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Philosophy and Development: On the Problematic African Development – A Diachronic Analysis

Lansana Keita

Introduction

The term ‘development’ is generally understood etymologically to mean ‘expansion by a process of growth’ or ‘growth and differentiation of some entity along lines natural to its kind’. The processes of transformation and growth described by the term typically apply to biological processes where the stages of growth are usually described as development. But the development of the modern social sciences in Western Europe some 200 to 150 years ago and the recognition by its practitioners that societies have undergone and do undergo transformations in history established parallels between the processes of biological change and those of society. The theories of prominent European social scientists such as Comte, J.S. Mill, and Marx, with the important North African precursor Ibn Khaldun (1868) also in mind, were founded on the idea that human societies were not static but underwent periodic transformations. What is interesting too is that the progress or movement observed in social transformations were normatively viewed in moving from states of being less developed to ones of being more developed. One recalls Marx’s quasi-Darwinian thesis that human history was naturally evolutionary progressing from less developed stages to those that were more developed. Thus, for Marx, a developed capitalism would eventually give way to socialism then communism, eventually reflective of a mature human society.

It is in this context that post-Enlightenment European thinkers such as Comte and Marx argued that human society progressed from stages that were less developed to stages that were more developed. Marx specifically argued that human society progressed through the stages of ‘primitive’ communism, slavery, feudalism, and capitalism to culminate in the future with communism, the most developed phase of human existence. Marx’s deterministic theory of the dynamics of history argued that it was the historic function of capitalism to spread itself into societies

that were not as developed, thereby setting the conditions for their eventual progress into socialism and communism.

It is instructive too to note that the post-Enlightenment idea of development as intrinsic to the path of human history was central to the philosophy of history formulated by the German thinker Hegel, a major influence on Marx, in the nineteenth century. For Hegel (*Philosophy of History*), the developmental path of human history was characterised by the idea of increasing self-consciousness on the part of humans. This process was facilitated by the movement of 'Spirit' (*Geist*) as it progressed from East to West. The result of this was to be discerned in the increasing amounts of freedom gained by the individual within his or her society over time. An interesting point about Hegel's 'dialectics of history' is that his philosophy of history granted no developmental path for Africa. Africa, according to Hegel, had not entered into the path of human history, therefore it did not contain the necessary criteria for development. In this regard, Africa would be permanently undeveloped.

On account of technological transformations made within Western Europe dating from the sixteenth century, the idea developed among European thinkers that in comparative terms, the societies of Western Europe were more developed than those in the non-European world. European travel to other parts of the globe, aided by the use of the compass within the context of newly acquired knowledge of the world and nature in general, should be seen as the catalyst that produced the European Enlightenment with its subsequent development of the social and human sciences. Anthropology was created to study the cultures of non-European societies and it was born necessarily with a plethora of theoretical biases. One of its major premises was that the European world was civilised and developed, while many of the non-European societies were 'primitive' and undeveloped. It was assumed that undeveloped societies would increasingly become developed, the more they resembled the developed societies of Europe.

This was the context in which the contemporary concepts of 'modern' (literally meaning *à la mode*) and 'backward', 'civilised' and 'primitive', and 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' were first formulated. When reference was made, for example, to the economic systems and technologies of Africa during the era of Europe's irruption thither, the received doctrine was that Europe was 'developed' and Africa was 'underdeveloped'. But there is an evident problematic here concerning the terms 'developed' and 'underdeveloped'. 'Developed' suggests a completed or finished process, while 'underdeveloped' tends to imply stasis or lack of progress. But the technological and economic structures of European society fifty years ago have undergone palpable changes and continue to do so. Consider the fact that computers, cellular phones, solar energy, and so on were not commonplace in European society some fifty years ago. Thus, the idea that European societies are 'developed' is obviously questionable. European societies are in the process of development just as other societies deemed 'undeveloped' or 'developing'. For this reason, the automatic contrast between 'developed' and 'developing' societies should be subject to debate.

The obviously confirmable difference between contemporary developing European societies and those of Africa is that the former societies are the producers and users of more novel forms of technology than the latter. What is also evident is that social structures of the former are eventually made to conform to the novel forms of technology.

Was Africa Ever the Source of Novel Forms of Development?

Having established that the term ‘developed’ should not be used with regard to societies that are perennially in the process of transformation – as all societies are, to lesser or greater degrees – a pertinent question now is whether Africa was ever the site of novel sociological transformations.

The human species differentiates itself from other species of living organisms in that it possesses the peculiar characteristic of not only adapting to its environments as other living organisms do, but of transforming its environments to suit its needs, wants, and purposes. Presumably, the specific biological structures of the fauna of the East African savanna are the result of millennia of slow evolutionary pressures, according to the principles of natural selection. This punctilious process has never been witnessed, but it is assumed that the elongated neck of the giraffe and the running capacities of the cheetah are results of this adaptive process. It is claimed too that the present biological structure of humans is also the result of adaptive pressures deriving from the environment. But humans differentiate themselves from other biological species in that they have developed a greater active capacity for adaptation to their environments by a continuing transformation and utilisation of the environment for their own purposes. This active capacity is certainly present with some nonhuman organisms, but it is humans who have developed this capacity to the fullest extent. For example, hymenopterous insects such as bees, wasps and ants, arachnids such as spiders, and mammals such as beavers do transform nature for their own purposes but their adaptive capacities seem driven more by instinct rather than otherwise in that their capacities seem restricted only to species-specific niches. The transformational capacities that humans demonstrate seem rather to be motivated by reflexive consciousness rather than by instinct. In other words, humans are endowed with the capacity to modify their operational programmes to suit the environment as they see fit. It is for this reason that the human capacity to transform or modify the natural environment to satisfy needs and wants is a constant and ongoing phenomenon. It is in this context that one may argue that the human capacity to transform nature according to more effective techniques of such over time may be seen as forms of technological development.

This human capacity in the form of technological development was first evident in what is now known as Africa as early as 2.5 million years ago (MYA) (Klein 1989:164). The archaeological evidence suggests the manufacture of stone and bone implements by proto-humans or early members of the species *homo*. According to archaeological evidence, the species *homo* attained its most evolved level some

160 thousand years ago (KYA) in what is now known as East Africa and Southern Africa. Until some 55KYA all human technological developments took place in Africa because no *homo sapiens sapiens* lived elsewhere. Some archaeologists claim that a qualitative change in human technology and sociology took place in Europe some 40-50KYA, thereby hoping to prove that a distinction must be made between 'anatomically modern humans' and 'behaviourally modern humans'. But there is the counter-claim that this 'human revolution' took place tens of thousands of years earlier in Africa (McBrearty and Brooks 2000). Reference here is to the 'African Middle Stone Age' with its specific microlithic technologies, trade, use of pigment, bone tools, and so on.

