

## **Mental Decolonization: A Pathway to Sustainable Development in Africa**

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**Research Article**

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**Abstract:** With most African countries gaining independence by the 1960s, there were widespread expectations that Africans were now mature enough to chart their course. However, the later play out of events saw those dreams fade away like a mirage. Instead of moving ahead, most African countries are plagued by massive under development. Africans were their problem. The constant dependence on the colonial masters and the mentality of seeing everything foreign as superior hindered the necessity of looking inward to devise her own developmental strategy, hence the need for mental decolonisation. Decolonisation is the act of undoing or freeing oneself from the bondage of colonialism. Mental decolonisation, therefore, is the changing of our orientation toward the impact of colonialism. This paper seeks to examine how changing the way we reason/think as Africans can open the gate for sustainable development in Africa. This work, therefore, argues that decolonisation in its entirety will yield the expected result only when there is a deliberate decision to decolonise Africa mentally. It is firmly believed that doing this will pave

the way for sustainable development. In this work, we shall adopt the expository, analytic and evaluative methods.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development, Decolonisation, Colonisation, Africa

## **Introduction**

The issue of promoting the need for sustainable development in Africa has occupied the centre stage among scholars in recent times. The urgency of this need is as a result of the massive underdevelopment that is well pronounced within the continent - her rich mineral and human resources notwithstanding. Some authors like Jared Diamond have argued that some environmental factors are responsible for the continents' developmental defects. Some of these environmental factors are the longitude and latitude position, nearness to oceans and seaports, soil type and so on. While some of these may contribute, it does not exhaust the answer. From history, we know that two countries may

share the same or similar environmental factors, yet one develops rapidly more than the other. The difference in developmental statuses is as a result of choices made.

When in the 1960's most African countries were gaining their independence, many thought that sooner or later Africa will be the point of attraction regarding developmental gains attained. This widespread expectation was propelled by the many natural endearments the African continent enjoys. However, this hope was dashed when after over 55 years there is still massive underdevelopment written on the faces of most African countries. The question is what happened? The answer is simple, African is its problem. The constant dependence on the colonial masters and the mentality of seeing everything foreign as superior hindered the necessity of looking inwards to map out her developmental strategy. Thus everything white or foreign is seen as superior and everything black or local is seen as inferior. This way of seeing things filtered into various aspects of peoples' life whether in politics, education, economics, social life, religion and so on. However, what is most disturbing is that we fail to see that what we are suffering today is the after effect of European imperialism in Africa. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1987, 1), captures this African reality when he opines that "this misleading shock interpretation of African realities has been popularised by the western media which likes to deflect people from seeing that imperialism is still the root cause of many problems in Africa". The tragedy is that many including the intellectuals have fallen victims of this unfortunate event, hence, the need for mental decolonisation. In this paper, we shall look at the role of mental decolonisation towards mapping a new developmental course for Africa. We argue that decolonisation in its entirety will yield the expected result only when there is a deliberate decision by Africans to decolonise themselves mentally. It is only when this is done can the search for sustainable development be feasible.

## **BACKGROUND TO COLONIZATION IN AFRICA.**

Material greed, cultural domination, and self-aggrandisement were three major characteristic features of the colonial masters. These three features had earlier manifested in the three major historical events that prepared the ground for the scramble for Africa in 1885 during the Berlin conferences. The outcome of this conference kick-started what could be considered one of the world's longest shows of superiority and domination. Prior to classical colonialism, Europeans have in three significant events showcased the 'myth of a superior race'. These events were the Crusaders, colonisation of the Americas, and the African slave trade. We shall briefly highlight each of these so that we can understand the adversarial and exploitative violence of colonialism in Africa.

