
An African Cultural Perspective on the Discourse on Development and Justice: Critical Reflections on the Developmentality Approach

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Abstract

Our aim in the paper is to answer the question: In what way can justice best be captured in the quest for development? When the relationship between justice and development is addressed, justice is often considered within the purview of security and the rule of law. This is largely a negative approach to justice and while it is necessary for development, it is not sufficient to accomplish it. As an alternative, we turn to the idea of positive justice as a more robust approach to justice for development. This approach is distinctively African, given that it is developed from the traditional resource of Ummuna Uwa in the Igbo social setting. This approach to justice deviates from dispensing punishment for crimes committed and seeking compensation for previous offences to appropriately apportioning capacities and goods bearing in mind the ultimate benefit of society. The sense here is in the fact that most times, proper apportioning of capacities can be a way of forestalling avenues or reasons for offence in the future.

Keywords: Coloniality, Deconstruction, Developmentality, Initiative Justice, Positive Justice, Pro-active solidarity, Responsibility, *Ummuna Uwa*

Introduction

In what way can justice best be captured in the quest for development?

While it is incontrovertible that justice is a vital social virtue, the 20th century institutions of development practice have not always given justice this pride of place. In framing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), these institutions did not bother to give any special mention of Justice. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime only attempts to give an explanation for this absence when it indicates that, “critical issues such as Security, Rule of Law and Social Justice, while present in the Millennium Declaration were not operationalised in the MGDs.”¹ It was in the post-2015 development framework that justice was mentioned as part of goal number 16 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This operationalisation of justice in the Sustainable Development Goals is done alongside security and the rule of law. That is, justice is seen along with security and the rule of law in the quest for development. This brings to mind, already, an idea of the way in which justice is captured in this development trajectory. It is captured largely in the negative sense of punishing offenders to security and setting in place modalities to deter prospective perpetrators of acts of insecurity. This disposition to justice in development criminalises acts of insecurity and insists on a framework that brings culprits of such acts to book. While this approach to justice is not bad in itself, it does not consider the possibility that acts of injustice could have been triggers for the predilection to insecurity. In this case, acts of oppression and exploitation, which are inherently unjust acts, could be originary motivations for acts of insecurity. A concrete example could be the case of the crises of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Eastern Security Network (ESN) currently raging in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. These groups have unleashed mayhem on the South-East of Nigeria and have successfully imposed a sit-at-home regime every Monday in the region. While the Nigerian government has criminalised

¹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Note on Justice, Security and Post 2015,” 1. Online at [unodc.org](https://www.unodc.org) accessed 07.01.2023.

the group, presenting them as a threat to national security and even gone the extra mile of declaring them terrorist groups, concerted efforts have not been made by the government to address the foundational problems (injustices) that have resulted in such violent antics against the state. The Igbos, who are the indigenes of the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, have felt consistently excluded from the highest level of governance in the country. They feel largely treated as aliens in their land. It is as result of this injustice that some from that region have taken up arms in order to be heard by the state. Rather than attending to their genuine grievances, the state chooses to criminalise their actions in a bid to guarantee security and the rule of law for national development.

In paying attention to justice as guarantor of security and the rule of law, this approach to development is inattentive to how foundational injustices creates room for insecurity. As such, this approach to justice and development is not alive to the fact that criminal justice and its negative disposition to justice is not enough to ground development. This approach to development is what is referred to as developmentality and we argue that embedded in it are foundational injustices which this approach to justice does not and cannot address or redress. As an alternative, we turn to the idea of positive justice as a more robust approach to justice for development. This approach is distinctively African given that it is developed from the traditional resource of *Ummuna Uwa* in the Igbo social setting. This approach to justice deviates from dispensing punishment for crimes committed and seeking compensation for offences done to appropriately apportioning capacities and goods bearing in mind the ultimate benefit of society. The sense here is in the fact that most times, proper apportioning of capacities can be a way of forestalling avenues or reasons for offence in the future. With regard to the IPOB and ESN contexts referred to above, if the Nigerian state had devised a proper means to include the various ethnicities in the

power architecture of the state, most probably there may not have been any need for groups to take up arms against the state in the bid for inclusion. Further, it takes up in a unique way, the question of solidarity and responsibility in justice for development. In what follows, we will first attempt to understand developmentality and to read its foundational injustices in the context of the coloniality of power. In the sections that follow this discourse on developmentality, we shall put positive justice into perspective and pay attention to its relationship with solidarity/responsibility.

Developmentality in Focus

The concept of developmentality is a term that was original to psychology and particularly developmental psychology. Within psychology, positions have been variously espoused on what the concept is and how it should operate.² From the field of psychology, this term was borrowed into Development Studies in order to capture a particular trend in the unfolding and becoming of societies with regard to human flourishing and wellbeing. As a concept in the study of development, it has been articulated in numerous ways and spheres, but only four of these will be of interest to this essay.

