

## AN IGWEBUIKE AND TRANSMODERN PERSPECTIVE OF MODERNITY

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### **Abstract**

*The historical period that is termed modern and its intellectual and cultural products have engaged the attention of scholars from both theoretical and practical points of view. Particularly, with the rise of theoretical and scholarly discussions on development, the idea of modernity/modernization has become pungent. The position in this regard has been that to develop is to modernize. Modernization as presented in this developmental framework refers to the way the West (specifically Europe and America) have moved from being rural agrarian communities to urban industrial cities. Consequently, development entails modernization and to modernize requires following the steps of the West. Within this framework and even from a general historical context, the modern is exclusively defined from the Euro-American point of view. Numerous reactions have trailed this understanding of modernity and these reactions have demanded a modification or a redefinition of this understanding. This paper is aimed at exploring this redefinition from the standpoint of transmodernity and Igwebuike philosophy. Specifically, the paper argues that: (i) the current understanding of modernity is exclusively Euro-American; (ii) following transmodern trajectory, there are valid, genuine and significant non-European contributions to the making of modernity; (iii) using the Igwebuike framework, modernity should be seen as complementary rather than exclusive as modern African is already exemplifying. The conclusion is that any understanding of modernity that ignores the observations in the foregoing risks not only being provincial, but exclusive. The philosophical method of analysis which entails exposition and critique is what the essay adopts.*

**Key words:** Complementarity, Euro-American, Igwebuike, Modernity, Transmodernity

### **Introduction**

Numerous reasons abound for the engagement of the cultural and intellectual movement called modernity. Various disciplines have been involved in this

engagement for numerous reasons and from diverse points of view. Modern is the root word for modernity. Modern can mean all of post-medieval European history, in the context of dividing history into three large epochs: Antiquity, Medieval, and Modern. Likewise, it is often used to describe the Euro-American culture that arises out of the Enlightenment and continues in some way into the present. The term "Modern" is also applied to the period beginning somewhere between 1870 and 1910, through the present, and even more specifically to the 1910-1960 period. The cultural, intellectual and socio-political aura that emanates from this time is this is what modernity is all about. Distinctive features have also been attached to this period of history. Bauman, though a severe critique of modernity who calls it a holocaust,<sup>36</sup> admits that, the modern age defined itself as, above all, the Kingdom of Reason and Rationality. These two along with all the implications that follow from them constitute the defining features of modernity. Intellectual concern with this movement could be from the perspective of showing the inherent deficiencies of modernity.<sup>37</sup> Others are concerned with it to show the power and potency of it.<sup>38</sup> Yet another perspective looks at modernity from the point of view how it can integrate with other non-European efforts at progress in order to build a comprehensive developmental ideal for humanity. This is the background from which this essay focuses its attention on modernity. It seeks to look at modernity from the prism of transmodernity and Igwebuike philosophy with the view to developing a robust concept of development for humanity and for Africa in particular. To accomplish this task, the paper first begins by looking at the Euro-American vision of modernity, then it considers the transmodern interjection in the form of planetarity. Last attention is focused on the complementarity orientation of Igwebuike philosophy and how this drives African modernity. The final point is that, the self-conception of modernity cannot ignore these vital contributions to its essence if it is to retain its posture as a human ideal rather than a provincial or regional alternative.

### **Modernity and the Euro-American Vision**

Modernity as defined above, has its Euro-American understanding. That is, an understanding of it that places it within a trajectory of the social, political and economic power of Europe and America. This understanding of modernity is

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<sup>36</sup> See, Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press 1989.

<sup>37</sup> See also, Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press 1989. Also, Jane Bennett, "Modernity and its Critics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. Edited by Robert E. Goodin. Sep 2013. On line at 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.013.0006

<sup>38</sup> All of the discourse about modernisation with regard to development all belong to this level of the discourse. The point here is to show that you have developed only when you have been able to modernise.