Pope Urban II initiated the crusade in 1095 with the aim of appealing to all Christians to help defend orthodox Christians from Muslim invasion, liberate Jerusalem and ensure the safe passage of Christian pilgrims. However, this initiative was hijacked by some European kings who saw it as an opportunity to unify their people and enlarge or expand their power and territory. Also, the European public saw it as an opportunity for personal wealth and glory. Thus, they believed that joining the crusade will wipe away their sins, ensure their material prosperity and increase their glory. Husseun Bullhan (2015) commenting on the motives for joining the Crusaders stated that apart from the desire for power, wealth, spiritual salvation and personal glory, the most apparent intent was the need to construct coherent European identities against an external and convenient enemy. This particular interest helped them to develop the myth of a superior race that is waging a just war on behalf of God.

The colonisation of the Americas was also another instance where the Europeans showcased their quest for material exploitation, cultural domination, and self-aggrandisement. With the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, another stage was set for European claims of religious and racial superiority. The distinction of the race which characterised the activity of Europeans in America offered them a convenient opportunity for the justification of their exploitative intent. According to Bullhan (2015), in an attempt to enforce their natural superiority, they carried out three cataclysmic assaults by use of maximum violence. They are assault on the world of things (that is exploitation of gold, silver, and other commodities), assault on the world of people (that is the use of free labour and sexual exploitation) and finally, assault on the world of meaning (that is changing indigenous religions, knowledge, and identities).

The final event was the African slave trade. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the largest and the most dehumanising activity in world history. The success of the Europeans in America ignited the capture, subsequent transportation, and enslavement of the Africans. This slave trade according to William (1966), ensures the settlement of the Europeans in the New World and the earning of substantial capital for the industrial revolution. According to Walter Rodney (1974), the trans-Atlantic slave trade had three adverse outcomes. First, it depopulated the African continent and took its finest brains thereby truncating its political history and economic development. Secondly, it consolidated the dominant-dominated relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans thereby ensuring the primary justification of colonial exploitation. Thirdly and most significantly, it afforded them the opportunity to develop better technology that would be used to conquer and exploit others.

The growing industrial revolution made slavery inefficient and dispensable. The industrial revolution gradually saw the end of the slave trade, but it never ended the European quest for profit, racism, domination, and self-aggrandisement. "Instead it grew more with the development of industries that required more raw materials, more cheap or free labour, and more markets for manufactured goods" (BULHAN 2015: 242 ). In order to satisfy this need, colonialism presented itself as the most compelling convenient alternative.

### **The Drama of Mental Colonisation in Africa**

In this section, it is crucial that we look at what colonisation is and how it took place in Africa. It is from this backdrop that we will understand the whole idea or need for mental decolonisation. By way of definition, colonialism is the act of invading and acquiring other peoples' land with the intent of settling and having political and economic control over the indigenous people. Zig-Zag (2006:1) defines colonization as "when an invading force confronts an indigenous population already occupying a territory...it is a violent conflict between two hostile and opposing ways of life, with one attempting to impose its will on the other." Zig-Zag's definition can best be understood when colonisation is seen as a war for territorial dominance. In other words, the invader employs every means whether military, political, economic, psychological, diplomatic or cultural to dominate the people. It is important to note that before colonisation can happen, the indigenous people must be subdued and assimilated or converted to the culture of the colonists. It shows that colonisation is not all about external political domination of a people or the physical conquest of a people. It also involves colonisation of the people mind or thought and their entire way of life. For instance, Lamming (1991, 23) laments that

colonialism in Africa was such that “Europe had trained black men to wear those white mask” When colonialism happens, its most significant damage is in the perception people see and evaluate things or events. For instance in Africa, one of the effects of colonisation is that whatever is white is superior (white collar-jobs, white magic, white-power) and whatever is black is inferior (black magic, blackmail, black-sheep, black market, black joke). Russell Al Farabi (2015) sites an example to show how white superiority has been internalised in Ghana. According to him, Ghanaian parents always refer to their successful children as ‘me brown’ (my white child). It is on this ground that Sandew Hira (2016, 3) observes that for colonisation to happen it must take the following dimension:

The creation and dissemination of knowledge that promotes the idea of the superiority of the coloniser and the inferiority of the colonised.