In 2004, Jon Harald Sande Lie doing a study on a development project in Ethiopia began to work on the concept of developmentality with regard to development,³ but it was in 2015 that his mature articulation of the concept emerged. Using ethnographic sources from the World Bank-Uganda relationship, Lie developed the concept of developmentality to

² See, Lynn Fendler, "Educating Flexible Souls: The Construction of Subjectivity through Developmentality and Interaction". In: Hultqvist, K, Dahlberg, G (eds) *Governing the Child in the New Millennium*. London: Routledge, pp. 119–142; Eric Burman, *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*. Second Edition. London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007.

³ This study was submitted as a thesis to the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo as "Discursive Development Order and Local Informal Practices: A Development Project in Northern Ethiopia" in 2004. The concept is discussed from pages 111 of the thesis. This was eventually published in 2009 by VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.

unveil the situation in which the World Bank's appeal to the ideals of participation, ownership and partnership are instruments through which the Bank manipulates aid recipients into aligning with its own policies and practices. Developmentality underscores how lopsided aid relations are being reproduced in profound ways. It unveils a situation in which promises of greater inclusion and freedom facilitates new governance mechanisms enabling donors to retain control by framing the partnership and thus limiting the conditions under which the recipient exercises the freedom it has been granted.⁴ Developmentality as presented here is a model of development which operates in such a manner that suggest some form of manipulation on the side of the aid giver.

Debal Deb in *Beyond Developmentality*, considers it as the “mindset – which equates affluence with development, measures development in terms of GNP growth, and accepts development to be the destiny of civilization –...”⁵ Taking a leave from Michel Foucault's idea of governmentality, Suzan Ilcan and Lynne Phillips also come up with the term developmentalities (in the plural). They apply the concept to the framing of the Millennium Development Goals and consider these developmentalities “as a form of governmentality produced through these Goals. They, draw on the turn of the century to recast certain development problems and offer reformulated solutions to these problems.”⁶ Timothy Ivinson, discusses developmentality in relation to urban development. In his opinion, developmentality is “the strong sense in which questions of growth and development have become the fundamental rationale through which all design and regulatory questions

⁴. See, Jon Harald Sande Lie “[**Developmentality: Indirect Governance in the World Bank–Uganda Partnership**](#),” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 36(4), 2015, 723-740.

⁵. Debal Deb, *Beyond Developmentality: Constructing Inclusive Freedom and Sustainability*, (London & Sterling, VA: Earthscan, 2009), 2.

⁶. Suzan Ilcan and Lynne Phillips, “Developmentalities and Calculative Practices: The Millennium Development Goals.” *Antipode: Journal of Radical Geography*, 42(4) 2010, 844.

of the urban must be filtered.” He introduces a biological twist to the application of the concept when he submits that, “developmentality describes the deeply *biopolitical* level at which town planning aims to govern and produce the built environment.”⁷ All these are some of the scenarios within which the term developmentality has featured in discussions on development.

These senses and applications of the concept, carry within them the thread of thought which this essay finds interesting with regard to developmentality. That is, developmentality is that mind-set that seeks progress for the sake of progress and nothing more. For want of a better description of this approach to development, it is referred to in this essay as 'development-mentality'. This mentality seeks development even at the detriment of others. Of all the position articulated above, Dabel Deb's position holds the unifying element of all; development is growth irrespective of whether such growth has positive outcomes or not. Deb is also quite interesting because he develops the epistemology for this approach to development. In his opinion, two insights from history and philosophy produced the epistemology of developmentality. The first is that,

modern connotations of development emerged with the rise of capitalism in the 19th century. In particular, the Spencerian doctrine of development as a law of society emerged in the period of Industrial Revolution in Britain. Spencer also furnished his sociology with his law of the survival of the fittest in the capitalist marketplace, and fathered what later came to be known as Social Darwinism. However, one also

⁷. Timothy Ivinson, *Developmentality: Biopower, Planning, and the Living City*. Thesis Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Humanities and Cultural Studies, London Consortium, Birkbeck College, University of London, 2017, 10.

gleans that the philosophical underpinnings of development – namely the human supremacy over nature – were much older, linked to Judeo-Christian cosmology. Furthermore, the idea of progress itself is older than the phenomenology of industrial progress. Following the Baconian principle of giving primacy to instrumental reason and scientific method to achieve progress, thinkers like Rousseau, Voltaire and Tocqueville maintained that progress results from human use of reason....⁸

At the second level, the “insight is that man's supremacy over natural world fitted snugly into Social Darwinism and Eurocentrism, and justified both colonization of the South and extermination of indigenous peoples in the colonies.”⁹ In summary, Social Darwinism as developed by Spencer and the idea of human supremacy over nature as developed by the Judeo-Christian cosmology all came together to form the epistemology of developmentality or development-mentality.