deeply Eurocentric. This is the understanding of modernity operating in the works of Charles Taylor<sup>39</sup> and Jürgen Habermas<sup>40</sup> operate. In Dussel's opinion, this concept of modernity understands modernity as a distinctively European phenomenon and every other culture had to adopt the European culture in order to be reckoned with as modern. This concept of modernity is not just Eurocentric but it is also provincial and regional. It is an 'emancipation, a Kantian *Ausgang*, or 'way out,' from immaturity by means of reason, understood as a critical process that affords humanity the possibility of new development'.<sup>41</sup> In identifying the specific historical moment of this modernity, Dussel observes that it took place in the eighteenth century and the temporal and spatial dimensions were described by Hegel and commented on by Jürgen Habermas as well. For Habermas the key moments of this concept of modernity are Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. He even goes as far as later suggesting that the English Parliament should be added as one of the key moments too. The sequence will therefore be from Italy to Germany to England and to France. For Dussel this perspective is Eurocentric because "it indicates intra-European phenomena as the starting point of modernity and explains its later development without making recourse to anything outside of Europe. In a nutshell, this is the provincial, regional view that ranges from Max Weber (I have in mind here his analysis on "rationalization" and the "disenchantment of worldviews") to Habermas. For many, Galileo (condemned in 1616), Francis Bacon (*Novum Organum*, 1620), or Descartes (*Discourse on Method*, 1636) could be considered the forebears of the process of modernity in the seventeenth century."<sup>42</sup> This concept of modernity is that which Habermas thinks has not been completed and need to be completed for true emancipation to be arrived at.<sup>43</sup> Reason here is 'emancipating reason'.

This emancipating reason also has its irrational, violent and annihilating part. The exercise of this irrationality of emancipating reason is what constitutes the

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<sup>39</sup> See, Charles Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity." *The Hastings Center Report*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Mar. - Apr., 1995), pp. 24-33; See also the collection of essays titled: *Charles Taylor's Vision of Modernity: Reconstructions and Interpretations*. Edited by Christopher Garbowski, Jan Hudzik and Jan Kłos. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> See, Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Translated by Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990.

<sup>41</sup> See, Immanuel Kant, What is Enlightenment. (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 28-41. Online at <https://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=6&ved=2ahUKEwj5jc3Fv8DjAhWkVRUIHd99AHIQFjAFegQIBhAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fassets.press.princeton.edu%2Fchapters%2Fs6787.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3-duESdsEI2icpBL0AaJNn>

<sup>42</sup> Enrique Dussel, "Europe, Modernity, Eurocentrism," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1.3, (2000), 469-70.

<sup>43</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, xix.

'Myth of Modernity'. The point here is that with Europe's contact with other cultures of the world and the advantage it had over them, it began to exercise its reason in some irrational forms. In Dussel's words 'modernity implicitly contains a strong rational core that can be read as a 'way out' for humanity from a state of regional and provincial immaturity. On the other hand, this same modernity carries out an irrational process that remains concealed even to itself. That is to say, given its secondary and mythical negative content, modernity can be read as the justification of an irrational praxis of violence'. The last sentence notes the two moments of the Eurocentric concept of modernity. That is modernity has: a) a mythical negative content which b) justifies an irrational praxis of violence. Dussel itemizes some of the constituent element of these moments of modernity as follows:

- ✓ The modern civilization casts itself as a superior, developed civilization (something tantamount to unconsciously upholding a Eurocentric position).
- ✓ The aforementioned superiority makes the improvement of the most barbaric, primitive, coarse people a moral obligation (from Ginés de Sepúlveda until Kant or Hegel).
- ✓ The model of this educational process is that implemented by Europe itself (in fact, it is a unilineal, European development that will eventually –and unconsciously – result in the "developmentalist fallacy").
- ✓ Insofar as barbaric people oppose the civilizing mission, modern praxis must exercise violence only as a last resort, in order to destroy the obstacles impeding modernization (from the 'colonial just war' to the Gulf War).
- ✓ As the civilizing mission produces a wide array of victims, its corollary violence is understood as an inevitable action, one with a quasi-ritual character of sacrifice; the civilizing hero manages to make his victims part of a saving sacrifice (I have in mind here the colonized indigenous people, the African slaves, women, and the ecological destruction of nature).
- ✓ For modern consciousness, the barbarians are tainted by 'blame' stemming from their opposition to the civilizing process, which allows modernity to present itself not only as innocent but also as absolving the blame of its own victims.
- ✓ Finally, given the 'civilizing' character of modernity, the sufferings and sacrifices – the costs – inherent in the 'modernization' of the

‘backward,’ immature people, of the races fitted to slavery, of the weaker female sex, are understood as inevitable.<sup>44</sup>

Given these elements, it becomes clear the level of complicity the Eurocentric concept of modernity has in the levels of exploitation the world is suffering today. For this reason, modern reason does not need fulfillment, but transcendence.