The cultivation of an attitude of superiority with the coloniser and an attitude of the inferiority of the colonised.

The fostering of skills that, supports the attitude of superiority with the coloniser and an attitude of the inferiority of the colonised.

The creation and preservation of institutions that enforces the colonising of the mind.

Hira’s mechanism of colonising focuses more on mental colonising, for beyond the territorial invasion is the main colonisation, that is mental colonisation.

Colonisation in Africa happened between the 1870s – 1900. The motive of the European imperialist was prompted by three main factors, economic, political and social. The economic factor was as a result of the need for raw materials and cheap labour to match the need of the industrial revolution. The political factor arose because of the power struggles among major European countries. The third and the most important was the social factor, which was spurred by the need to solve the growing social problems in Europe namely unemployment, poverty, homelessness, social displacement and so on.

The attempt to solve these problems led to the exportation and subsequent creation of white colonies in some African countries like Algeria, Tunisia, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, and Central African areas. The interplay of these three factors led the European imperialist to declare exclusive claims to particular territories and then the subsequent dominance of that territory, in all ramifications. Bulhan describes the scene of colonisation in the following words:

Lasting occupation of land, exploitation of human and material resources and quelling resistance required the erosion of social bonding, indigenous beliefs, values, identities, and indigenous knowledge. Colonialists achieved this by using different agents including missionaries, anthropologists, physicians, and journalists. Since violence and outsiders’ propaganda alone cannot sustain oppression, colonisers resorted to local agents to carry out the colonial mission. The most important of these were individuals educated in colonial schools or serving as subordinates in the colonial system. These so-called local elites inherited the colonial state whose function was not to serve the colonised but to exploit them. (2015, 243)

However, since the concern of this paper is not on territorial occupation, let us look at how this drama of colonisation affected the mind of Africans that is its epistemic characteristics and outlook. Mental colonization or colonization of the mind, according to Marcelo Dasal (2018), must enjoy the

following characteristics (a) the intervention of an external source the ‘colonizer’ – in the mental sphere of a subject or group of subjects – the colonized (b) this intervention affects central aspects of the mind’s structure, mode of operation and content (c) its effects are long lasting and not easily removable (d) there is a marked asymmetry of power between the parties involved (e) the parties can be aware or unaware of their role of colonizer or colonized and (f) both can participate in the process voluntarily or involuntarily. In Africa, all these characteristics were present in its full capacity. Mental colonisation in Africa took place ‘through the transmission of mental habits and content by means of the social system other than the colonial structure’ (Dasal, 2018). This social system includes family structure, cultural practices, religion, language, ideology, fashion, education, political structure and so on. That is why in most circumstance Africans were meant to see some of their social systems as not adequate to provide for them a better life. For instance, in the area of language, Africans were meant to speak the white man's language. Also, we know that language is a major and reliable tool for mental operations such as identification, conceptualisation, classification, and inference. This means that when they (Africans) speak the white man’s language, they will begin to conceptualise realities in white man's way. Conceptualising realities in a white man’s way is a means of enforcing control. Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1987) demonstrates that when the European colonisers entered Africa, they forced Africans to speak European language, as a means of enforcing their control. To ensure this, they set up schools that taught children European languages while de-emphasising the use of native language. Language, as a result, becomes the means of alienating the people from their own culture and history. Farabi (2015, 66-67) corroborating Ngugi’s observation said that “While at home, children were taught about their ancestry from their parents through oral stories, at school they learned to criticise their native cultures if they want to become civilised and gain the favour of the white man’s God”. In most homes in Africa, especially in Nigeria, children are taught to have disgust for their native language. The ability to speak the white man’s language shows one as belonging to a higher social class. Thus speaking the white man's language, dressing like them, thinking like them, believing in their God, becomes a sign of civility. The dangerous thing about mental colonisation is that the coloniser thinks they are helping the colonised, by providing them with better beliefs and mode of action that improve their ability to cope successfully with the environment. Also, on the part of the colonised, most times they are unaware that most parts of their mind are being colonised. From the above explanations, we agree with Oladele Balogun (2018: 274) that mental colonisation entails “unavoidable influence and involvement of alien mode of thinking in the thinking, attitude, and approach to life of indigenous Africans”. This uncritical assimilation of the alien mode of thinking has gravely affected the African way of life and mode of thought.

