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FROM "WRETCHEDNESS" TO "SELF-RELIANCISM:" RETHINKING FANON AND OGUNDOWOLE ON AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This work attempts a comparative analysis of two significant indigenous philosophical contributions in the area of Africa's development discourse: Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and E.K. Ogundowole's *Self-Reliancism*. Although both writers are from different historical contexts, yet, they are united in their quest and their objective of charting a transformative path toward Africa's socio-political and economic advancement. Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, presents a radical critique of colonialism and its psychological impact, advocating for decolonial violence, cultural renaissance, and the liberation of African consciousness as necessary conditions for meaningful development. Ogundowole, on the other hand, articulates a philosophy of *Self-Reliancism*, which emphasizes Africa's autonomy, the reclamation of indigenous knowledge systems, and a progressive-oriented commitment to internal self-sufficiency as necessary for building sustainable growth for Africa's development. The study employs a critical analysis methodology and a review of relevant literature to assess the philosophical foundations, practical implications, and points of convergence between these two frameworks. It argues that an integrative approach that synthesizes Fanon's decolonial praxis with Ogundowole's constructive self-reliance offers a compelling indigenous paradigm for African development. Such a synthesis demands not only the epistemic decolonization of thought and institutions but also a praxis-driven reorientation toward cultural authenticity, structural transformation, and cognitive liberation. Through this philosophical focal lens, this paper advocates a comprehensible, Africa-centered model of development that challenges dependency and reclaims African agency.

Keywords: African Development, Decolonization, Fanon, Ogundowole, Indigenous Knowledge, Neocolonialism; Self-Reliancism.

Introduction

The African continent continues to grapple with enduring and complex developmental challenges, including poverty, political instability, economic dependency, ecological degradation,

and cultural dislocation. While such issues are not exclusive to Africa, their persistence and intensity across many African states are often attributed to entrenched systems of corruption, weak governance structures, and externally imposed development paradigms that fail to align with indigenous realities (Ake, 1996; Rodney, 1972). Despite significant interventions by national governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector, development efforts have frequently fallen short, undermined by structural inequalities and a reliance on Western-centric models of growth and governance (Ekeh, 1975; Fanon, 1963). In this context dependent philosophical inquiry, efforts is made to provide a powerful means of rethinking Africa's developmental trajectory. Following similar approaches as advocated by Hountondji (1983); and Wiredu (1996), this research utilizes the frameworks as tools not only to critique the inherited legacies of colonialism and neocolonialism but also to propose indigenous, context-sensitive alternatives. Thus, the engagement of the thought of these two critical African philosophers, namely, Frantz Fanon and E. K. Ogundowole as a framework, though historically and methodologically distinct, they have a meeting ground on the need for African self-liberation and autonomy.

Fanon's writing was in the period of anti-colonial struggle and he critically analyzed the psychological, structural, and cultural consequences of colonial domination. His reflections in *The Wretched of the Earth* reveal how colonialism fractures the native psyche, distorts identity, and replaces indigenous systems with exploitative hierarchies (Fanon, 1963). While Fanon focused primarily on decolonization as a means of reclaiming political and cultural agency, Ogundowole addressed the enduring grip of neocolonialism, especially its epistemic and economic dimensions. Ogundowole through his concept of Self-Reliancism, advocated a forward-looking African philosophy grounded in indigenous knowledge, critical rationality, and socio-political independence (Ogundowole, 2011). Due to the difference in their periods and the focus of their eras, Fanon's work had centered on the breakdown of colonialism, while Ogundowole was on the persistence of neocolonialism. However, both thinkers had a meeting point in their critique of externally imposed domination and their call for a fundamentally autonomous African future. In the work of both scholars lies detailed expositions of how colonial and neocolonial systems fractured Africa both physically and spiritually, carving the continent into artificial regions that justified European exploitation (Fanon, 1963; Rodney, 1972). This paper argues that the synthesis of Fanon's decolonialism, with Ogundowole's self-reliance provides a compelling indigenous paradigm for Africa's development. It finds its root in an epistemic self-determination, structural reform, and cultural reawakening, which are integrated approaches that foresee a future where Africa's development is not externally dictated but internally constructed through the reclamation of its philosophical, political, and existential agency (Ogundowole, 2011; Fanon, 1963; Hountondji, 1983).

Fanon's Decolonial Praxis and the Quest for Liberation

In Fanon's ideological disposition, his work, *The Wretched of the Earth* serves as the cornerstone of his postcolonial theory. Its underlying perspective is in its critiquing of the material and psychological violence of colonialism; and its advocacy for violent resistance as a means of reclaiming agency and selfhood (Fanon, 1980). Fanon sees colonialism not only in the guise of political domination but also as epistemic and cultural annihilation. His critique is a thoroughgoing emphasis on the three themes he describes as core characters: Revolutionary Violence; Critique of the National Bourgeoisie; and Cultural Reclamation. In Fanon's position, the process of decolonization cannot be violent, stating that the occasion of colonialism itself

was a violent one. As such, the actualization of liberation itself, cannot be devoid of violence. Liberation for Fanon cannot be negotiated but must be seized through force.

