value of economic goods and wealth creation founded on competitive marketplace should be critically reexamined for it does not take the peculiarities and specificities of sub-Saharan Africa into account. Reflecting on one of its ideological basis, which is the modernization theory, will bear this point out.

The modernization theory assumes that the third world countries are ‘backward’ in comparison with countries in North America and Western Europe. It postulates that the way out of this backwardness is a process of evolution culminating in modernization. This involves a phased, lineal, irreversible and progressive process following the model of the developed world (Himmelstrand, 1994, p. 36). At the heart of this process is free trade. Following this, it is asserted that each country would prosper if it sold goods for which it had a comparative advantage or a competitive market. It affirms that third world countries will achieve modernization if it absorbed western values and resources in the form of loans and aids (So, 1990, p. 36).

Rostow, in highlighting the phased process of modernization, distinguishes five stages of economic development through which all societies seeking it must traverse. The beginning stage is that of traditional society. From the initial traditional stage, a society slowly moves into “precondition for takeoff growth when it begins to change due to the rise of new entrepreneurs, the expansion of markets and so on. The country reaches the phase called drive to maturity when the rate of investment hits 10% of national income and is sustained. This stage is followed by growth in employment opportunities, increase in national income, rise in consumer demand and the formation of domestic market. At this stage, the country would have reached the final stage of economic development, labeled, ”high mass consumption society”, (Rostow, 1960, pp. 5-14).

One can assert from the foregoing dynamics of modernization that it is a homogenization process. Parson makes allusion to this point in his view that “as time goes on, they (the third world) and we (the western world) will increasingly resemble one another.... (Levy, 1967, p. 207). Levy concurs with the above position in his view that modernization is a universal solvent in that more contact with a modern society effectuates modernization of a primitive society. He asserts that patterns of modernization have manifested universal tendency to penetrate any social context they come in contact with. Once this penetration starts, the previous indigenous patterns give way and it does this in the direction of some of the patterns of the modernized society (Levy, 1967, pp. 206-207). Following this, Ajei (2007, p. 33), has said that this process of seeking homogeneity from primitive/traditional stage linked with the third world and advancing to the complex/modern stage associated with the western world is an Americanization/Europeanization process.

Viewing the above from the interculturality standpoint, one can say that the historical experiences of sub-Saharan Africa, particularly that of colonialism and the rape of the continent consequent upon it are both disregarded and assimilated to the historical experience of the West. This prescription to the African countries to move along the same path as the West reenacts the ethnocentric belief that European cultural knowledge and values are the best in the world (Irele, 1993). This ethnocentric posture overlooks the possibility of an

alternative pathway to development apart from the dominant paradigm, economism. But can Africa's development be based on a metaphysics of knowledge that treats the rational and critical capacities of traditional Africa with contempt? (Hegel 1956: 93). It makes sense then to question such development programs such as Lagos Plan of Action, New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), which are adaptations and reconstructions of Eurocentric paradigms as well as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) in terms of their ability to address the needs of the Africans or deal with the problem hindering Africa's development.

Modernization assumptions are incompatible with intercultural requirements in the sense that it is exclusivist of traditional society. Its insistence on the need to eliminate traditional values on the road to development gives one the impression that tradition and modernity are mutually exclusive. But are they? Gyekye (1997, pp. 252-263), affirms that tradition and modernity always coexist and nurture each other in every culture. Thus, modernity does not have to destroy everything traditional. It does not have to throw overboard those cherished values of traditional African culture, such as communalism, family hood and ubuntu in terms of which society was organized on the ethic of cooperation for the common good. In fact, if the communalistic ethic were to be translated to state policy, it could be the elixir needed to meet social justice needs and reduce poverty in the contemporary Africa.

What one is saying is that interculturality presupposes that African development policies reflect adequately indigenous socio-cultural values in order to reinforce our cultural identity. It highlights the issue that development programs that work in some areas may not work in others. It provides the basis for adapting development prescriptions to the conditions prevailing in the recipient countries at any point in time. The recipient's needs, own plans and priorities must be at the centre stage. This will require insight into socio-political conditions and priorities in the recipient countries. A precondition for interculturality is understanding and respect for other cultures. This enables the participants to know who the other is. This also calls for active public discourse on development, in order to stimulate an active, constructive debate based on knowledge, experience and insight into the problems and opportunities facing the beneficiaries. Thus, in development matters, interculturality creates room for participation and sustainability. The key ideas in interculturality have found operational expression through grass root empowerment, civil society enhancement and cultural appropriateness, all of which have become mainstays of development programs and projects.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This paper set out to examine interculturality as a philosophical method of apprehending cultural reality in the context of Africa's colonial and decolonization experience. Having critiqued colonialism from the perspective of the requirements of interculturality, the paper highlighted the role played by this orientation in the decolonization process and how it was used by Africans in constructing politico-economic systems for the newly independent states. From the observations made herein, this paper avers that in light of the challenges posed by ethnocentrism, religious intolerance/bigotry, parochialism and dogmatism to world peace and stability, interculturality is the key to affirming and accommodating cultural diversity, which more than ever before is becoming increasingly difficult to wish away in this age of globalization. It is the antidote needed to douse the tension and the violent outbursts which the domination of one culture by another could cause.

Such violent eruptions are quite plenty in the present globalised world.

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