### **Mental Decolonization: An Imperative. Some Authors Perspective**

We choose to begin this section by stating that decolonisation is a constructive process of reversing the process of colonisation. Decolonisation in itself is not just something that happens overnight it involves some steps. Mental decolonisation, therefore, is the constructive process of ridding oneself of the uncritical influence and alien mode of thinking and attitude brought about as a result of the process of colonisation. The African today is at every side chained by the lasting effect of mental colonisation. Kwasi Wiredu (1995: 22) observes that “The African today, as a rule, lives in a

cultural flux characterized by a confused interplay between an indigenous cultural heritage and a foreign cultural legacy of colonial origin'. The result of this cultural condition is 'the historical superimposition of foreign categories of thought upon African thought systems. (Wiredu 1995: 19). This mentality has brought about the distortions of African worldview, and it has heavily thwarted African developmental plans.

In the past, some authors have heavily emphasised the need for mental decolonisation for Africans. Frantz Fanon was the first to raise the consciousness or the need for mental decolonisation, even though he did not strictly refer to mental decolonisation, but his understanding of decolonisation incorporated that. Fanon adopted a radical and violent approach toward decolonisation. He understands decolonisation as a radical overturn of the whole social structure. In other words, it "sets out to change the order of the world, a program of complete disorder." (Fanon 1963: 35) Fanon agrees that decolonisation in as much as it must be radical, it is not something that happens overnight. It is a historical process. That is to say "it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content" (Fanon 1963: 36). Therefore, for decolonisation to take place there must be serious questioning of the colonial system. Fanon believes that decolonisation must be a conscious process. The reason is that individuals are involved, and as such, it influences and modifies them fundamentally. Describing how this drama of decolonisation looks like, Fanon (1963, 36-37) writes:

It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonisation is the veritable creation of new men. However, this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power, the thing which has been colonised becomes a man during the same process by which it frees itself.

Fanon's description of the decolonisation drama portrays the radical nature he intends that the process of decolonisation should assume. It will involve a serious questioning of colonial situation. This is akin to the eschatological reversal that Jesus points out when he states that 'the first shall be the last'. However, what becomes worrisome in Fanon's argument is the method or means which this decolonisation will take or demand. He believes that decolonisation can only triumph when people have employed all means including violence. He writes:

The naked truth of decolonisation evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it. For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a deadly and decisive struggle between two protagonists. (1963: 37)

Fanon's arguments for and method which the decolonisation process will take place may not be the best approach, but it awakens in African scholars the need to look inwards and see the beauty and the riches in African values, morals, art, culture and indeed the entire African worldview. In the bid to react to Fanon's clarion call, the Kenyan writer, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o called for the decolonisation of the mind. According to Wa Thiong'o, the colonisation of the African mind happened as a result of its