The end of the Neolithic approximately some 10KYA witnessed a qualitative change in the way humans sought to transform their environments for survival purposes. The age of agriculture is claimed to have begun in what archeologists call the Middle East, which includes Northeast Africa and West Asia. Agriculture required domestication of animals, development of tilling technologies, plant breeding and nurturing. With the discovery of the greater effectiveness of metal implements over other types (lithic and bone especially), usage of copper and bronze increased. Eventually iron became the metal of choice for much of Africa's societies. What is of importance, though, within the context of the development of technology, is that usage of any metal for whatever purposes requires furnace construction and smelting to specific temperatures. There is some controversy over whether the practices of agriculture and metal smelting were developed independently in different parts of the globe or whether they were spread through a process of diffusion. In any case, suffice it to say that there is archaeological evidence of agriculture, settled societies and metal smelting in Africa more or less simultaneously with similar evidences elsewhere especially in West Asia and its environs. The time period in question here ranges from 5,000 BCE (the Egypto-Nubian culture complex) to 900 BCE for the earliest approximate times. It is instructive to point out too that iron working in Africa has been much studied by archaeologists with the recognition that furnace construction seems to have been accompanied by local and indigenous considerations (Miller 1997).

But what provides incontrovertible evidence for parts of Africa being more developed than anywhere else on the globe from at least 4,000 BCE until 500 BCE are the technological and sociological structures of the Egypto-Nubian complex and its environs, which is now the Sudan. Writing, engineering, astronomy (which produced the first, accurate annual time measurement – the calendar), building in stone, mathematics, surgery and all the known human arts and sciences had their origin in this sociological complex (Diop 1991). The Greek and Roman civilisations, which respectively developed in what is now called South East Europe and Southern Europe, were both founded on the technology and general knowledge developed predominantly in the African locales of Egypt-Nubia and the sub-tropical West Asian society of Sumer.

Since the present era (i.e. AD), the level of development in Africa has been comparable to and even more technologically advanced than other parts of the globe. The Islamic presence in Europe may be said to be directly responsible for the transmission and diffusion of more developed forms of knowledge to Western Europe. But it was the technical knowledge of the Egypto-Nubian complex embellished by the culturally hybrid Greeks that served as the technological catalyst for the European Renaissance. By contrast, Medieval Africa north of the Equator was technologically and sociologically more developed than most of Europe until the tenth and eleventh centuries (Diop 1987). In that part of Africa there was long distance trade, manufacture and monetary transactions using gold bullion. The towns of Jenne, Timbuktu, and Mopti in the Sahel were well known locations of trade and manufacture. In general, agriculture, animal husbandry and long distance trade all with their required technology were present in Africa. Historians of Africa are well acquainted with Africa's technological specificities not only in the Egypto-Nubian complex, but also in what is now known as Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Nigeria (for example, leather works and other items manufactured in Kano were transhipped to Europe by way of Morocco as early as the thirteenth century), the Sahelian economic and trade areas of Ghana, Mali and Songhay, and parts of Southern Africa.

There was a decisive transformation in the world's technological level of development when Western Europe began applying the technical knowledge it acquired from other areas to travel to other areas of the globe. Travels to China and the Americas by individuals such as Magellan, Da Gama and Columbus opened up new economic opportunities for Western Europeans. The compass, printing, and gunpowder (invented in China) were used to telling effect by Europe within the context of the rapidly spreading economic system later known as capitalism. The exploitation of captive labour in the Americas and the violent acquisition of lands and gold were the crucial ingredients for the increased trade and the accumulation of capital. African labour and the gold reserves of the Americas served as the catalysts for trans-continental trade, urbanisation, and qualitative transformations in technology. Economic historians write of the Industrial Revolution which produced the steam engine and other forms of mechanical energy. The technological advantages that accrued to Western Europe under the aegis of mercantilist capitalism in turn served as the basis for further technological developments in sea transport (the steamship) and weaponry (long range cannon, and the Gatlin and maxim guns). The colonisation of vast areas of the globe first effected by force of arms then using the vanquished populations as forced labour, all served as added catalysts to a burgeoning commercial and industrial capitalism. The combination of commercial and industrial capitalism coupled with rapid technological changes resulted in a world split along zero-sum game lines. The economic and technological gains of Western Europe resulted in economic and technological losses and disadvantages for the rest of the world, especially for the indigenous peoples of the Americas and Africa. The economic relations between African societies then under European sway and the relevant West European nations were in reality those of unequal exchange. Europe

advanced and developed economically at the expense of its colonies in Africa, Asia and the Americas. This is the historical explanation for the sociological structures of what are now called the 'developed' nations and the 'underdeveloped' or 'developing' nations.

Given the comparative economic and technological disadvantages experienced specifically by the nations of Africa with regard to those of Europe, the desire on the part of the disadvantaged is to eradicate those disadvantages which carry real costs in strictly economic terms. But these comparative disadvantages have been so institutionalised in structures protective of economic advantages that radical solutions are needed. Myriad theories of economic and sociological theories of development have been developed over the years, but they have not borne fruit when empirically applied, and those that would seem to augur positive results are never tested in any authentic manner. The intriguing theoretical question is an instrumental one. What would Africa look like if correct theories of development were implemented?

The Hypothetical Structures of a Developmentally Transformed Africa

If Africa were at the vanguard of economic and technological development this would manifest itself in three areas: technological, economic, and sociological. They are explored in the following:

The Technological

If Africa were now at the vanguard of human development, its technological level would be qualitatively different from its present state now. Africa would be at the forefront in the production and manufacture of those items which now require the most advanced knowledge and skills in the world today. Thus, the continent would be the area where technologically advanced items such as airplanes, automobiles, ships, computers and other durable goods would be manufactured. These enterprises would also be supported by local research centres in technology and engineering which would be attached to them. These enterprises would be for the most part owned by their workers, who would have the right to the majority of the productive stock.

The same technological self-sufficiency would apply in the area communication. The kinds of advanced research in communications technology now monopolised by Scandinavia and the East Asian nations of Japan and Korea would also be found in Africa, again supported by research centres in engineering and applied natural science.

In the area of agricultural production, Africa would be home to the most efficient and environmentally rational modes of production with all technologies and needs produced on the African continent. Technologies appropriate for all types of agricultural units and enterprises would also be produced on the continent, supported by ongoing research in Africa's research centres. There would also be serious ongoing research to reclaim the deserts in Africa for agricultural purposes with the

funding and implementation of such deriving from African sources. In other words, an Africa developed in technology would be practically autonomous in supplying the most advanced technologies for whatever purposes.