Fanon sees the "national bourgeoisie" not as a new entrant in the entire affair, rather, they have always existed in every post-colonial state. In Africa, they are a definition of European-based education and culture and are the recipients of the credit for founding the political parties, which are responsible for the crop of leaders that African countries have today. They were the leaders and carried out the negotiation for the terms of decolonization with the colonist country. The focal trend of Fanon's thought reflects the National Bourgeoisies as the "extended arm" of the colonialists who have always been the link between the colonialists and the colonized. They were for him those who were after independence responsible for the perpetuation of colonial economic and political structures. They are elites who formed alliances with the former colonizers and the new neocolonial arrangements ensured the continuity of the colonialist agenda. Thus, at that point, they were drivers of political units or parties that had assumed the role of achieving national unanimity. This was followed by a strategic emergence as the principal negotiator for independence.

In Fanon's thought, the Colonialists had adopted "delay tactics" in their negotiation to create a timeline that allowed for the actualization and self-transform of the Bourgeoisies into the "entity" the nation need. Fanon had described this path to decolonialization as "a cloaked" form of the former colonialism since the Bourgeoisies were young, inexperienced and dependent. They did not possess the skills or experience needed to provide either capital or sophisticated economic guidance to the new country. Thus, they had no option but to rely on the colonials for finances, loans and equal advice establishing the new neocolonialism role (Fanon 1980: 135). Central to Fanon's approach is the call for a psychological liberation of the colonized. He foresees cultural revitalization as essential to the reconstruction of the African identity and the best option for overcoming the inferiority complex implanted by colonial ideologies. He had established his revolutionary ideology on the idea that the freedom or liberation sought has to transform both material conditions and mentalities (Fanon 1980).

Fanon's critical push for violence allowed his ideologies to be criticized as he was adjudged to have "underestimated the potentials of non-violent resistance and democratic transformation" (Towa, 1989). However, unlike Fanon, Ogundowole does not subscribe to revolutionary violence, rather he emphasizes ethical self-mobilization and structural transformation from within. This perspective from the standpoint of this work appears complementary to Fanon's position. Ogundowole's further outline of a post-decolonization reconstruction in Self-Reliancism thus provides a philosophical response to the persistent underdevelopment of postcolonial Africa. By identifying and decrying the overreliance on Western aid, models, and ideologies and identifying it as the reason behind dependency underdevelopment and progress, Ogundowole had taken a nuanced stand (Ogundowole, 2011). In his view, Self-Reliancism is "a set of purposive activities directed toward self-realization, holistic competence, dedication, confidence, national awareness, originality, inventiveness, and creativity" (Ogundowole, 2011, p. 72). His criticalness on a way forward for development is centred on such core social autonomy as: economics; epistemic; capacity building; and innovation. In this perspective, Ogundowole (2011) argues for not only the control of African resources alone but also for the independence of our institutions of knowledge. In this way, he advocates for the promotion of our indigenous knowledge systems. Ogundowole's position is that the only source of holistic and true development is from within, and no culture will advance based on an epistemic culture outside its culture (Ogundowole, 2011).

Ogundowole's Self Reliancism and the New World Order

In his positioning, Ogundowole approaches development for the continent as a product of internal capacities, creative reasoning, and pragmatic self-determination. In Ogundowole's "Philosophy of a New Order" is found a demand for a new world economic and political structure which has its source in the continent's development prospects and problems. It is a fight against neocolonialism and the foreign struggle for foreign domination and alienation on home soil. The Self-Reliancist theory is an attempt to eliminate the economic dependence of African states, ending abruptly any advancement or agenda of neocolonialist capitalism, thus, positioning African states in exercising full control over their economic activities and natural resources and enhancing their national *self-affirmation* and *self-realization*. Ogundowole's position, if critically appraised is a complimentary ideology to Fanon's, and if merged as a continuation of Fanon's objectives in the "Wretched of the Earth" exposes problems of certain paths toward further decolonization and avoiding the pitfalls of neo-colonialism. His Self-reliancism comes as "a set of purposive activities directed toward self-realization," emphasizing features such as "competence, dedication confidence, national awareness, originality, inventiveness and creativity" (Ogundowole 2010: 72). In more economic understanding, it is "the ability of a people to control their resources and consequently their economic and socio-cultural destiny". This he says is a necessary condition in evolving a self-reliant society.

Self-reliance presupposes self-determination. It is "an act of faith in man's ability to transcend the barriers imposed by nature, to blaze, by sheer force of the intelligence, new frontiers of progress, new paths to prosperity, and new avenues for a better standard of life for all within the political entity. Thus, for Ogundowole, the self-reliancist ideology is more of a universal process; a universal orientation destined to liberate, not only the people of the new states but also the peoples of the advanced capitalist society (Ogundowole 2010: 79). An appraisal of Ogundowole's *Self Reliancism* looks to observe an undoubted stimulation of a holistic development aimed at: elevating human reasoning in such a way that it results in a commiserating growth in self-confidence and mastery on the part of the individual. For him, holistic social growth adopts a shared growth of the composing elements. For this, he argues that when engulfed in the feelings of self-confidence, there is a proportionate chance that individuals will take responsibility for themselves towards their self-actualization (Ogundowole 2011: 133). In the real sense of it, a pragmatic observation will reflect that the creativeness of the people is stunted when core aspects of the state are entrusted into the hands of foreigners. This is evident in contemporary African states' dependency on countries like China, Korea, India, British, UAE, America etc.