contact with the West. This contact ensured the training and conditioning of the African mind to conceptualise and analyse events and phenomenon according to Western fashion. In other words, they carried out their “business of analysis with conceptual ontologies embedded in the foreign languages of colonisation” (Balogun 2018: 275). Thiong’o directed his concern for decolonisation to the area of language and literature. He believes that language was the instrument used by the West to separate the African child from his culture and history. He insists that the African writer must tell the true stories of their people in their native language using African forms. He believes that it will help the future generation to learn and know more about the true traditions that existed. He insists that “African writers are bound by (their) calling to do for their languages what Spencer, Milton, and Shakespeare did for English, what Pushkin and Tolstoy did for Russian; indeed what all writers in world history have done for their languages by meeting the challenge of creating a literature in them” (Thiong’o 1986: 8). Perhaps this very idea informed his decision to write his work in his native language and his insistence that Gikuyu term remains in the main text of his translated works to maintain authenticity. What is clear in Thiong’o’s argument is that the adoption of European language constituted a strong factor in the alienation of Africans from their language, which invariably led to the denial of their collective self, resulting in the dependence on Western culture and cognitive structure. This adoption of European language for him spells doom for African conceptual structure and cultural understanding. Therefore, for decolonisation of the mind to be successful, it must overthrow the Western language. For language is the carrier of culture. It is through language that culture develops, articulates and transmits itself from one generation to the next. Language is the tool for controlling the mental universe.

Thiong’o’s concern, observation, and argument may not be without some criticism, but it indeed raises a serious concern for Africa. This concern is the idea of keeping the West at the centre of the universe, and the African child is made to look upon himself from the spectacle of the European worldview. In other words, what Thiong’o highlights is that Africans must direct their developmental searchlight to Africa, if not the Western worldview will subsume the African worldview. This concern can be referred to as an attempt to present the postmodernist vision.

Kwasi Wiredu’s effort to propagate the gospel of mental decolonisation came with the idea of conceptual decolonisation in African philosophy. He was the first to originate the idea. His idea of conceptual decolonisation is seen as an offshoot of Ngugi’s decolonisation of the minds. For Wiredu, conceptual decolonisation involves two critical but interrelated issues. The first is that it negatively involves the avoidance or reversal “through a critical conceptual self-awareness of the uncritical assimilation in African philosophical traditions which have exercised influence on African life and thought” (Wiredu 1995: 33). The second point is that conceptual decolonisation positively entails “exploring as much as judicious, the resources of our indigenous conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditations on even the most technical problems of contemporary philosophy” (Wiredu 1995: 22). These two ways of understanding conceptual decolonisation have something to tell us. From the former, we understand the dilemma which African philosophers and African philosophy find itself. The cultural flux in which Africans find themselves has resulted in the distortion of the African worldview and the superimposition of alien criteria in the interpretation of African conceptual scheme. Wiredu argues that for Africans to produce modern African philosophy that reflects African worldview,

the task of conceptual decolonisation is imperative. Among scholars in African philosophy, there has been a heated debate as to which method African philosophy will follow. Some have argued that the universal method of philosophy as exemplified in analytic tradition should be applied in doing African philosophy. Against this background, conceptual decolonisation arises as "a postmodern resistance to the absolute insistence on modern logical analysis as the only hallmark of philosophy" (Balogun 2018: 276)

In the latter understanding, Wiredu encourages Africans to look inwards to see the riches embedded in their culture and belief system and see how they can use the indigenous resources available to them in doing their philosophical reflections so as to paint the correct picture and bring out the real interpretation of the African conceptual scheme (1995, 90). Commenting on the interrelatedness of Wiredu's understanding of conceptual decolonisation Balogun (2018: 277) writes:

The two conceptions of conceptual decolonisation given above are interrelated and complementary of each other. They involve the "comparative utilisation of different languages in philosophical thinking" (WIREDU 1991, 81) intending to guarding against and freeing philosophical thinking in Africa from the entanglements imposed on it by the uncritical assimilation by African scholars of alien conceptual Scheme.

From the above, we see that Wiredu's concern is that African philosophers must subject Western categories to systematic and critical reflection. In the words of Oladipo, "the African must direct his thought of all modes of conceptualisation emanating from the colonial past that cannot stand the task of due reflection" (2002, 16). With this, Wiredu insists that African scholar must endeavour to decolonise some concepts like morality, evil, spirit, person, mind, Gods knowledge and so on. Wiredu's optimism that Africans can achieve self-knowledge, self-determination and mental liberation is seen in the work of Oladele Balogun titled *Conceptual Decolonization As A Post Modern Resistance*. In this work, Oladele pushed forward Wiredu's argument and further attempted an exercise in conceptual decolonisation using Yoruba's concept of 'God' and 'Satan' as an example.