The Economic

An Africa at the vanguard of economic growth and development would have transcended the balkanised, economically dependent status bequeathed to it from the colonial experience. An advanced Africa would be one in which the Bantustan-like mini-states that characterize the African continent would be a thing of the past. There would be intra-African trade, movement and communication in an economic landscape in which a single monetary unit would be on par with the other major currencies of the world. One of the reasons for the persistent unequal exchange between African nations and the West especially is the greatly debased nature of Africa's currencies. Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage, based on an international division of production coupled with the flexibility of currencies as a function of balance of payment outcomes, has not proven to be viable for Africa, given that Africa's currencies continue on their debased route without respite. In short, the economic matrix for an Africa experiencing mature economic growth would be one of a common market of some 850 million individuals who would be free to trade, travel and exchange without the impediments imposed during the colonial era. One of the noted historical and archaeological facts about the African continent is that there was untrammelled trade and travel for millennia until the advent of the colonialists. Given the geographical extent of the continent and its relative ecological variety, the question of massive unemployment with individuals having to migrate extra-continently to areas of greater capital depth would become a thing of the past. Furthermore, Africa's economic system would be one in which the major goal would be the maximisation of human welfare in a sociological context which recognised that economies exist first to satisfy human needs and not primarily for the accumulation of wealth on the part of some individuals and nations. In this regard, major and prior considerations would be given to investment in human capital for all individuals so that the individual could realize his or her full potential in terms of interests and dispositions. In this regard, it would be practically impossible for individuals to be unemployed because Africa's educational systems would guarantee that every individual be trained in a variety of skills and be privileged with access to capital for purposes of business and otherwise. In contemporary Africa, the situation is the reverse. Enterprising individuals who might have some business idea in mind experience great difficulty in obtaining capital for the purpose in mind. Lending agencies, of course, always seek to reduce risk when capital funds are made available to the public, but that situation could be easily remedied by initially offering small amounts of capital for projects that carry high probabilities of success. This is where state and public capitalisation of such institutions would be of great assistance. Capitalisation costs would be held at a minimum if the capital equipment

needed for the prospective enterprise were to be leased at manageable interest rates as an option.

The contemporary age we now live in is one which touts the virtue of the market and the neo-liberal economy. With the demise of the Soviet Union, ideological arguments are routinely mounted against what are perceived as the limitations of socialism. But it must be recognised that the banking system, which is at the heart of capitalism, is admittedly founded on a socialist principle. Banks operate on the socialist principle of collecting large amounts of public capital which is then loaned to individuals singly. The incentive on the part of the public to loan funds to banks is determined in part by the returns determined by the going rate of interest.

This brings up the important question of the role of government or the state in any programme for economic development. Theorists who support liberal economic theory and market economics argue that the role of the state in economic development should be reduced to a minimum. Ideologically, they are committed to privatisation of as many economic enterprises as possible and the reduction of state funding of socially beneficial programmes such as investment in human capital, health and commonly shared infrastructure such as roads, railways and the likes. Such theorists also express much opposition to subsidies directed at enterprises, the need for whose products are subject to inelastic demand in the areas of housing, basic education and welfare.

But the economic history of those nations that have successfully broken free from the constraints of underdevelopment demonstrates that the state has played an important guiding role in rational economic decision making and economic growth. Germany's economic growth and technological development in the latter part of the nineteenth century was determined to a great extent by the mercantilist practice of protecting growing enterprises from outside competition. This theory of autarky was argued for by political economists such as Frederic List. List argued for tariff protection of infant industries imposed by the state which itself should embark on a nationalist programme of economic development (List 1983; Roussakis 1968). The same may be said for Japan in the latter part of the nineteenth century and, more recently, nations like Korea and Malaysia. Economic transformations and economic growth took place in nations such as Korea because 'they showed that the role of the state need not merely be to protect certain industries or to promote exports. It can also perform functions like planning; it can own key sectors, create social infrastructure, and serve as a focus for ideologies and identities' (Biel 2000:202). Similar arguments have been made by admittedly prominent adherents of neoclassical economic theory such as Joseph Stiglitz (Hoff and Stiglitz 2001:415-425).

Thus, an Africa that is at the vanguard of development would be one in which there would be a judicial partnership between government as an institution and a sovereign, free and politically dominant public, composed of both single individuals and collectivities. At this juncture, a crucial distinction must be made, however, between two key institutions of any modern society: that between government as

consisting of cadres whose function is to attend to economic needs such as education, housing, health, public safety, and so on, that are most efficiently served in communitarian fashion, and the state whose function in this instance would be essentially and mainly ceremonial. The functions of the state and government, both completely beholden to their creators, the people will be strictly delineated and maintained by constitutional statute. One might note in this regard that there is an increasing tendency in the modern nation state for the state to be dominant over government and even to absorb it. Much has been written on the role of the state in modern society with some theorists arguing that the real function of the state is to safeguard by implicit force the economic, political and cultural interests of its dominant classes. In a revised theory of the African state, its role would be reduced to something akin to the ceremonial role played by the remnants of the traditional monarchies of Europe and elsewhere. The modern state, in most instances, has been usurped by secular governments beholden to concentrated capital that protect their rule legally by self-serving statutes and physically by security apparatuses that often operate in secret and with impunity. Caricatures of this kind of governmental structure have been adopted widely in post-colonial Africa.

In an Africa that is advanced economically, the state would be allocated very limited powers with its appointees such as presidents and prime ministers serving almost ceremoniously, and fully beholden to the populace. The different ministries whose government functions are to provide for and oversee the general welfare would be fully divorced from the state. Heads of the different ministries and their appointees would be drawn purely from the government sector with its career employees. The point of this approach to government and the state in an advanced Africa would be to demonstrate that its economic structures would necessarily entail political economic issues involving the role and function of both government and the state. As suggested above, in an advanced Africa, human welfare in all its dimensions within the context of a constitutionally enforced communitarian ethos would be the primary consideration of such an economy. Human welfare in all its dimensions within an African context would involve not only economic decision making on the part of individuals, but also economic decision-making on the part of government. But in order to ensure a maximal human welfare in the form of the human capacity for self realisation, the state would have minimal powers to control free expression within the context of a rationally determined maximum negative and positive rights for all persons. The general political-economic context would be one of individual states within a larger collectivity of politically federated states with governments at the supranational level. From a standpoint of strict rationality, an advanced Africa would contain no more than four or five nation states, all members of a wider African commonwealth whose members would include the nation states of overseas Africa.