### **Planetary Modernity: The Transmodern Interjection**

The transmodern interjection with regard to the Euro-American version of modernity comes basically from the works of Walter D. Mignolo and Enrique Dussel. This interjection comes more in the form of a redefinition of the Euro-American vision of modernity. It is within the context of understanding local histories as planetary phenomena that Mignolo makes the case that “‘Modernity,’ in other words, is not the natural unfolding of world history, but the regional narrative of the Eurocentric worldview.”<sup>45</sup> Within this planetary context Dussel also undertakes a redefinition of the Eurocentric conception of modernity giving it a planetary undertone. Dussel begins his case even from the name ‘Europe’, for him there is a semantic slippage in the adoption of the name Europe. In his opinion,

the mythological Europa was the daughter of a Phoenician king and thus was Semitic. This Europe that comes from the Orient bears little resemblance to the ‘definitive’ Europe (the modern Europe); one should not mistake Greece with the future Europe. This future Europe was situated north of Macedonia and north of Magna Graecia in Italy. The future Europe was the home of everything that was considered barbaric (thus, in later times, Europe eventually usurped a name that did not belong to it). The classical Greeks were well aware that both Asia (the area that would later become a province in the Roman Empire and which corresponded to contemporary Turkey) and Africa (Egypt) were home to the most developed cultures. Asia and Africa were not considered barbaric, although neither were they considered wholly human. What became modern Europe lay beyond Greece’s horizon

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<sup>44</sup> Enrique Dussel, “Europe, Modernity, Eurocentrism,” 472-3.

<sup>45</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, 13.

and therefore could not in any way coincide with the originary Greece. Modern Europe, situated to the north and west of Greece, was simply considered the uncivilized, the nonpolitical, the nonhuman. By stating this I am trying to emphasize that the unilineal diachrony Greece-Rome-Europe is an ideological construct that can be traced back to late-eighteenth-century German romanticism. Therefore, the single line of development Greece-Rome-Europe is a conceptual by-product of the Eurocentric 'Aryan model'.<sup>46</sup>

From the above one thing is clear, the ideological base for the linking of modern Europe to Greece and Rome. This in Dussel's opinion is not a comprehensive narrative of the story of modernity Europe. This is because between Rome and Modern Europe, there are some significant interventions from other cultures which contributed in the making of Modern Europe.

Dussel even goes as far as diagrammatically representing this incomprehensiveness and showing the points where significant cultural interventions are made from outside Modern Europe. Fig 4.1 shows this very well. Essentially, the figure attempts a comprehensive diagrammatic representation of the historical sequence from the Greeks to modern European world.

With this schema, Dussel shows that there is no direct Greek influence on western Latin Europe (it is mediated by both arrows a and b). That is, the mediation was done by the Arabic and Jewish world from the tenth century onwards. There is also no direct link between either sequence c of modern Europe and Greece or the Byzantine world (arrow d), but there is a direct link with the western Christian Latin-Roman world. What these show is that, in the making of modern Europe, the Arabs and Jews were fundamental non-European interventions that the sequence Greek-Rome-Modern Europe has not properly represented. In fact in Dussel's words "Muslim 'universality' reached from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Thus, Latin Europe was a secondary peripheral culture and up to this point had never been the 'center' of history."<sup>47</sup> Within this context