Developmentality, Coloniality of Power and Foundational Injustices

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz declares that “all acts of violence are rooted in injustice, promote injustice, and sustain injustice... acts of violence results in injustice and oppression.”¹⁰ Colonialism, which is the heritage of a large proportion of the underdeveloped parts of the world, was an act of violence. As such, the coloniality of power which succeeds it is also steeped in similar violence, albeit in a more subtle yet dangerous form.

^{8.} Debal Deb, *Beyond Developmentality: Constructing Inclusive Freedom and Sustainability*, 5.

^{9.} Debal Deb, *Beyond Developmentality: Constructing Inclusive Freedom and Sustainability*, 5. More of this epistemology of development is discussed from page 16 of the work.

^{10.} Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, “Justice: A Post-9/11 Theory,” in *The Impact of 9/11 on Religion and Philosophy: The Day That Changed Everything?* Edited by Matthew J. Morgan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 169.

Following this logic, coloniality is rooted in injustice, foundational injustice at that. Developmentality as described in the previous section is an approach to development that is caught up in the coloniality of power. As was mentioned above, the core element of the development-mentality approach is its quest for progress for the sake of progress, hinged on the epistemology of the survival of the fittest and the supremacy of man. The supremacy of man in this context can be reduced to the supremacy of the white man or of what Clive Gabay calls Whiteness.¹¹ In this context, the fittest is that which survives and by such token retains control over every other thing. The 'White Man' wins in this struggle for survival and takes charge of everything. The 'White Man' now retains the right to control and manipulate other men and other things in existence. This makes control a central element in this approach to development. The more control you have over nature and other human beings, the more capacity you have for development. This element of control as it is central in the development-mentality approach is what makes coloniality deeply implicated in this approach to development.

The concept of coloniality was developed by the Peruvian Sociologist, Annibal Quijano in his essay 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America' (2000). But this concept has been taken up and discussed by other Latin American scholars like Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo, Nelson Maldonado-Torres etc. By means of the superiority of violence, colonialism gave the West access and control over colonial spaces. This in turn gave them comparative advantage over the affairs of the world. Here is the point of inauguration of the foundation injustice and the privileges thereof. In the words of Quijano,

The privileged positions conquered by the dominant
whites for the control of gold, silver, and other

^{11.} See, Clive Gabay, *Imagining Africa: Whiteness and the Western Gaze* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) for more discussion on Whiteness.

commodities produced by the unpaid labour of Indians, blacks, and mestizos (coupled with an advantageous location in the slope of the Atlantic through which, necessarily, the traffic of these commodities for the world market had to pass) granted whites a decisive advantage to compete for the control of worldwide commercial traffic.¹²

This control of worldwide commercial traffic, as well as the control of the political, social and economic affairs of the world even after the demise of colonialism is what is referred to as coloniality. It is the logic of domination that underpins the activities of the West right from the 15th century down to the invasion of Iraq by America in 2003. Over this period of time, the coloniality of power has been championed by different nations. First, it was the countries on the Iberian Peninsula (Spain, Portugal and Italy); these championed the renaissance face of the coloniality of power. Next, was Germany, Britain and France and these championed the enlightenment face of the coloniality of power. In recent times, America represents the identity of modernity. It is the nation that currently carries the mandate of the coloniality of power. This power is negative in-itself; sometimes it is described as “the darker side of the renaissance”¹³ or “the underside of modernity.”¹⁴ From these descriptions, this coloniality of power stands in a dyadic relation with modernity, that is, the coloniser enjoys modernity, while the colonised suffers coloniality.¹⁵ This coloniality is the 'civilisation of death' hidden

^{12.} Annibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1.3, 2000, 537.

^{13.} This is part of the title of Walter D. Mignolo's, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*. (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

^{14.} This is also reflected in the title of Enrique Dussel's, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, Translated and Edited by Eduardo Mendieta (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996).

^{15.} See, Madina Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo, “Global Coloniality and the Decolonial Option,” *Kult 6 - Special Issue Epistemologies of Transformation: The Latin American Decolonial Option and its Ramifications*, 2009.

under the rhetoric of modernisation and prosperity, of the improvements of modern institutions.¹⁶ As long as this development-mentality prevails, coloniality continues to hold sway.