And yet contrary to popular belief, for the most part, the practised and cherished ideas of freedom have historically been an intrinsic element of African society. Who feels more free than Africa's eternal nomadic herdsman as he leads

and follows his cattle on their wandering ways, paying little attention to the arbitrarily imposed boundaries of the colonialists, now slavishly followed by their appointed governments? Who feels more free than the African peasant who tills, plants and harvests as seen fit without the controls and regulations of the imposed colonial and neocolonial government?

On Human Capital and the Division of Labour

One of the problems faced by contemporary post-colonial African economies is that of the very evident unemployment and underemployment of individuals who graduate from Africa's institutions of modern education. The kinds of education now extant in Africa's pedagogical institutions at all levels derive for the most part from the colonial systems imposed during the colonial era. Hence, we have French, British and Portuguese systems of education in various parts of Africa, all reflective of mostly colonial modes of knowledge transmission. In an advanced Africa, education would be geared necessarily to future meaningful employment to such an extent that the crucial element in education and human capital investment would be that each student would have been already apprenticed to some productive enterprise before graduation. Individuals whose interests would lead them to establish individual enterprises would also be apprenticed to other individuals in similar situations while receiving the adequate financial support from cooperative banks and other credit granting agencies.

But the essential issue here would be that in an advanced Africa educational instruction would be not only theoretical and practical but also eclectic. Thus, as a ready example, all individuals would be trained in the various arts required for modern agriculture, architecture, business operations, automotive repairs and other instruction in the mechanical and scientific arts. In this regard, every individual after the necessary period of instruction would have the real option of self employment or otherwise. Thus, the division of labour in this context would not require the specialisation that is so evident in the West and elsewhere.

Politics and the New Republic

In a developmentally advanced Africa, the question of its political landscape is of paramount importance. The political systems imposed or bequeathed to Africa by way of the colonial project have been tried and have been found wanting. The reason for this is obvious: the political structures of contemporary Europe are the local products of historical processes that have roots in the specific feudal and post-feudal structures of Europe. It is because of these different political histories that the political systems of France, Germany, Britain and Italy are easily distinguishable. Africa itself has had its variegated political structures, all relevant to essentially agrarian, commercial and nomadic societies, but contemporary African society has been radically transformed – as European and Asian societies – in recent times, mainly on account of the impositions of the colonial era.

To answer the question concerning the political life and structures of an advanced Africa, I begin by posing a thought experiment question. The question is: If one were about to be born but without knowledge as to one's prospective economic and sociological status, gender, talents, health, family, and so on, into what kind of society would one wish to arrive? The answer is that any individual would hope to enter a society in which he or she would be guaranteed economic security for survival purposes, optimal conditions for self-development and self-realisation and maximal conditions for freedom and self-expression. In other words, the individual about to enter human society would necessarily hope to enter a society that is structured in such a way that human welfare in all its dimensions would be maximised – even for potential masochists with their perverted sense of 'welfare'.

If humans lived single and solitary lives, the issue of human welfare and the appropriate social structures would be determined by the individual. Matters involving economic arrangements, the extent of one's freedom of rights, freedoms and autonomy. But the passive, post-serf classes of Europe allowed their recently won rights and freedoms to be confiscated by the new bourgeoisie, the class that provided the capital and assets for a growing capitalism. The superficial aspects of democracy such as voting and the temporary service in government by those appointed by capital (private or state) have been touted to post-colonial African governments as necessary and sufficient criteria for democratic 'good governance'.

But economic imbalances between those who own or control capital and those who are employed by the owners of capital have led to great distortions in the process now referred to as democratic. It is instructive to point out, in this context, that when voting was first introduced in the post-feudal societies of Europe, only individuals with adequate amounts of capital and property were accorded the right to vote. The reason for this was that capital and property owners sought to establish political mechanisms whereby the new governors of bourgeois society would attend to the specific interests of the former in terms of legislation, taxes and economic privileges. The expansion of the choice-making process took place only after literacy and knowledge spread to the working classes and the increasing numbers of the new town bourgeoisie – in short, the superficial aspects of the democratic process, that is the right to vote, became more widespread and accepted in the context of rights with the growth of what is now known as civil society.

It was this kind of system that was introduced to the new nations of Africa as they became independent. But this political graft from Europe was essentially problematic. The development of the political process in Europe was determined by local processes. Urbanisation with literacy and increased numbers of workers was a crucial element in the shaping of the political landscape of Europe. In Africa, urbanisation was taking place, but at a much slower pace than in Europe. The populations of post-independence Africa were still predominantly rural and agricultural. Literacy did not grow as quickly, given that the languages of instruction were predominantly those of the European metropolis. But what was of critical importance in this situation was that emerging civil societies were bereft of any real political

power, given that such societies had relatively few organs of media expression such as newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and so on. In other words, Africa was relatively bereft of industrialising, capital-rich productive elements except in South Africa where settlers from Europe found it relatively easy to obtain capital for industrial, mineral exploiting and industrial purposes. The result of these post-colonial structures was that most political and economic power accrued to the state, often beholden to the ex-metropolis according to the dictates of neocolonialism. Under these circumstances, the political process was necessarily flawed despite the touted superficial requirements of 'free and fair elections'. But as I mentioned above, even in the European societies where the modern idea of 'democratic governance' was organically developed, there are still serious distortions of the political process on account of the imbalance of wealth and the great influence of capital.

The collective approach advocated here, with regard to these considerations, is one based principally on the idea of economies of scale; pooled resources yield economically more efficient results than when invested from single sources. Natural resources such as minerals and the environment would be owned collectively by all citizens. In an adequately developed Africa, the goals of the political process would entail the direct involvement of citizens at all levels, especially at local levels. The function of elected officials would be that of attending to the already prescribed functions of government. The most important functions of government for which the citizens would have agreed to support fiscally by way of their own contributions would be the maintenance and improvement of infrastructure, the collective needs of education and the collective needs of health, administered by adequately trained government officials. Again, a distinction must be made between the government and the state. Government officials would require the appropriate training for their tasks, which would be established legally by way of a general constitution. State officials who are elected according to the political process would be completely beholden to those who elected them for the sole purpose of ensuring that the prescribed tasks of government officials be efficiently effected. Questions relating to budgetary expenditures would be determined only by those individuals employed by government and deemed competent to effect such. In other words, the role of the state and its officials would be primarily ceremonial. The political situation would amount to what one might refer to as direct democracy, with citizens having direct access to those whom they have elected to serve their own interests. The problem arises however when the state and government are conflated with the state appropriating for itself the economic tasks that are better handled by government. Matters are also compounded when the state, by way of its officials, imposes its will on the people and seeks to curtail their naturally ascribable political freedoms. In all this is forgotten the fact that the state is comprised of ordinary individuals who are required to dispatch their functions at the behest of the people who remunerate them as they see fit.