A Synthesis Towards a Holistic Indigenous Developmental Paradigm

It is vital to recognize that both Fanon's and Ogundowole's attempts share a fundamental concern with Africa's liberation and self-actualization, even in their different methodologies. Fanon's approach attempts a more radical liberation for the continent, while Ogundowole promotes a sustainable reformative process grounded in indigenous logico-epistemic creativity. Fanon comes to the typical highlight of a revolutionary ideology. While Ogundowole's conception of a self-reliancist philosophy is often seen as an offering that stands in contrast to the common trajectory and approach to Africa's development of his era. Both men also agree in their works that foreign-adopted models will not generate the desired results required for achieving sustainable development in Africa. In both authors' works, can be found the weariness of the challenges of Africa's developmental struggles, which they see as being compounded by systemic issues. Evident in both Fanon and Ogundowole's work are issues such as that of

"Global Economic Asymmetries" acknowledged. This was fingered out by Rodney (1972), who indicated that the position of Africa in global economics remains a relationship where it is merely integrated into global capitalism, as a raw material supplier, suffering from unfair trade terms and dependency. The effect is what is reflected in Ake (1996), as a position of being restricted to an "unholy dependency of conditional aids and debt. In this case, nations are compelled to depend on international loans, which are often tied to so-called structural adjustment programs, reduce fiscal sovereignty etc.

Attempts at indigenous philosophies by both Fanon and Ogundowole offer alternatives that are both critical and constructive. They challenge the moral authority of Western prescriptions and re-centralise African agency. There is a departure from what is applicable to postcolonial states, where the Government is often a mimic of colonial administrative structures, which its reinforcing elite dominance (Ekeh, 1975). A synthesis of Fanon and Ogundowole's ideological positions when critically appraised will lead to an articulation of a coherent indigenous developmental paradigm comprising four pillars, namely: Epistemic Decolonization; Institutional Autonomy; Economic Self-Sufficiency; and Cultural Renaissance. By epistemic decolonization, it is necessary to adopt Fanon's position that Africa must liberate itself from mental colonialism. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) highlights this in the areas of integrating Africa's indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) from languages, histories, and worldviews into education and public discourse. This, as this work recognizes, is the real decolonization and the first step towards a holistic Institutional Autonomy. For Ogundowole, "Institutional Autonomy" is the bedrock of building institutions rooted in African values and accountable to local needs. This includes decentralization, community-based governance, and participatory democracy. It is only when this is achieved, that real development that is internally driven can begin. From the position of Ogundowole's Self Reliance, if this is not first taken care of, any investment in agriculture, local industry, and indigenous technology will not replicate its projected results. The necessary step is to aim towards an economic self-sufficiency that emerges from eradicating the dependency on imported goods and ideas.

Recommendations and Conclusion

African societies like other human societies have evolved over the years. African societies have grown over various ages; having their version of the "stone age"; hunting and gathering age; crude Agriculture and Mechanized farming; enlightenment and industrialization; info-tech revolution, etc. However, an underlying factor through the ages and shift in paradigm is the African's revivalism i.e. the desire or tendency to renew interest in something old such as custom belief or local technology with the sole intent of producing a synergistic result. Embedded in this and not exempting our own indigenous culture is the doctrine of man's conscious purposive activity to advance. This as discussed in this work is evident in Fanon and Ogundowole's works. The integration of Frantz Fanon's decolonialism critique with E.K. Ogundowole's Self-Reliance offers the African continent a powerful framework for rethinking Africa's developmental trajectory. By addressing both the legacies of colonial violence and the dangers of neocolonial dependency, this synthesis provides a roadmap for genuine transformation. While routing for an indigenous African philosophy of development, findings in this work advocate that true African development for Africans must be rooted in cultural affirmation, economic autonomy, epistemic liberation, and ethical self-determination. As Africa navigates the complexities of globalization, such a philosophy provides the intellectual and moral compass necessary to reclaim agency and forge a future defined not by imposed models but by African ingenuity and resolve. The Indigenous paradigm for Africa's development will not

be actualised unless critical concerns as discussed in this work are fully embraced. These steps are pragmatic and achievable.

Critical is an educational reform, that requires a revamp of the curricula to de-emphasize the centralization of Western culture and education and offer a re-direction towards a more African philosophy, languages, and epistemologies (wa Thiong'o, 1986). This achieved, it is a necessity for nations to assume a national resource control policy, where resources are nationalized and internally managed for the nation's benefit. Moreso, citizens must be ready to be involved in participatory governance. In other words, they must be ready to promote accountability and prepare the next generation to also do so through their early and proper engagement with civic education, institutional checks, and community engagement, while also supporting arts, oral traditions, and language preservation to foster cultural pride and continuity. In all this, it is expedient that African states come together, reason together and be united towards continental solidarity.

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