At a practical level, the rise of International Financial Institutions at the end of the Second World War and the activities of these institutions on the Global South region of the world continues this coloniality in a very evasive manner. For some opinions, the post-World War Two (WWII) development project is not a failure, but rather a complete success in its effective management of the global South.¹⁷ This success was as a result of the exceptional exercise of power over the global south. Power, in this context, is not in the sense of sovereign power, which is hierarchical and plainly visible; but power in the sense of bio-power or disciplinary – such power is diffused, efficient and invisible. The aid architecture as it operates in the global south represents this situation quite well. In the first instance, “the aid architecture continues the colonial mentality of viewing postcolonial people as people in need of salvation, civilisation, prosperity and good governance.”¹⁸ Still within the aid regime, the shift from the top-down driven Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) to the various poverty reduction programmes (PRSP) makes the power dynamics more subtle and pervasive. In the words of Mawuko-Yevugah

The seeming paradigmatic shift in the international aid architecture in the form of transition from donor-led Structural Adjustment Programme to country driven poverty reduction strategies, suggests that aid

^{16.} Walter D. Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom,” *Theory, Culture & Society* Vol. 26(7–8) 2009, 3.

^{17.} (See, Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 46-47.

^{18.} L. C. Mawuko-Yevugah, *Governing Through Developmentality: The Politics of International Aid Reform and the (Re)Production of Power; Neoliberalism and Neocolonial Interventions in Ghana*. A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Department of Political Science, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 2010, 61.

recipient countries are now into the position of determining their own development agenda... However, as the PRSP needs World Bank/IMF approval to become operational, this inclines the government to produce a document that reflects donors' policies in order to release funds, which the government, in the case of Africa, are highly dependent on.¹⁹

This power game in the new aid regime is the topic of discussion in quite a number case study documents. Jon Harald Sande Lie (2015) focuses on this phenomenon in the World Bank-Uganda relationship, he also studies this mentality in Ethiopia (2004). How this mentality operates in Ghana is the focus of Lord Cephas Mawuko-Yevugah's Doctoral Thesis in 2010. The underlining point in all these studies is that, development-mentality continues the inferiority game upon subjects of power and most importantly, it undermines the capacity for free self-determination²⁰ of those at the receiving end of power. Besides undermining the full impact of the whole development process, by the very nature of developmentality it continues the oppression and exploitation of the victims of its power. Thus, the victims of its power are still caught in the foundational injustice of colonialism which the coloniality of power continues.

Positive Justice: Birthing a New Frame for Justice

Established theories or “settled/official narrative”²¹ of justice are articulated from the standpoint of the global North and they are expected

^{19.} Lord Cephas Mawuko-Yevugah, *Governing Through Developmentality: The Politics of International Aid Reform and the (Re)Production of Power, Neoliberalism and Neocolonial Interventions in Ghana*, 81.

^{20.} See, Armatya Sen, *Development as Freedom*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

^{21.} Uchenna Okeja, “Introduction: Globalizing or Transcending Global Justice?” *Philosophical Papers* 46: 1 2017, 1-2.

to take hold on the peoples of the global South. In this context, theories of justice that are liberal, conservative, centrist, democratic and socialist are originated from the global North and set in place to address issues of global injustice. In these efforts, attempts are hardly made to consider how the victims of injustice view their situation and how best they think their situation can be addressed. In her assessment of Leif Werner's work on property rights and resource curse as it relates to Africa, Helen Lauer is of the view that "Many of the shortfalls in Werner's (2008) account and his recommendations could be readily corrected by consulting and deliberating with Sudanese and Guinean social scientists who are familiar with relevant histories, collective memories and varied cultural orientations of these countries."²² It is also in this connection that she makes the case that "global justice imposed blindly is justice denied locally."²³ It is on the basis of the need to appreciate non-western voices in the quest for justice in Africa as well to avoid the blind imposition of justice that we prefer positive justice in this work. Positive justice as it is conceived here emanates from the global South, particularly Africa, and is poised to address a local problem with global aspiration in view as well. Positive justice is a kind of justice that should help to manage a pluri-centric society that is a post-colonial one where colonial hegemonisation still holds strong sway. Positive as conceived here is the maximal actualisation of impartiality. Within this context, each should get his or her due irrespective of position, status or race, not necessarily about punishment or rectification. In a postcolonial context, particularly, Joseph Agbakoba writes that,

The experiences, policies and practices of collaborative capitalist approach of Lee Kuan Yaw's Singapore and Seretse Khama's Botswana in contrast

^{22.} Helen Lauer, "Global Justice as Process: Applying Normative Ideals of Indigenous African Governance" *Philosophical Papers* 46:1 2017, 183.