A Note on Development in Europe

The history of the world could be seen as one in which humans have sought to increase their freedoms by improving their understanding and control of the forces of nature for their own ends. These attempts at understanding and control were always attempted by appeal to the dual epistemologies of metaphysics and empirical technology. And instead of being beholden to nature and its caprices, humans have constantly and persistently sought to increase their agencies, hence, their freedoms by understanding how nature actually works. This understanding of nature has always been the major task of metaphysics (the transcendental) in its various forms, and what we now call empirical science (limited to the sensory world). But humans have also sought to increase their freedoms within their social structures over time, *pari passu*, as they expressed their increasing freedoms in their explorations of nature. In the case of Europe it must be recognised that this now-influential area is essentially an arriviste technological civilisation, having attained such status long after Africa and Asia had attained such. Until Roman civilisation became dominant a mere two thousand years ago, the sociological landscape of Europe was one of roaming groups of individuals who survived principally by plunder and mayhem. The Vikings, Vandals, and Saxons have acquired a deserved reputation in this regard.

But when Rome pacified most of Europe, a long period of unfreedom set in for Europeans in the form of slavery and serfdom. And even before the Romans, Greek civilisation, from which modern Europeans drew their cultural inspirations, was characterised by its slave classes. The same may be said for Roman civilisation. As Roman civilisation drew to a close in the fifth century, its institutions of slavery and peonage were replaced by that of another kind of servitude, historically referred to as serfdom. During the long era of serfdom, the serf was tethered to the land and subjected to the will of his lord, whose class acclaimed to itself the title of landed aristocracy. European feudalism lasted more than one thousand years, and its demise marked a central and significant point of European history. The 'freeing of the serfs' in Europe, from approximately the fifteenth century onwards, marked a quantum increase in the amounts of freedom for the European. The freeing of the serf and the birth of the new class of town burghers armed with new knowledge and novel technologies were practically simultaneous events, and the justification for the new freedoms was assigned to the new philosophers of the European post-Renaissance. But Montesquieu, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and others all belonged to the maturing post-feudal class of the European bourgeoisie. Their critical theories and disquisitions all established the intellectual conditions for the justified demise of feudalism and the birth of the modern European state. The French Revolution was the culminating point of this process. Liberty, Fraternity and Equality meant that hereditary rule and monarchical tenure were things of the past. The people were now ideologically justified in choosing their governmental representatives through the power accruing to them under the concept of parliamentary democracy.

But freedom is elusive. The rise of the bourgeoisie in Europe was a function of the economic power that accrued to that class according to its own ideology and practice of the economic system known as capitalism. The post-serf peasant, now an urban dweller, saw his freedoms whittled away under the power of capital. The mine and factory were now the replacements for the fields of the manor. It was this new unfreedom that inspired the idea of socialism, first with individuals like St. Simon, then later with Marx. The increasing freedoms of the bourgeoisie under capitalism were gained at the expense of the lack of freedoms for others. But the freeing of the captive serf in Europe was soon after accompanied by the organised capture of free West African labour for the plantations of the Americas and parts of Africa (Cape Verde, Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, etc.). The new captive labour of Africa was wedded to capital to produce wealth and novel technologies for Europe. Africa in captivity meant the increasing freedoms for Europe for the period dating from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. The culminating point to this formal period of unfreedom was the end of the colonial era. In the case of Africa, the departing colonialists had the last word. They imposed on Africa their own self-serving versions of government and democracy.

Contemporary African Attempts at Development

I have argued above that the major reason for the colonisation and economic exploitation of Africa was its relative technological retardation with regard to Europe. The struggle for independence was primarily a struggle against economic exploitation and political subservience. Like Japan in the mid-nineteenth century, some leaders of African independence recognised that it was imperative to reduce the technological gap between Africa and the West. After being the world's leader in technology for 155,000 years – culminating in the autonomous and seminal technological civilisation of the Egypto-Nubian complex, and the technologically innovative structures of Axum, Zimbabwe, Ife-Nok-Benin, and so on – out of the 160,000 years that *homo sapiens* has been extant, Africa found itself in the sixteenth century in technological arrears, thereby facilitating its subsequent control and exploitation by some of the nations of Western Europe.

Since the days of decolonisation, there have been three noteworthy theoretical attempts at economic development: the Lagos Plan of Action, Tanzania's Ujamaa Cooperative Development Theory, Libya's Green Book Prescriptions, and Ghana's African Pan-African Socialism. Yet, the only attempt at development which bore fruit and offered promise was that of Ghana under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. The reason for the success of the Ghana model was that it was based on actual empirical study of the economic development of Europe, a careful study of the history of Africa (explaining why the 'Gold Coast' of European provenance and agency became Ghana – the well-known state of medieval Africa) and the recognition of the intra-continental aspects of African history. Ghana's theory of economic development was patterned after the many theoretical writings of Nkrumah expressed in such texts as *Consciencism*, *Africa Must Unite*, and *Neocolonialism: The Last*

Stage of Imperialism. It is instructive to examine some of the ideas expressed in *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* because it offers insights into the recognition by Ghana that structural changes in the organisation of post-colonial Africa had to be made before meaningful development could take place. It must be pointed out first of all that most theorists of African development tend to offer prescriptions for development without raising questions about the viability of the myriad postcolonial political entities hastily constructed by the colonial powers as they yielded formal political power to their erstwhile colonies. The idea of development is usually couched in nebulous terms about market freedom, privatisation and corruption. But consider the following from Kwame Nkrumah:

Neo-colonialism is based upon the principle of breaking up former large united colonial territories into a number of small non-viable States which are incapable of independent development and must rely on the former imperial power for defence and even internal security (Nkrumah 1965: xiii).

Consider too these prescient observations: 'Unless small states can combine they must be compelled to sell their primary products at prices dictated by the developed nations and buy their manufactured goods at the prices fixed by them' (Nkrumah 1965:xiv). Statements such as these offer examples as to why one of the key principles in Nkrumah's theory of Pan-Africanism is the idea of continental institutions.

But for Nkrumah, the issue of development was not restricted only to the political but also to the economic. He writes:

The existence of separate monetary zones is having a harmful effect on the growth of trade in Africa. It is leading to illegal trade and revenue losses in many countries and makes an African Common Market difficult. Like the old, artificial political boundaries which are a relic of the colonial period, the various monetary zones help to emphasize differences when the independent African States should all be working for unified economic development. They perpetuate links with former colonial powers and strengthen the forces of neocolonialism (Nkrumah 1965:227).