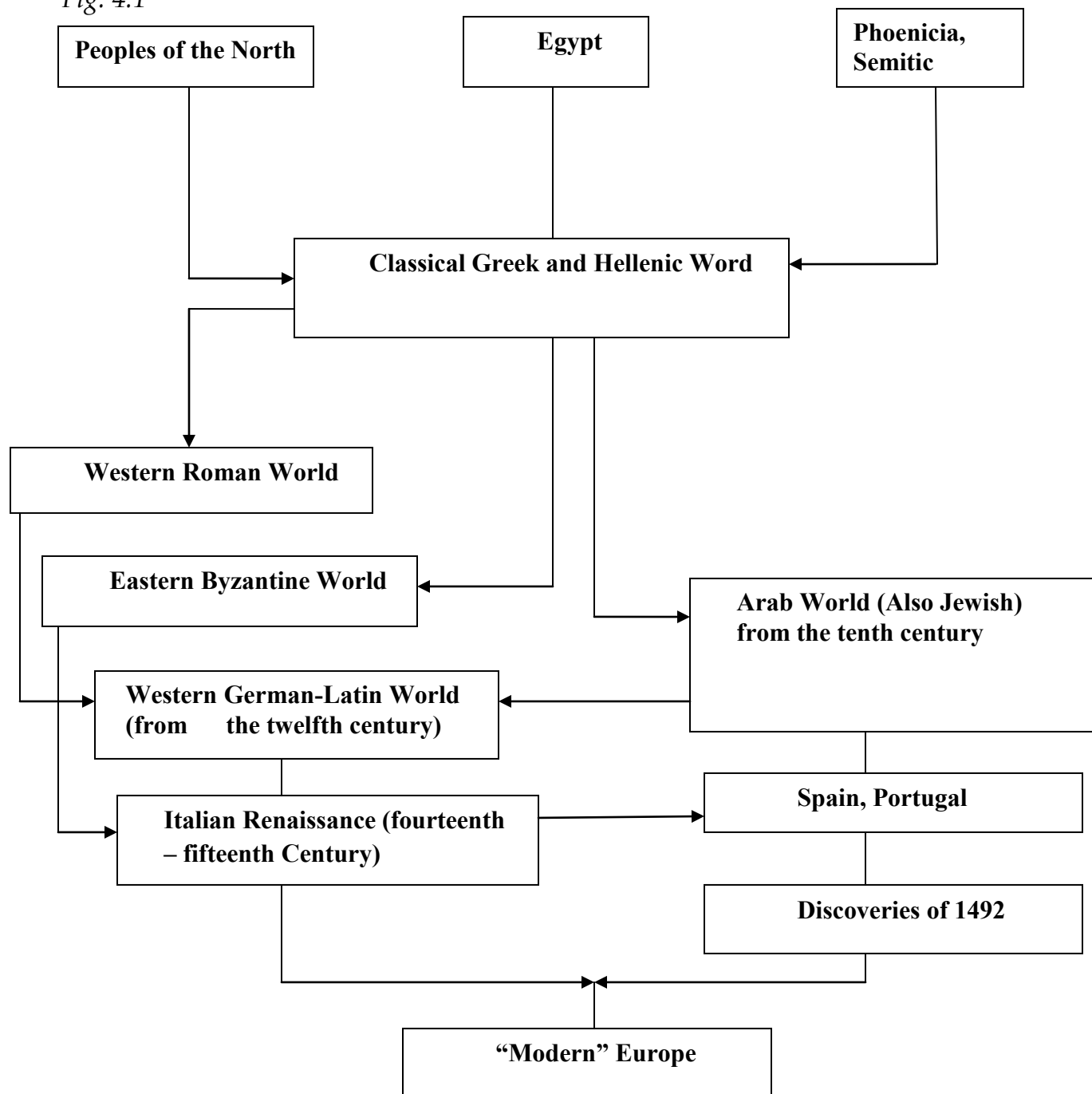
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<sup>46</sup> Enrique Dussel, "Europe, Modernity, Eurocentrism," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1.3, (2000), 465.

<sup>47</sup> Enrique Dussel, "Europe, Modernity, Eurocentrism," 466.

then, ‘the crusades can be seen as the first attempt of Latin Europe to impose itself on the eastern Mediterranean’.

Fig. 4.1



Dussel also takes issue with the equation that Western=Hellenistic + Roman + Christian. This equation resulted from the fact that during the Italian Renaissance there was a coming together of independent cultures. Here, the Latin world joined the eastern Greek world and they subsequently confronted the Turkish world. In turn, the Turks forgot the Hellenistic-Byzantine origin of the Muslim world and thus allowed to emerge this equation. This equation Dussel considers the Eurocentric ideology of German romanticism. This perspective is erroneous for two reasons

First, there was not yet a world history in an empirical sense. There were only isolated, local histories of communities that extended over large geographical areas: the Romans, the Persians, the Hindu kingdoms, the Siamese, the Chinese, or the Mesoamerican and Inca worlds in America. Second, their geopolitical locations did not allow them to be a center (the Red Sea or Antioch, the final destination of commerce with the East, was not the center but the westernmost border of the Euro-Afro-Asian market).<sup>48</sup>

In summary Dussel concludes that Latin Europe of the fifteenth century was nothing more than a peripheral, secondary geographical location situated in the westernmost boundary of the then Euro-Afro-Asian world, besieged by the Muslim world.

In transcending this Eurocentric modern reason, Dussel develops another concept of modernity. This concept takes into view a consideration of a world perspective on modernity. The point here is that modernity is at the center of world history and this centrality is achieved from various perspectives: state, military, economic, philosophical. This centrality was very important for Dussel in that it was Europe's distinct contribution to the making of modernity. This is because "all the great Neolithic cultures were 'centers' of civilizing subsystems with their own peripheries, but without any historically significant connection with other ecumenes. Only modern European culture, from 1492 onwards, was at the center of a world system, of a universal history that confronts (with diverse types of subsumption and exteriority) as all other cultures of the earth: cultures

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<sup>48</sup> Enrique Dussel, "Europe, Modernity, Eurocentrism," 468.