^{23.} Helen Lauer, "Global Justice as Process: Applying Normative Ideals of Indigenous African Governance," 180.

to those of Nkrumah and post-Nkrumah's Ghana, Tafawa Balewa's and Yakubu Gowon's Nigeria and subsequent development of these countries should be illuminating... Lee and Khama refused to be diverted and detracted by the issues of neo-colonialism (such as quickly reaping the dividends of independence by rapidly taking over managerial and administrative positions from colonial powers), rather they focused on building business partnerships with their former colonial power and the West in a manner that may look puzzling initially.²⁴

These countries employed expert expatriates right after independence, treated them as they will treat their indigenes within the public service, and got them to work in their countries on equal terms. It was not about getting these former colonial lords to work for them as superior privileged expatriates, but as normal civil servants and having equal remuneration as the others in the service. It was maximal actualisation of impartiality aimed at developing the local workforce and to nobody's disadvantage. Mandela's idea of the rainbow nation after the Apartheid Regime is another good example of this form of solidarity in action. What these leaders have done is 'to approach national development, relationship with former colonial powers and international capitalist system with pro-active solidarity and initiative justice on a socio-centric temporal continuum.'²⁵ They took steps to protect the interest of all relevant stakeholders in a humanity-wide-manner based on solidarity.

^{24.} Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective* (Köln: Rudiger Köppe Verlag, 2019), 364.

^{25.} Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective*, 364.

This concept of positive justice was developed bearing in mind the idea of *Umunna* (literally meaning father's children) in the Igbo social setting. In his *Development and Modernity in Africa*, Agbakoba attempts a distinction between the *Umunna-Obodo* and the *Umunna-Uwa* typologies in the tradition scenario. While *Umunna-Obodo*, which is community of the town, has remained the dominant understanding of community in traditional societies, the emergence of missionaries in the Igbo speaking parts of Nigeria gave impetus to the development of the *Umunna-Uwa*, a model of community based on universal brotherhood and humanity.²⁶ It is in line with the ideal of *Umunna-Uwa*, that Agbakoba identifies initiative Justice/pro-active solidarity as an integral part of positive justice. This form of justice is intercultural because, its details are a product of an intercultural hybrid between that ideas of justice in the Igbo (African) context and the western model. This idea seeks to highlight how the operation of positive justice in the African context can help to foster a more pragmatic disposition to justice and to development on the African continent and even the world at large. The expression of this form of justice can be seen in how the African (Igbo) execute numeric equality, as an aspect of justice, especially in property and wealth distribution. In the event of the loss of a propertied man who has two wives, the Igbo in distributing the man's wealth to both wives will do so equally, not minding the fact that one of the wives has just one child and the other has more than one. The sense in this is that, while the wife with numerous children may suffer in the present because her inheritance may not be enough for her and her children; in the long run, at her old age, these children will translate to numerous pair of hands at her service when her energy begins to fail her. For the wife with a single child, she will have just a pair of hands to see her through the advanced stage of her life. This means that, the flow of temporality has a way of

²⁶. Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective*, 209.

balancing the inconsistency of numerical inequality. At a deeper level, it behoves on the wife with a child to assist the wife with numerous children from her abundance so that these can in turn render her services when old age begins to take its toll. In Agbakoba's specific words, "she (wife with one child) should be pro-active and expect compensatory justice in the form of reciprocity – this is pro-active solidarity, especially regarding vulnerable, exploitable, relatively weak persons or groups outside one's circle of responsibility (specifically, outside one's circle of subjective responsibility but within the scope of one's objective responsibility)."²⁷

This model of justice can apply transculturally. This is its global aspiration. In the first instance, the colonial master failed in initiating pro-active solidarity. This is because the colonial master was only out to exploit the weakness of the colonised (even though the colonised has a large share of the blame too). Even today, advance capitalist nations have not been able to refrain from exploiting the weaknesses of developing nations, knowing fully the consequences of the global system on these communities in terms of poverty, poor living standards, violence, displacement of people and forced migration. In the end, "the point is that pro-active solidarity and initiative justice on grounds of enlightened self-interest could have averted some of these problems because a more developed Africa and Middle East would have been more secure economically, politically and thus make migration less necessary or attractive to many of the people in these regions."²⁸ From the African standpoint, the Africanisation policy which was favoured at independence did not demonstrate pro-active solidarity or initiative justice in any way. At best, it was retributive and only helped to plant ill-

^{27.} Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective*, 352.

^{28.} Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective*, 363.

prepared Africans in the public service and the result is the high level of insensibilism and apathetic-beneficence prevalent in Africa today. Pro-active solidarity would have required that African governments created a just environment that would encourage foreigners who had more experience in administration to stay back and Africans can understudy them for optimal performance. This is what Lee Kwan Yaw did in Singapore and Sereste Khama did in Botswana. But the indigenisation policies of Nigeria and Ghana failed. Even today, the indigenisation policy continues to rear its head in the form of 'ethnisation' and 'tribalisation' of the public service in many parts of Africa. These are against the basic tenets of positive justice.