Balogun agrees with Wiredu on the need for conceptual decolonisation, because it has many benefits. Thus he writes:

Conceptual decolonisation is necessary as it has the benefit of promoting cross-cultural understanding in African philosophical studies. It is helpful in the search for African intellectual identities as if capable of promoting various cultural foundations of philosophical ideas and thoughts. Decolonisation research can intimate how African beliefs can help in tackling some fundamental contemporary challenges in our triple-heritage culture. (2018: 278)

Balogun's appreciation of the need for conceptual decolonisation can be considered as a clarion call for philosophers to take the business of conceptual decolonisation seriously in their philosophical endeavours. This conceptual decolonisation will help them send-off the colonial mentality, and free African philosophy of undue Western interference. Balogun goes further to lead by example by decolonising the concept of 'God' and 'Satan' in modern Yoruba thought. He believes that their

concepts have been given a wrong interpretation following the Anglo-Christian account of traditional Yoruba notion of Supreme Being and Esu (2018, 279). In that particular section, the major thrust of his argument is that Olorun or Olodumare, which is the name of Supreme Being in Yoruba conception does not possess similar attribute as the Christian God. Unlike the Christian God that is omnipotent, all knowing, all merciful, all-powerful, Omni-benevolent and so on, Olodumare, that is the Yoruba God works together in collaboration with other being or divinities to ensure the smooth running and governance of the universe. In other words, he does not know everything, he is not all-powerful, he too can cause evil, and he is not entirely transcendent. (Balogun 2018: 280). He concludes by saying that any attempt to depict God in African religion as having the same attribute as that of the Christian God will amount to superimposition of the alien criteria on the African supreme being.

Balogun also follows the same approach in decolonising the concept of Satan and origin of evil in Yoruba conception. He carefully demonstrated that even though Esu is capable of doing evil, it will be entirely incorrect to perceive Esu as an all-evil being like “Satan of Judeo-Christian thought” (Balogun 2018: 283). What Balogun’s intellectual exercise has made us understand is that in the transition process from traditional to modern society, there has been Western influences and infiltration, therefore any genuine attempt to do African philosophy must go in the way of decolonising some concept in order to get its original meaning and interpretation.

What we have so far done is to examine the views of some scholars on the need for mental decolonisation whether as a reorientation or as conceptual decolonisation. One thing we notice in these authors’ views is that all of them are in agreement that the coloniser's mentality or way of thinking has seriously influenced and distorted African original way of doing things or understanding realities. They argue that the uncritical assimilation of Western concept and thought pattern has gravely hindered intellectual political, moral, economic, social and religious development in Africa. Therefore, there is a need for us to look inward and see the glorious riches of African heritage that has even helped with men in developing their society.

### **The Primacy of Mental Decolonization and The Question of Sustainable Development in Africa.**

In more than fifty years of post-colonialism in Africa, what has preoccupied the mind of most African intellectuals is the question of development in Africa. However, the reason this has become increasingly difficult to tackle is that the definition of development and its related concept of sustainable development is more European than African. In other words, it does not take into consideration the African culture, realities, and concept. For the whole issue of sustainable development to become meaningful it must show environmental sensitivity. That is it must look at the people's culture and realities to see what it can make out of it. However, the whole idea of sustainable development by Western condition has done nothing but making the Europeans the significant actors in African soil and making Africans helpless observers. Messay Kebede laments the helpless situation of the African man when he writes that “modern schooling is for Africans nothing else than the learning of self-contempt through the systematic exposure to African's utter insignificance. Africans cannot but internalise this view, given that their ability to echo the Western idea of Africa is how they acquire modern education” (2011:98). Kebede’s lamentation implies that Africans have been conditioned to

endorse and promote colonial agenda, that is that everything Western is superior and everything African is backward or inferior. This understanding may account for the reason why most Africans view development in materialistic terms especially when they try to compare the amenities available in white man's country with the many that are lacking in ours. However, the whole idea of sustainable development is not limited to social structural transformation and provision of scope for the socio-economic amelioration of the quality of life of the people. It goes beyond that.