The idea of the political and economic pooling of resources as a necessary condition for economic development was not unique to political theorists such as Nkrumah. Consider the following, written more than thirty years ago:

The only way to achieve the economic re-construction and development essential to fulfill the aspirations, needs and demands of the peoples of Africa is through a sustained shift to continental planning, so as to unite increasingly the resources, markets and capital of Africa in a single substantial economic unit (Green and Seidman 1968:22).

But Nkrumah's programme was not just only about the political and economic integration of Africa, it also involved the restructuring of Ghana's economic system along socialist lines. Nkrumah's socialist agenda was seen as highly controversial in Euro-American and African political circles in an era when there was a fierce ideological conflict between the Soviet Union and the West. The Soviet Union, founded on the principles of Communism, was seen by many in the non-European world as

a promising alternative to the Western capitalism, for purposes of development. The socialist model which Nkrumah found attractive was one which empowered the state with the major tasks of development in the form of the harnessing of capital for rapid growth in the areas of technological infrastructure and universal education. The Soviet Union under the theoretical guidance of Lenin was able to accumulate enough capital in a relatively short period of time to create sectors of state-controlled heavy industries and manufacture. It was on account of this rapid technological transformation that the West saw the Soviet Union as a very serious competitor in the area of political economy. In fact, this rapid technological change was what could be viewed as the major reason why the Soviet Union was able to defend itself during World War II and to launch outward thrusts into Eastern Europe following the defeat of Germany.

The question now is, How successful was Nkrumah's programme of development? With regard to the theory of Pan-Africanism, suffice it to say that the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) a supra-national organisation based in Addis Ababa and the founding of the Economic Community of West African States, constitutes the practical results of this idea, but extra-continental forces mindful of the potential of a genuine implementation of the Pan-African ideal were less than enthusiastic about offering the needed economic support for such. In strict economic terms, Ghana embarked on state administered seven-year plans that produced some rapid growth in areas of needed infrastructure in the construction of the Tema Harbour, and the Akosombo Dam and power grid. And it should be pointed out that the capital for such indigenous projects derived from tax duties, especially in the area of cocoa. But there were externally imposed difficulties when Ghana tried to coordinate the mining and smelting of its own extensive deposits of bauxite with Guinea to produce aluminium *in situ*. But what makes elements of Ghana's development programme useful for the future is the rapid success it experienced in investments in human capital. The effect of Ghana's educational programme is still felt in West Africa many years after the demise of its ambitious experiment under Nkrumah.

Contemporary Theories of Development

One of the very evident paradoxes on the issue of development is that despite the vast amounts of research done on the topic, the issue itself seems impervious to solution. This research topic was first undertaken in the 1950s with the explicit goal of explaining and offering prescriptions as to the causes of wealth and technology differentials between the nations of Western Europe and North America, and most of those of Africa, Asia and Latin America. As a result of this interest, a number of research paradigms have been formulated to this end. One standard point of departure for the development models is that, in order for development to take place, there must first be economic growth. Growth is seen as a necessary quantitative accumulation of surpluses that would eventually be transmuted qualitatively into development. One basic assumption that the development theorists made was that mechanisms had to be developed that maximised output in society's two major

sectors: the agricultural and the industrial. It was argued that the developed world (mainly Northern hemisphere Western nations) was industrialised and demonstrated regular economic growth, while the developing world was primarily agricultural and experienced difficulties demonstrating economic growth. In this regard, development was seen predominantly as a matter of economics, thereby yielding theory construction to theorists in economics who normally analyzed the problematic of development from within the theoretical assumptions of their own particular paradigms. Thus, theorists in development (I name just a few) viewed the problem of development from the standpoint of classical or neoclassical economics (Hirshman 1958; Lewis 1955), Marxian political economy (Baran 1957), sociological theory (Rostow 1960), dependency theory (Prebisch 1950; Frank 1967; Furtado 1963; Emmanuel 1972; Amin 1974), and more recently critical development theory (Pieterse 2001).

What is also evident from a consultation of the research efforts on matters of development is that the vast majority of the researchers are based in the research institutes of the developed world and determined by the need for ‘analytical tractability’ and an ignoring of the fact that ‘the human economic agents who are objects of interpretation and understanding do not represent inconcrete and disconnected entities ‘out there’ in the sense of being isolated from their environment in space and time, or from the theoretical and empirical constructs of would-be interpreters’ (David 1997:217).

In what follows, I will offer brief analyses and discussions of the main theories of development so as to demonstrate how they differ fundamentally from the theory I have sketched above. The theories in question are the neoclassical theory, dependency theory, poststructuralism, and developmentalism.

Neoclassical Economic Theory

The literature on the economics of contemporary development theory is dominated by theorists who have been schooled in what is called neoclassical economics. With the development of the modern social sciences as separate disciplines dating from the mid-eighteenth century, the theory of economics evolved from its classical phase into neoclassical economics, founded on the idea that economic decision making should be studied as rigorously as possible with appeal to the quantitative methods of mathematics. In its present guise, the neoclassical paradigm views itself as decidedly objective and scientific, given its reliance on a set of fundamental axioms and mathematical derivations. On account of its commitment to a scientific orientation, its theorists argue that its strictly scientific side represents positive economics, while its applied or policy side should be viewed as normative or welfare economics.

In this regard, neoclassical economics may be viewed as a species of engineering with its fundamental axioms that stress consumer sovereignty, transparent markets, transitive preferences that are conformed to by the ideal construct, *homo oeconomicus* or ‘economic man’. But what is remarkable about this construct, to whom all the postulates, axioms and theorems of neoclassical economics apply, is that its

behaviour is motivated only to 'maximise expected utility, subject to real costs constraints' according to a prescribed postulate of rationality. His behaviour is a function only of one value judgment, that of maximisation or gain. It is according to this foundational theory that the majority of the economists at the IMF and World Bank formulate and implement policy. In this regard, economics as a science has no tolerance for considerations regarding politics, sociology or the value judgmental considerations of political economy. The stated justification for this approach is that economics is first and foremost a scientific discipline and that its primary operational goals are results based on efficiency rather than on normative considerations, such as equity.