Solidarity in the Ambient of Positive Justice

In the foregoing section, mention was made of pro-active solidarity as a component of positive justice. This section will explore some bit of the relationship between solidarity and the justice in view here. Solidarity as an approach to development brings to the fore the awareness of shared interests, objectives, standards and sympathies, creating a psychological sense of unity of groups or classes. Solidarity can be understood in this context as that which is “within each of us – our essential humanity – which resonates to the presence of this same thing in other human beings.”²⁹ In Rorty's opinion, this is the traditional philosophical way of spelling out what solidarity means. This traditional sense dates back to the works of “Auguste Comte who in 1875 increased the visibility of solidarity in contexts that were not directly religious or political. He argued that solidarity could be a remedy for the increasing individualisation and atomisation of society, which needed to be subordinated to social concerns and the wellbeing of the collective.”³⁰

^{29.} Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 189.

^{30.} B. Prainsack & A. Buyx, *Solidarity: Reflections on an Emerging Concept in Bioethics*, (UK: ESP Colour Ltd., 2011), ix.

Emile Durkheim, in his *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), developed a distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity, drawing upon the idea of sameness, a shared feeling of those joined together by religious beliefs, lifestyles, training and familial bonds.³¹ This sense of shared feeling of religious beliefs, lifestyle, training and familial bonds is part of the reason Rorty insists that the traditional sense of solidarity is bound up with contingency. In his opinion, “the feeling of solidarity are necessarily a matter of which similarities and dissimilarities strike us as salient and that such salience is a function of historically contingent final vocabulary.”³² Thus, the context of religious beliefs, lifestyle, training and familial bonds creates a network of similarity within which the feeling of solidarity is stronger and outside of which, it is weaker. Consequently, there is a 'we-they' situation in this context, which makes it historical and therefore contingent. He questions the essential universalisation of the feeling of solidarity and insists that such universalisation is morally dubious, but holds that people can be urged to expand their sense of 'we' to people who have been previously taught of as 'they'.³³ This in his opinion is moral progress.

Still within the context of expanding the 'we' to encompass the 'they' in solidarity, the concerns Uchenna Okeja raises about absolute otherness and the possibility of justice through deliberation can be applicable to solidarity. Just as he asked if it is possibility to accomplish justice through deliberation when the other is seen as completely aberrant, we can also ask whether solidarity is possible when the 'they' are considered as absolute other with which no kind of meeting point is realisable. Specifically, is solidarity possible when the other is considered as an

^{31.} B. Prainsack & A. Buyx, *Solidarity: Reflections on an Emerging Concept in Bioethics*, ix.

^{32.} Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, 192.

^{33.} Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, 191.

“embodiment of everything abhorrent or aberrant?”³⁴ Questions of this kind bring to the fore the problem of irreconcilable difference in the quest for solidarity. Anselm K. Min is of the view that “we are indeed living in an age of difference, but what the age calls for, paradoxically is not the reification or absolutisation of difference, but its sublation – in the Hegelian sense of negation, transcendence and preservation – into solidarity.”³⁵ In Min's thinking, globalisation has brought different cultures into a common space and this produces a twofold dialectic; the 'dialectics of differentiation' in which the differences of these cultures are highlighted and the 'dialectics of interdependence' by means of which cultures are compelled to live together in spite of these differences. 'Solidarity of the others' is the framework in Min's thought on how to forge this living together. In fact, Min submits at some point that, “strategically, no group can effect its liberation without solidarity with other groups.”³⁶ In this solidarity process, there is no privileged position; all come together for the sake of all. “This is why Min talks not about a 'solidarity with others'—which still puts 'us' in a privileged position—but about a 'solidarity of others' where each is related to and dependent upon everyone else. Otherness is transcended in terms of difference with 'us' even as it is preserved in the solidarity of 'us all.' As such, solidarity resists both the hegemony of the individual and the totalitarianism of the whole.”³⁷ 'Solidarity of the other' seeks to create a balance of extremes in a manner in which the demands of justice and liberation are guaranteed. Solidarity in this sense entrenches a form of social system that is organised in such a manner that it will not breed any form of injustice that

³⁴. Uchenna Okeja, “Justice through Deliberation and the Problem of Otherness” *Angelaki Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 24:2 2019, 10.

³⁵. Anselm K. Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World: A Postmodern Theology after Postmodernism*. (New York: T & T Clark, 2004) 65).

³⁶. Anselm K. Min, “From difference to the Solidarity of Others: Sublating Postmodernism.” *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 31:7 2005, 823.

³⁷. P. Pharshall, “Book Review: Anselm Kyongsuk Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World: A Postmodern Theology after Postmodernism*.” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 7:2 2004, 329.

will require punishment or rectification, but one in which abilities and capabilities are *ab initio* put into proper use. Even when there is rectification to be done, such is not done in a punitive manner, but in a manner that will positively affect the wellbeing of the social system.