When we talk about sustainable development we refer to “a process of social transformation in which the exploitation of resources, patterns, and strategies of investments and capitalization, the ethics and direction of technological advancement and attendant institutional adaptation are in relative harmony, and facilitate both current and strategic potential to satisfy the needs and aspiration of members of the society concerned” (Prah 2011: 156). One thing about the whole idea of sustainable development is that it is geared towards satisfying the needs of the people. In other words, there is a need for human agencies and human priority. In the African situation, for human agency and human priority to get involved in talks about sustainable development, there is a need for mental decolonisation. Africans must free their mind from colonial enslavement. This freedom or liberation of the mind is central if the talk about sustainable development is to be realistic. Kebede agrees to this when he writes:

The centrality of freedom to (sustainable) development issues does no more than inviting the proposal that what people can do and be is mostly dependent on the representations that they have of themselves. If they define themselves in enhancing terms, the likelihood is that they will set themselves high goals and will believe that they have what is required to make them happen, by contrast, if they have a low opinion of themselves, they will be less ambitious and less inclined to think that they have the calibre to achieve great goals. However, more yet, the self-delaying representation can lead to behaviours that militate against the idea of agencies and the creating of opportunities. (2011: 99)

From the above, we see that the first significant step toward achieving sustainable development in Africa is by decolonising the African mind. That is by rejecting or not internalising the colonial discourse. Therefore, the Africa child must define himself in such a way that the definition removes all categories of backwardness and inferiority. The critical question at this point is, how will the decolonisation of the African mind happen? Kebede suggests that ‘relativisation of the West’ is the only way out. In other words, Africans must move towards self-affirmation and reconciliation with their legacy. Even though Kebede's suggest may be harsh, but then his concern is to generate that African consciousness. Africa must reject the importation of everything from the West, since it is nothing but a sign of their technological and cultural backwardness. If Africa must achieve sustainable development it cannot be by full-fledged westernisation, rather it can only be possible by being creative and original with her culture and also see the role other cultures can play in the continent's development. Imbibing the Western paradigm fully does not promote development instead it postpones it.

The Senegalese philosopher Leopold Seder Senghor advocates that Africans must endeavour to retain their tradition since it makes them original and creative. Thus, if sustainable development is to happen, it must take the dimension of adapting the living culture of a people to the new condition occasioned by contact with the West and technological advancement. This inability to adapt to the culture of a people appears to be the missing link towards the achievement of sustainable development in Africa. The issue is that in the talk about sustainable development in Africa the people's culture and realities are neglected. Senghor observes that if development must take place in Africa effort must be made to "determine the present value of the institutions and style of life born of these (African) realities and how to adapt them to the requirement of the contemporary world" (1959: 292). The point here is that sustainable development in Africa can be possible where there is a synthesis between the wonderful legacy of Africa and the borrowing culture of the West. Thus, effort should be made to see that the imported knowledge from the Western category is made to blend with the indigenous knowledge system in such a way that it does not diminish the beauty of the indigenous knowledge system but promotes it. This is because "development cannot be achieved in circumstances where the culture of the masses are steadily abandoned in favour of cultures which are totally foreign to the masses and which are familiar terrain for only small sections of the elite" (Prah 2011: 163). This synthesis can only happen when mental decolonisation must have taken place. Sustainable development in African involves "taking root in African's legacy while reaching out to the West ..." (Kebede 2011:103)