that will be militarily dominated as its periphery.”<sup>49</sup> As indicated above, the specific historical point for the articulation of this concept of modernity is 1492. By implications, before 1492 there was no world history in the empirical sense of the word. Empires or cultural systems simply coexisted. What existed before this time was just a series of interregional relations. On this, Dussel writes, ‘for me, the centrality of Latin Europe in world history stands as the fundamental determination of modernity’. This centralization of Latin Europe began to take place right from the fifteenth century when the Spaniards and Portuguese began their exploration of the Atlantic and to take over the various parts of the New World. Contesting against Hegel and Habermas submissions about the start of modernity, Dussel maintains that “the seventeenth century (as exemplified in the works of Descartes and Bacon) must then be seen as the result of one-and-a-half centuries of modernity. It is a consequence rather than a starting point.”<sup>50</sup> With the centralization of Latin Europe here, other culture were denoted as being in the periphery while Europe is in the centre. This concept of modernity takes into cognizance the fact that modernity was more of a planetary phenomenon than a European one.

An obvious implication of this perception that modernity is planetary is that, “a great part of the achievements of modernity were not exclusively European but grows from a continuous dialectic of impact and counter-impact, effect and counter-effect, between modern Europe and its periphery even in that which we could call the constitution of modern subjectivity.”<sup>51</sup> At a more specific level, Dussel notes that Latin America is the first ever periphery of Modern European and it gave “Europe the first *comparative advantage* that explains, in part (but it is a part of the explanation that is never considered in the interpretations of modernity), the triumph over the Muslim world, vanquished at Lepanto in 1571 (25 years after the discovery and the beginning of the exploitation of the Zacatecas silver mines in Mexico and the Potosi silver mines in Bolivia), and over China, which ‘closes’ upon itself until the 20th century.”<sup>52</sup> It is important to note this because Europe was at the periphery of the then Afro-Asiatic-Mediterranean interregional relations and this civilization that was before Latin Europe was very fundamental to making of modernity as a whole.

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<sup>49</sup> Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, Translated and Edited by Eduardo Mendieta (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), 132.

<sup>50</sup> Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, 470.

<sup>51</sup> Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, 132-3.

<sup>52</sup> Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, 134.

Dussel even goes into history to note that China was a nation of power at the time of the rise of Latin Europe and could have explored and taken over the New World. In his words,

...the reason China could not be hegemonic in the 'new system' that emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the reason it did not discover America, was not because it was inferior to the Europe of the time (either from an economic, a cultural, a technical, or even a scientific point of view), but because the 'center' of the 'interregional system' was west of China, in Hindustan and the Islamic world. America was beyond its horizon—if the Chinese did arrive in Alaska or California, they did not find anything of commercial interest.<sup>53</sup>

He further corroborates the truth of the power of China at the time with the ideas from the works of Adam Smith and Max Weber. An extensive quote here will show Dussel's impression about Smith on the power of China at the time. Dussel writes that,

In *The Wealth of Nations* (1976 [1776]), Adam Smith often comments on China's greatness, its economic importance, and its low salaries: 'China has been long one of the richest, that is, one of the most fertile, best cultivated, most industrious, and most populous countries in the world. . . . The accounts of all travelers, inconsistent in many other respects, agree in the low wages of labour, and in the difficulty which a labourer finds in bringing up a family in China.' Notice how Smith uses the terms *industrious* and *wage*, just as he does in referring to England or Scotland, which makes it seem unlikely that such manufacturing 'industriousness' and such a 'salary' would not produce for the factory owners a 'surplus' in the strict sense: 'The course of human prosperity, indeed, seems scarce ever to have been of so long continuance as to enable any great country to acquire capital sufficient for all those three purposes; unless, perhaps, we give credit to the wonderful accounts of the wealth and cultivation of

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<sup>53</sup> Enrique Dussel, *World-System and "Trans'-Modernity," Nepantla: Views from South* 3.2 (2002), 224.

China'. 'China is a much richer country than any part of Europe, and the difference between the price of subsistence in China and in Europe is very great. Rice in China is much cheaper than wheat is any-where in Europe'. The life of the elite is much more developed in China than in Europe (this is the 'luxury' that Werner Sombart (1965 [1913]) requires for capitalism): 'The retinue of a grandee in China or Indostan accordingly is, by all accounts, much more numerous and splendid than that of the richest subjects in Europe'. Nevertheless, the enormous masses of China's workers are poorer: 'But the real price of labour, the real quantity of the necessities of life which is given to the labourer, it has already been observed, is lower both in China and Indostan, the two great markets of India, than it is through the greater part of Europe'. For Adam Smith the discovery of Spanish America permitted Europe to buy from both markets (the two richest in the world-system and the most varied in the world prior to the Industrial Revolution): 'The silver of the new continent seems in this manner to be one of the principal commodities by which the commerce between the *two extremities [sic] of the old one* is carried on, and it is by means of it, in a great measure, that those distant parts of the world are connected with one another'.<sup>54</sup>

From all of these, one sees the advantage that China had economically over Europe and the fact that it was only after Europe had access to Latin America that she now had the economic power to buy from the Chinese and Indostan markets. Were it not for the discovery of Spanish America, Europe was still a periphery. Besides the fact that the centre of the world for China was not in the New World, the internal crisis in China also gave Europe the opportunity to take over and become the economic centre of the world.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Enrique Dussel, *World-System and "Trans'-Modernity,"* 225.