How does the idea of solidarity articulated in the foregoing key to the discourse on justice espoused in this essay? Isasi-Diaz's work on what justice should be in the post 9/11 era understands justice not as 'rights-protection', but as 'right-relationship'. Fundamentally, we do not pursue justice as entities that are embodiments of fundamental rights; rather we pursue justice because we are beings who are in relationships. The sense of this relational mode comes forth through her use of the term 'sociality'. Loosely put, sociality refers to "that human bond that makes it possible for all to share this planet."³⁸ She considers solicitude to be virtue of sociality. Solicitude, in her thinking, is a form of care that centralises affectivity and reciprocity. In fact, Isasi-Diaz writes that, "I use 'solicitude' instead of 'responsibility' to highlight affectivity and reciprocity."³⁹ On the basis of this kind of care, we should aspire to recreate the human bonds that have been put asunder by the 9/11 attack. This care should also evoke the tenderness required to keep the reconciliation and care moving forward. Thus, justice as right-relationship is a form of justice as active reconciliatory praxis of care. Its attention is constantly on recreating the bond of humanity that acts of injustice fracture. Solidarity can be equated with the 'bonds of humanity' that justice as right-relationship seeks to protect. This 'bond of humanity' is not discriminatory as it serves to carry the whole of humanity along as co-sharers of the planet. In not being discriminatory, it sublates rather than reifies or absolutizes the differences which our global reality thrusts upon us. This form of solidarity (bond of humanity), given the

³⁸. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Justice: A Post-9/11 Theory," 169.

³⁹. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Justice: A Post-9/11 Theory," 176.

importance it places on care, is also pro-active. It is so by virtue of the fact that it does not only seek to address the infractions on relationships in the past and present, but it also takes care of avoiding such infractions into the future. Thus, just as positive justice has room for pro-active solidarity, where acts of justice are set in place now so as to enjoy reciprocity in the future, justice as right-relationship also aims at building relationship that are targeted at reciprocity even into the future.

Responsibility, Positive Justice and Development

Positive justice also takes responsibility for development quite seriously. One outstanding feature of responsibility is that people are quick to elide it. Ambrose Bierce in his *Devil's Dictionary* highlights this feature of responsibility thus, “a detachable burden easily shifted to the shoulders of God, Fate, Fortune, Luck or one's neighbour. In the days of astrology, it was customary to unload it upon a star.”⁴⁰ This disposition of unloading responsibility is quite prevalent in the articulation of injustices and who is to blame for them. Often times, the victims of injustice are exonerated or exonerate themselves from the injustices they suffer and the responsibility for such injustice is placed completely on others. When Enrique Dussel insists that responsibility is a *taking-charge* of the other (which means *re-sponse*: to take charge (*spondere*) of the other, reflexively (*re-*)) before the tribunal of a system that accuses him or her, and assuming the other to be the victim of an injustice insofar as, by virtue of being accused, the other has been marked as the unjust, the guilty, the criminal – it is to come before that tribunal in the name of the other;”⁴¹ he already gives the impression that whenever there is an act of injustice, somebody other than the victim should be blameworthy. But is it possible for the victims of injustice to be blameworthy for the injustice

^{40.} Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1911) 290.

^{41.} Enrique Dussel, “Deconstruction of the Concept of 'Tolerance': From Intolerance to Solidarity,” *Constellations* Volume 11: 3 2004, 330.

they suffer? Is it not counter-intuitive to think that a person or group of persons could also be held responsible for the injustice they suffer?

The approach to justice we advocate in this paper thinks otherwise. The opinion is that, it is actually possible for the victims of injustice to be held blameworthy for what they suffer. The distinction between the *Umunna-Obodo* and the *Umunna-Uwa* typologies in the Igbo social setting is meant to give force to this position. *Umunna-Obodo*, which is community of the town and which is the dominant disposition to brotherhood in the Igbo setting and even Africa, has a web of particularity embedded in it in such a fundamental way. It grades brotherhood on the narrow network of just the family, the clan and the tribe. Thus, when the community of the town deliberates on issues of the community, such is done among brothers who belong to the same town and do not bear any fundamental difference. Resolution is easy in such deliberation because it is a meeting of brothers of the town. When it is a meeting with others whose roots are outside the town, it becomes a different affair altogether. Violence can be perpetrated against one who is not of the town and such will not be an infraction. Hostility can be accommodated when it is directed at a member from outside the community. In this manner, injustice can also be permitted against a member of the outside community. Here, there isn't any overriding sense of responsibility to any member outside of the family, clan or tribe. In contrast, the *Umunna-Uwa* is a model of community based on universal brotherhood and humanity. In this approach, the sense of community and brotherhood is expanded to encompass the ends of the earth. Community becomes the whole of humanity and not just my community or my family, clan or tribe. Under this model, the maximal level of impartiality as positive justice has the whole of humanity as its frame where it can be properly actualised. In the case of *Umunna-Obodo*, justice can only partially be dispensed and responsibility is limited.