But is neoclassical economics a science? Science, as it is defined, consists of a set of empirically testable theories whose function is to predict and explain experiential phenomena in the world. To these ends, scientific theories must rely on general laws expressible in quantitative or structurally discrete terms. Neoclassical economics offers the appearance of a science, given its explanatory models founded on mathematical propositions. But appearance is not necessarily reality. Epistemological concerns have been raised about the predictive accuracy of neoclassical theories and the fact that some theorists have argued that the realism of a theory's assumptions is not important in determining its scientific content (Friedman 1953). This would be acceptable on instrumentalist grounds if the predictions of the theory in question were actually borne out. But as mentioned above, the predictive record of neoclassical theories have not been encouraging. It seems rather that neoclassical economics as any discipline dealing theoretically with human behaviour is necessarily founded on value judgments in the service of some chosen orientation. In this connection, neoclassical economics serves as the evaluative basis for neoliberal market economics as it presents itself as being universally valid on essentially scientific grounds. But it must be recognised that the economic behaviour of humans on strictly empirical grounds reduces to aspects of sociology or anthropology reflective of the cultural values invoked by them as they barter and exchange items among themselves. For example, the culturally derived exchange habits of some society might eschew the principle of interest altogether, while the whole dynamic of neoclassical market economics is founded on the idea that 'interest' is its major catalyst. In this regard, let us view neoclassical economics not as a universal science, but rather as a research anthropological paradigm reflective of the historical cultures of the societies of Western Europe. This is an important constraint for those who would wish to employ this particular paradigm in the service of development for contemporary Africa. For example, the relatively large amounts of debt owed by the nations of Africa to the IMF and Western banks are based on the extending of credit based on initial considerations of interest. What this means, of course, is that the fundamental principle of neoclassical economics is that of self interest.

Key Applications of Neoclassical Economic Theory

It is instructive to discuss at this point some of the key theoretical models within the context of development theory and to demonstrate their relative ineffectiveness with regard to general economic development. Following the work of J.M. Keynes, who argued that an economy can achieve equilibrium at much less than full employment of labour resources, the theoretical question became: What role should government play in stimulating economic growth so that the maximum amount of labour resources be employed? The research programme that developed around Keynes's arguments became known as Keynesian economics. Given that the perceived problem with underdeveloped economies was that of lack of adequate and sustained growth, attempts were made by Western theorists to formulate the problem and solution in theoretical terms. In this regard, two neoclassical models became popular: 1) the Harrod-Domar (H-D) Model and the Solow Growth Model; and 2) the Lewis Growth Model.

In brief, given the assumption of general production functions $Y=F(\text{Capital, Labour, Technological Knowledge...})$, the Harrod-Domar model ($G=s/C$) claimed that the growth rate was a function of the relationship between the rate of savings and the Capital-Output ratio. This model was then tuned to the important issue of the warranted (necessary rate for constant growth) rate of growth and actual rates of growth. But the observed dynamics of the neoclassical economy showed that there were serious concerns about the accuracy of Keynes's famous Savings = Investment recipe for growth. Market economies did not grow in strict linear fashion but rather along quasi-sinusoidal lines because of the fact that dynamic growth was periodically compromised by over-capacity and under-capacity of labour resources. Later modifications to this model were attempted by Robert Solow who formulated what became known as the Solow Growth Model (Solow 1970). Solow focused on the issue of technology and argued that changing technologies was a better guarantor of constant growth than was suggested by the H-D model.

The problematic with these growth models is that they were more suited to the industrialised world than those areas where there was a constant shortage of capital whose provenance was not indigenous. With regard to the developing world, the established growth models had little relevance except maybe to demonstrate that growth was maximally an affair of macroeconomic policies. Similar criticisms could be leveled against the Lewis model that argued that the best path to growth was the utilisation of surplus rural labour in the industrialising urban sectors which would in turn be the recipient of capital inputs from the industrialised world. The empirical evidence shows that this two sector growth model proved not to be viable. The reason is that the industrialised world was not prepared to help in creating competitors from areas that traditionally produced cheap agricultural goods.

Dependency Theory

While neoclassical economic theory produced unworkable models of economic development, its intellectual nemesis, Marxism, sought to approach the problem of

development from its theory of exploitation. Dependency theory, in general, explains development as being constrained by the unequal exchange relationships that exist between the nations that are developed and those that are viewed as developing. The literature on dependency theory is substantial, so it would be preferable to list just the more important figures. Prebisch (1950), Baran (1957), Frank (1966), Amin (1974), et al. are some of the better known theorists. But it should be pointed out that the issue of dependency in its broadest sense of political economy and sociology was better explicated by theorists such as Nkrumah (1965) and Fanon (1968), speaking for the African continent. What is instructive about dependency theory is that it points out that development is virtually impossible, given present existing structural relations between the industrialised nations and their ex-colonies. While neoclassical theory is shorn of all historical and sociological context, dependency theory is founded on the historical and sociological dynamic that determines the existing structural relationships between the industrialised and the non-industrialised.

The general theme is that of unequal exchange with the industrialised nations deriving surpluses from their relationships with the non-industrialised. It points out the role of the IMF, World Bank, weak currencies and the political pressures employed to maintain the unequal relationships. It is in this context that political economy is a better analytical tool than neoclassical economics. Dependency theorists argue, in general, that the solution to the problem would derive from revolutionary activity with workers in the vanguard with the ultimate goal being some version of socialism. Yet, this has not yet been tried in the vast areas of economic underdevelopment. The only possible exceptions are China and Vietnam. Cuba has made some progress, but its political situation is problematic. Furthermore, it has been unable to move from a predominantly agricultural society to one of some industrial and technological development. Yet, it must be noted that its research and production in pharmaceuticals have been impressive. The neoclassical market theorists point, on the other hand, to the East Asian nations of Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia as nations that have demonstrated movement towards industrialisation. But this development took place only because of great amounts of capital from the United States coordinating with investments in human capital. But these large inputs of capital were injected by the West for purely political reasons in its conflict with the communist nations, especially the Soviet Union and China. The problem of development is not a difficult problem to explain. The question is, From where would the instruments to transform the existing situation come? In the final analysis, things reduce to a question of ethics: Would capital be forthcoming on grounds of a 'win-win' situation for all, or would it be forthcoming only in terms of self-interest for those who provide it? If history should serve as precedent, then Africa is obliged to provide its own capital in whatever creative ways it can.

In response to this approach based on hard realism, one may point to the touted successes of the microfinancing of small enterprises by the Grameen bank of Bangladesh as a potential escape from the impasses of development theory in practice. But

the results here are too negligible, even though useful. Such efforts do not really deal with key structural problems such as unequal exchange and the actual political economy of underdevelopment. The World Bank can easily finance with positive and genuine monitoring, hundreds of projects requiring minimal amounts of capital. But it does not do so because the providers of international capital make economic decisions purely according to principles of political *real politik* and zero-sum game considerations. That is why development in the case of Africa must ultimately be based on the indigenous formulation and analysis of bold and innovative paradigms.