<sup>55</sup> Enrique Dussel, *World-System and "Trans'-Modernity,"* 226. For Dussel following Weber, It would seem that until the eighteenth century, China was the greatest producer of commodities, and that the China Sea was an unequalled mercantile site within the world-system (because of the articulation of the Old World with the New World since 1492). The Chinese crises of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries resulted, partly, in China's inability to realize the modernity as Europe did. In this opinion, the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), which founded the highly developed Chinese empire (which included capitalist regions), went into a relative crisis with the arrival of

In a similar vein Weber holds strongly that if Europe had not been the most prepared region to carry out the industrial revolution, it would have been China or India. Weber devotes a great deal of time in his works on ethics, religion and morality to showing 'why China and India did not give rise to capitalist society. His voluminous research produced the same answer time and again: China and Hindustan could not be capitalist because of their corporate property regime, because they had a bureaucracy that impeded competition, and so on'. On the other hand, while 'studying the ethics of the prophets of Israel, Weber found that, as far back as this, the long road was being built that would lead to capitalist modernity; the last stage of this road would be the reform promoted by Calvinist ethics (the conditions for the realization of the capitalist system). Calvinist individualism, wealth considered as a divine blessing, competition, private property, and the discipline of an austere subjectivity made the birth of capitalism possible, conditions not found in Chinese corporatism or in the magical quasi-feudalism of Hindustani Brahmanic culture'. Following from this, Christianity and the Protestant ethic were fundamental to the making of the Latin Europe and its capitalist identity. The point to be made is that, other superior cultures existed before Latin Europe, but did not force itself on Latin Europe and in actual fact had a role to play in the making of Modernity and its history of which Latin Europe is at the center, as such it is not fair for Latin Europe to begin to claim exclusively that modernity is purely its product and to begin to force itself on others.

At another level, the anti-modern discourses which other non-European cultures have produced against modernity and its excesses have gone unnoticed just because they are not European. In Dussel's opinion, the debate between Sepúlveda and de las Casas is classic example of a non-European anti-discourse on modernity that has not been properly taken note of. Specifically in evaluating Habermas' *The Philosophical Discourses of Modernity* Dussel observes that Habermas' concept of modernity is not just Eurocentric, but it also contains strong elements of the developmentalist fallacy. This is because

In first place, Habermas situates in time the beginning of this 'counterdiscourse': there at the beginning stands Kant (we would therefore be only two hundred years old!). Yet, in historical reality, from a non-eurocentric

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the Manchurian dynasty (1644–1796). In Europe, this was a time when the rococo "Chinese style" (*chinoiserie*) became fashionable (porcelain utensils, lacquered paintings on wood, baldachins in the gardens to have tea, decorated Chinese pavilions, silk for wide-sleeved garments, etc.).

point of view of modernity (that is to say, worldly), this *counter-discourse* is already five centuries old: it began on the Hispaniola Island when Anton de Montesinos attacked the injustices that were being carried out against the Indians, and from there it reached the classrooms of Salamanca (since it is there that the critique of 1514 is continued with the theoretical and practical labor of Bartolome de las Casas, and it is there also where this counter-discourse will be expressed in the university lectures of Francisco de Vitoria concerning *De indiis*). As is always the case with Central-European philosophers, and especially Germans, the 16th and 17th centuries do not count, and Latin America much less.<sup>56</sup>

Here then, there is a systematic denial of the contributions of the Spaniards and the Spanish Americans (colonial world) to the development of a counter-discourse on modernity, which in actual fact is not true. But this Eurocentric mentality has to be pushed along on the grounds that since modernity is purely a Eurocentric horizon, '...the counter-discourse is also an exclusively European product. In this manner, the periphery itself, in order to criticize Europe, will have to europeanize itself, because it would have to use a European counter-discourse in order to show Europe its own contradictions, without being able, once again, to contribute anything new and having to negate itself'. There is by this an attempt to even make similar the point of radical counter-discourse. But,

If ... this counter-discourse is already the dialectical product (affirmation of alterity as principle of negation of the negation: analectical movement) of a critical dialogue with alterity, it cannot be said that it is exclusively and intrinsically European, and least of all that Europe is Europe the only one that can 'retrieve from its *own* traditions' the continuation of such counter-discourses. On the contrary, it is likely that it is only outside Europe where this counter-discourse may develop more critically, and not as continuation of a strange or *exclusively* European discourse, but as continuation of a critical labor that the periphery has already stamped in the counter-discourse produced in

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<sup>56</sup> Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, 135.