To further establish the case in the foregoing, Joseph C.A Agbakoba draws the line between subjective and objective responsibility. Subjective responsibility in his opinion, is when responsibility “is considered in terms of oneself (the self here is taken not simply in the sense of one's physical and idiosyncratic self but, even more importantly a times, includes all the social circles to which one belongs and which constitute one's identity in part or in full; thus, it is used in the sense of one's self).”⁴² Responsibility in this context is to be held accountable for the self and the social self. In contrast to this, he identifies what he refers to as objective responsibility. This is a form of responsibility that pays attention to the exteriority of one's significant self (responsibilities for exteriorities, for the other; which may or may not involve duties, obligations and rights arising from historical and ongoing exchanges and interactions).⁴³ At the objective level, responsibility is not personal and duties are not attached. By this distinction, Africa ought to take subjective responsibility for its development. Subjective to the extent that in seeking development, African seeks to improve its significant self, which is the purview of subjective responsibility. The West is to take objective responsibly for development of Africa. This is because, the African is not related to the significant self of the West. Given the failures on both the side of Africa and the West to accomplish development for Africa, we can also say that the subjective irresponsibility of Africa is part of why Africa lacks development and the objective irresponsibility of the West is what has caused Africa to be what it is. Thus, in the realm of positive justice, victims can be blameworthy for the injustices which they suffer. In the African context, Africa is blameworthy to the extent that she is subjectively complicit in her rape due to the particularism (narrow vision of community and brotherhood) embedded in her worldview.

^{42.} Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective*, 70.

^{43.} Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective*, 17.

With regard to developmentality, development-mentality always encourages the attitude of objective responsibility in dealing with the other, that is, those who are not part of the significant self. The central role of coloniality within the development model bears testimony to this fact. The care for the other is only as long as it benefits the self. Thus, even when aid funds are doled out to poor nations and these funds are not used the way they should be used (as a result of the subjective irresponsibility of these poor nations), aid givers do not care much (due to their objective irresponsibility), provided their interests are protected. Still in this context, even when economic growth is not translating into economic wellbeing for the people, the World Bank still declares that there is global poverty reduction. Responsibility, as far as these world economic institutions are concerned is largely objective. This objective concern should, by every standard, be the norm. Given the precarious turn of events and the urgent need to uplift humanity and the globe, positive justice insists on an approach to development that universalises subjective responsibility and makes it the norm. From the discourse about solidarity above, the disposition towards the other should almost always be like that to the self. Aside moral arguments for this demand, the complicity of the Global North in the predicament of the Global South is a good reason to insist that the Global North takes subjective responsibility for the development of the Global South. In the words of Chinua Achebe,

Because the West had a long but uneven engagement with the (African) continent, it is imperative that it understand what happened to Africa. It must also play a part in the solution. A meaningful solution will require the good will and concerted effort on the part of all those who share the weight of Africa's historical

burden (African as used here could be expanded to cover the whole of the Global South).⁴⁴

Thus, it will not be out of place to insist that since there had to be collaboration and contact in the making of the current predicament, there has to be collaboration and solidarity in dealing with it. Positive justice will not just be content with holding responsibility just at the objective level towards the other. Positive justice will insist that all stakeholders in the development process must bear subjective responsibility in the quest for development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can give specific and precise attention to our initial question. We have proposed in this paper that the way justice can best be captured in the quest for development is as positive (initiative) justice which operates on the basis of pro-active solidarity. Our point has been that only in this way foundational injustices, which breed bottlenecks to development, can be addressed. Negative justice lacks this capacity because its focus is more on criminalising offences and punishing such. While such approach is necessary in its own right to ensure a secure society for development to thrive, it is not sufficient for the cause of development. More specifically, we have argued that the development-mentality approach is founded on certain forms of injustices as a result of the coloniality of power which cannot be addressed using the negative approach to justice. This is the final point of our deconstruction of developmentality. The effort we have made to reconstruct it based on positive justice takes its primary resource from the traditional African setting and how goods are distributed in the African setting in line with initiative (positive) justice with pro-active solidarity in view. This

⁴⁴ Chinua Achebe, *There Was A Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), 2.

approach forestalls any form of originary injustice that could become a bottleneck for development in the future. Also, this approach takes very seriously the possibility of the victims of injustice being responsible for or having a hand in the hardships they suffer. In line with all these, our final word will be that, proper distribution of goods is very central to development and this is where there is a strong moral anchor for development. The point is, while the question of wealth acquisition could be answered by economic consideration, the question of its distribution is an ethical one and economics can only at best come up with conjectures. Addressing this moral question of distribution and other vital moral questions in development falls very well within the domain of development anchored on positive justice and proactive solidarity as has been developed in this essay.

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