The central point is that any quest for sustainable development in Africa must take into consideration and also build on what the people have and are. What people have and are, is in their culture and language. This shows that the best form of development is that which has its foundation on the people's indigenous knowledge. This is because a people's collective memories and fund of knowledge of their environment have a significant impact on their livelihood. Therefore, for development to be meaningful, it needs to acknowledge this foundation of what the people already have and are. That way "new knowledge is integrated into the indigenous cultures of the people" (Prah 2011: 160). This synthesis of what people know and have with the demands of new knowledge may account for the reason why Christianity as a way of life succeeded in Europe but appears to be failing in Africa. In Europe, this integration or synthesis was possible because Christianity did not come to Europe with the element of superiority. However, in Africa the story was different. Because colonisation went hand in hand with missionary activity, Africans were taught to look upon her religion with disdain, to be ashamed of her language and to see her culture as inferior. As a result, this synthesis or integration between what the people know and are and the new culture could not take place.

Another side to the issue of mental decolonization which is more devastating and perhaps a major obstacle to the whole idea of sustainable development in Africa is the materialistic and selfishness that characterizes governance and interpersonal relationship in Africa. Beyond what the colonizers did to us is what we are doing to ourselves. Leadership positions in most African countries have become an avenue for enriching oneself at the detriment of the society. This is because when one sees him/her self occupying a leadership position he/she sees it as a life time opportunity not to improve the society but to enrich him/her self and his/her family. That is why in most African countries

corruption and embezzlement of public fund is at its peak and political leaders seek to perpetuate themselves in office. Sometime, when one wants to do the work effectively, the kinsmen and friends look at the person as a fool. This type of mentality also filters into other aspects of interpersonal relationship where people seek for their own interest without putting others into consideration. This type of mentality needs to be decolonized for sustainable development to be feasible in Africa.

Therefore, for sustainable development to take place in Africa, primacy must be vested in mental decolonisation. This will help Africans to see and appreciate what is peculiar in our culture, language, religion, social and political arrangement. The decolonisation of the mind will help us see the African peculiarity. Appreciating this African peculiarity will liberate us from all Western entanglement and dependence.

## **Conclusion**

It is important to note that at the centre of Africa's developmental woes is the devastating effect of the colonisation of the African mind. Most often, some authors underestimate the impact of these western categories. As a result of this alter neglect we tend to internalise the colonial discourse. Also, this attitude has significantly impeded development in Africa and also has made it difficult to create the African difference. Suffice it to say that the mental set up of African has done nothing but promoting Western dominance in virtually all facets of her developmental domain, be it social-economic, politics, philosophy, language, and so on. This type of mentality has done nothing but induced and inculcated the mentality of dependence which has done nothing but fuelled the process of underdevelopment in Africa. Mudimbe (1988) observes that the production of the dependency mode of thinking has done nothing but place Africa as a marginalised society, thereby blocking the African initiative.

In the wake of all these mental dependences, the decolonisation of mind becomes a forced prerequisite for sustainable development in Africa. Thus, priority should be given to mental decolonisation in every discussion on sustainable development in Africa. Mental decolonisation debunks Eurocentrism and inaugurates authentic African difference. However, it is important for us to note that identifying the African difference does not imply total abandonment of Western knowledge. This is because no culture is an island and no nation develops without mutual borrowing. The point is that in talking about issues of sustainable development in Africa, the cultural relevance and peculiarity of African must form the foundation before the adaptation of external input. Therefore, what African scholars must therefore, strive to do is to synthesise the African legacy and Western ideas of science and technology. By so doing “they are attempting to construct a dynamic continuity that centres and protects them from alienation and dependency while opening them to novel encounters and events”. (Kebede 2011: 110).

It is on this ground that one can then appreciate what Balogun did with the Yoruba concept of God and evil (Satan). By this, he shows that for African philosophy to thrive there is a need for conceptual decolonisation. This conceptual decolonisation will, according to him, help achieve for Africans cultural authenticity, cross-cultural understanding, and mental liberation. When this is achieved, Africa will be appropriately directed in the path towards achieving sustainable developments.

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