Europe and on its own peripheral discourse (in fact and almost integrally, when it is non-eurocentric it is already counter-discourse).<sup>57</sup>

This is the point here, a true critical discourse on modernity has already been started outside the Eurocentric counter-discourse and these should be allowed to thrive for Europe alone does not have the right to do philosophy. In fact, European philosophy is not the exclusive product of Europe. Instead it is the product of the humanity located in Europe, and with the contribution of the peripheral cultures that were in an essential co-constitutive dialogue. Here then, there are productive possibilities within both modernity and periphery and “the fulfillment of modernity has nothing to do with the shift from the potentialities of modernity to the actuality of European modernity. Indeed, the fulfillment of modernity would be a transcendental shift where modernity and its denied alterity, its victims, would mutually fulfill each other in a creative process.”<sup>58</sup> The process of achieving this transcendence is what Dussel calls transmodernity.

### **Complementary Modernity: Igwebuike and the African Vision**

At yet another level, the reactions to modernity or the anti-modern discourse can be articulated from an African point of view. Igwebuike as an organising frame in African Philosophy is on trajectory from which modernity can be conceived and contextualized from the African spectrum. Igwebuike is an Igbo word or phrase. As a phrase, *Igwebuike*, when broken into its component gives *igwe bu ike* which can be translated as ‘number is power’. That is, solidarity and complementarity gives power or the ability to be insurmountable.<sup>59</sup> Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu in conceptualizing this framework avers that, it is so central to African thought. It is so central to the point that, *Igwebuike* is that which universalises and particularises logic within the African context. At the universal level, logic is one, it is that which appeals to every reasonable mind. Syllogistic arguments, for example, belong to this universal level. Logic becomes particular within the context of application. Here, cultural experience becomes a fundamental fact in determining what is logical. This the point where Igwebuike connects with African logic. It is what determines logicity in the African context. Igwebuike represents complementarity. It is an Igbo word or phrase which can be translated as ‘number is strength’. That is, human beings are

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<sup>57</sup> Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, 136-7.

<sup>58</sup> Enrique Dussel, “Europe, Modernity, Eurocentrism,” 474.

<sup>59</sup> Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu, “Igwebuikeconomics: Towards An Inclusive Economy for African Economic Development.” *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 3, No. 6, 2017. 121.

insurmountable when they come together in solidarity and complementarity. Being is presented here as that which possesses a relational character. Igwebuike framework seeks the conglomeration, unification, and summation of fragmented thoughts. This complementary relationality of Igwebuike can be linked to the relational harmony which Plato describes in the soul and the state in *The Republic*. Igwebuike insists that humans all work together in order to attain the total joy of completion.<sup>60</sup>

This frame of complementarity and solidarity is what constructs the African vision of modernity. Scholarly discussions have been very prolific on how African can integrate modernity. Right from the point of the most recent contact (particularly in slave trade and colonialism) between Africa and Europe, the question of the best way for Africa to envision modernity and to integrate into it has been germane. The struggle with integration and conceptualization of modernity has been within the context of the tradition – modernity divide in Africa. The question has always been, to what extent can modernity be integrated over tradition in Africa? This is so because, what African had and practiced before the coming of slave dealer and colonial masters is what is called tradition. What the slave dealers and colonial masters came with is modernity (civilisation). The attitude towards modernity in this frame oscillates between the extreme positions of either to totally accept what the white man offered or to totally reject what he offered. To these approaches there was a third which was a midway. This position holds that, “modernization is not unilinear, with modern features gradually replacing traditional ones. The opinion is that traditional features might, in fact, be revitalized and strengthened by modernization.”<sup>61</sup> It can also be said that, traditional elements could also give more vigour modern convictions, within this form of understanding. This sounds like a complementary view of modernity or modernization should be.

At deeper levels, African scholars like Chiekh Anta Diop have even gone as far back as ancient times to insist that African civilization is the basis for the rationality which modern Europe has arrogated and is posing to propagate to Africa in the guise of the civilizing mission. He asserts, Europe has evolved under the aegis of Africa; it became rational by following the example and teachings of Africa, the mother of civilizations and the originator of modernity,

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<sup>60</sup> Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu, “Igwebuike and the Logic (Nka) of African Philosophy.” *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2017. 16.