Post-Structuralism and Developmentalism

While dependency theory is essentially the theoretical enterprise of political economists of the non-industrialised world, the development issue in the West itself has developed a kind of trendy aura. Development has now been transformed into 'sustainable growth and development' and the need to 'reduce poverty' in the so-called 'Third World' nations. Post-structuralism is the most convenient label for this approach to development, given that it is based on fluid and inchoate structural analysis. In this regard, there is room not only for large projects but for mini-projects administered by the proliferation of what are called NGOs. But in general, this approach is reformist. It does not seek radical transformations in the relationship between the industrialised world and the non-industrialised world. Poststructuralism may be seen as just variations on the Peace Corps theme: small scale volunteer work for those who seek the 'exotic' while they prepare for something else to do when they return to their respective metropolises. In sum, this modernist version of development transports the latest fads from the industrialised world to the developing world, hence, its tendency to focus on issues piece-meal such as gender rights, environmental and ecological concerns, food security and the ever increasingly popular 'sustainable development' (Pieterse 2001). This is not to deny the importance of such issues, but implicit in these new approaches is the idea that genuine development that would lead to an Africa on par technologically with the West is not something they consider seriously.

Developmentalism is merely the name used by those who accept poststructuralist discourse and seek to counter the traditional view of development as leading to 'progress' and 'modernism'. In this regard, developmentalism is seen as embodying a 'hegemonic discourse' that would include all strands in the critique of the idea of development itself. But some authors argue that there is a progressive side to developmentalism that includes theories that argue for 'different trajectories of development of dependent societies(as with dependency theory) and advocate different logics of development for different societies(as with democratic Marxism)' with the purported goal of empowering the poor(Peet 1999:155). Thus, for Peet, it would be problematic to lump this approach with 'neoclassical economics, modernisation theory, and World Bank policies'(Peet 1999:155). In this regard, individuals who are engaged in radical practice are much more important than 'poststructural philosophers who meet in the salons of Paris...' (Peet 1999:155). It is in this

context that one must understand the post-developmental theories that deal with 'gender and development', 'critical modernism', 'radical democracy', and 'alternative development'. Admittedly the ideas expressed in these theories may be useful, but there is an evident problematic. None of these theories emanate from the areas where development is needed most. Thus, the idea of hegemonic discourse remains. For genuine development to take place, the presumed subaltern must have the principal voice.

Development and Real Constraints

Despite the plethora of theories and disquisitions on the question of development in Africa, there are real constraints that militate against easy solutions. The post-colonial legacy of Africa is one in which the continent is truncated into a large number of relatively small states which do not have effective agency to operate politically or economically in the world. The Washington Consensus is naturally at loggerheads with the theoretical telos of the African Union in the image of Kwame Nkrumah. The real implementation of a Pan-African telos is thwarted first of all by mentalities frozen in colonial time as the continued existence of 'francophonie' and 'Commonwealth' suggest. But there is an ongoing dynamic in which minds and resources are struggled over and competed for. Frantz Fanon explicated the African colonial and post-colonial ethos and dynamic, Cheikh Anta Diop re-established the African past according to its own internal logic while Kwame Nkrumah formulated the general outline for Africa's historical telos. Thus, an adequate theory of African development exists, but constraints against implementation are maintained both internally and externally. The draconian dictates from the West's economic taskmasters in the form of the IMF and World Bank constitute the external constraints. The internal constraints are maintained by Africa's intellectually catatonic and psychologically ahistorical neocolonial classes, creatures all of metropolitan post-colonial culture.

It is the mental structures created in post-colonial time that prevent Africa's neocolonial classes from recognising, for example, that the principles of economic transactions that govern international economics are merely normative rules reflective of Western culture. Critical analysis would make it evident that Western bank credit is created out of thin air and that the so-called 'hard currencies' of the West are made of the same paper that African currencies are made of. There seems to be a reluctance to believe that an intra-African currency could be created in exactly the same way that the European Union created the euro. In their intellectually catatonic state, Africa's neocolonial classes merely sit back and await the next bit of 'advice' from the West which they then hasten to implement in uncritical fashion.

Conclusion

The history of the world could be seen as one in which humans *by their very nature* have sought to increase their freedoms by improving on their understanding and control of the forces of nature for their own ends. These attempts at understanding

and control were always effected by appeal to the dual epistemologies of metaphysics and empirical technology. And instead of being beholden to nature and its caprices, humans have constantly and persistently sought to increase their agencies, hence, their freedoms by understanding how nature actually works. This understanding of nature has always been the major task of metaphysics (the transcendental) in its various forms and what we now call empirical science (limited to the sensory world). But humans have also sought to increase their freedoms within their social structures over time, *pari passu*, as they expressed their increasing freedoms in their explorations of nature. This could be what is meant by 'development'. In this regard, Africa has been at the forefront of this human journey for most of human history. Only in the last 2,000 years or so out of a history of at least 150,000 years have individuals who migrated to other parts of the globe been able to claim knowledge and technological ascendance over the African continent. But even so, the foundations of such knowledge derive ultimately from Africa.

In this paper, the issue of development was approached from a somewhat different position. The normal position is that not only is Africa perpetually 'developing', but also that it was never developed and that the best advice could come only from the theoreticians of those societies deemed as 'developed'. It was shown, however, that historically, Africa was for a long period of time the most developed area of the globe and that the arguments of underdevelopment apply to a relatively recent period. It was also pointed out that an Africa at the vanguard of development would not resemble the technologically advanced nations of the West in terms of civil society, government and state structure. The reason is that the political histories of Africa's societies are different from those of Europe. But in addition to the main positions taken in this essay, an Africa in the vanguard of development would be one structured along Pan-African lines with federal states linked together with free and untrammelled trade and travel. The general point is that development in Africa would entail maximal amounts of African agency on parity with other continental groupings. Thus, Africa's languages, currencies, and status in international organisations would be on par with those of the other continents and areas. This specific configuration of Africa is usually overlooked by most theorists. For such theorists, the future of Africa is to be determined by the shallow ministrations of 'experts' and NGO cohorts of Western origin. It is evident therefore that the issue of development for Africa should be primarily the responsibility of Africa's theoreticians. It is incumbent on them that they be constantly aware of Africa's technological, sociological and economic history. They should also be vigilant epistemologists in their appraisals of the myriad theories of development that emanate continuously from the think tanks of the West.