<sup>61</sup> See, J. P. Schraeder, *African Politics and Society: A Mosaic in Transformation*. Second Edition. Belmont, CA.: Wordsworth.

which emerged along the banks of the Nile during the time of the Egyptian pharaohs.<sup>62</sup> By reintroducing Africa as a participant in the development of rationality and modernity, Cheikh Anta Diop reconfirms Africa as producer and consumer of modernity.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, Socé Diop, in his novel *Karim* (1935), relates with gusto the metamorphoses of the main character, Karim, who assumes multiple identities, including an accountant trained at a French school, a Senegalese Muslim from Saint-Louis (the oldest French colonial settlement in Africa) educated in the traditions of Islam and the values of the Wolof aristocracy, a dancer and charmer cognizant of urban opportunities and colonial chances. For each identity, Diop gives Karim a corresponding clothing style, dance steps, a manner of being and acting that are superimposed with close attention to French, African, and Islamic teachings and practices on issues of aesthetics and rhythm, dress, love, and sex. Karim represents the celebration of a hybrid form of being;<sup>64</sup> a kind of being whose emergence is formed from different combinations, be they colonial and traditional. The approach taken by Socé Diop is shared by "the translators of colonial modernity" analyzed by Simon Gikandi.

Gikandi describes superbly the dilemma of constructing an indigenous culture that embraces the colonial political economy both internally and externally, and examines the production of colonial modernity through a never-ending negotiation between the desire to maintain the integrity and autonomy of colonized societies and the willingness to face up to the European presence and its political economy.<sup>65</sup> This never ending negation is the approach which insists that colonial and traditional elements complement one another in the construction of African modernity and the new African self. This complementary disposition is what puts the Igwebuiké maxim at work here. Even at the earliest point interaction between the African reality and colonial incursion, H. I. E. Dhlomo in his great essay of 1939 titled "Why Study Tribal Dramatic Forms" gave the justification for such a complementary interaction between modernity and tradition in the following words, our time

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<sup>62</sup> See, Also, Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. Translated by Mercer Cook. New York: L. Hills, 1974.

<sup>63</sup> Mamadou Diouf "Modernity: Africa." New Dictionary of the History of Ideas. *Encyclopedia.com*. 15 Jul. 2019 <<https://www.encyclopedia.com>>.

<sup>64</sup> Mamadou Diouf "Modernity: Africa." New Dictionary of the History of Ideas. . *Encyclopedia.com*. 15 Jul. 2019 <<https://www.encyclopedia.com>>.

<sup>65</sup> Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). 23–41.

...is a time when an old indigenous culture clashes with a newer civilization, when tradition faces powerful exotic influences. It is a time when men suddenly become conscious of the wealth of their threatened old culture, the glories of their forefathers, the richness of their tradition, the beauty of their art and song ... It is a time when men realise they can preserve and glorify the past not by reverting back to it, but by immortalising it in art. It is a time when men embrace the old and seize upon the new; when they combine the native and alien, the traditional and the foreign, into something new and beautiful. It is a time when men become more of themselves by becoming transformed, when they retreat to advance, when they probe into their own life by looking outward at the wider world, when they sound the mute depths by gazing at the rising stars."<sup>66</sup> (*Transvaal Native Educational Quarterly*, March 1939).

This complementation is what the arts and the humanities have been able to beautifully achieve which we now call African Literature, African Drama, African Philosophy, African History etc. This is the dictum of Igwebuike at work; making the modern African from a complementary combination of elements from modernity and tradition. It is working in solidarity of both modernity and tradition.

## **Conclusion**

The crux of the paper has been to show that very vital interventions have been made on what it means to be modern in both theory and practice. Transmodern philosophy from its planetary point of view has shown that modernity is uniquely Euro-American as the conventional discourse on modernity has always tried to show. Igwebuike philosophy has also tried to establish that Africa, coming from a background of solidarity and complementarity, is forging a modernity that is a hybrid. A kind of modernity that takes the best from tradition and from modernity itself in order to form a balance that is original and integral to African development. All of these interjections on the understanding of modernity shows that, if modernity is to remain a genuine human ideal as its proponents claim, then it cannot afford to ignore these positive contributions to its essence. If the

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<sup>66</sup>H. I. E. Dhlomo, "Why Study Tribal Dramatic Forms" (1939), in *Literary Theory and Criticism of H. I. E. Dhlomo*, (eds.) Nick Visser and Tim Couzens, a special issue of *English in Africa*, vol. 4 no. 2, September 1977.

Euro-American vision continues to pose as the ideal without recourse to these developments, then it is inherently imperialist and cannot be a model for humanity.

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