Modernization and Development: A Historico-Contemporary Approach Through Justin Labinjoh's Narratives

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Abstract

Understanding development is a strategic issue in every human society. This is because central to humans is the need to develop, which is why societies over the ages have not only sought to develop, they have also attempted to understand what development is all about, how best to develop and what the outcomes of development should be. This is why scholars and nations have commonly categorized countries/societies as developed and developing/underdeveloped. Of interest however are continuous scholarly attempts at unravelling trends in development discourse. This article therefore engages the contributions of Justin Labinjoh, a foremost development thinker and scholar at the University of Ibadan until his death in 2001. Focussing on his unpublished manuscript 'Development: A History and Critique of an Idea', the paper reviews how the history of Western Europe informed, and is still informing Sociology as a discipline, its theories and, by extension, Sociology of Development which has been dominated by modernization theory.

Keywords: Development, modernization, historico-contemporary approach, Justin Labinjoh

Introduction

Justin Oluyole Labinjoh remains, even in death, one of the distinguished scholars and thinkers of Sociology, Sociological theory and Sociology of Development in Nigeria and Africa. While it is common to comparatively consider development of Sociology in Nigeria in terms of some earlier founding fathers, Justin Labinjoh left indelible footprints in Development Sociology and Sociological theorizing in Nigeria. His thoughts, ideas, research and scholarship continue to be relevant in understanding the development complexities and trajectories of the developing world generally and Nigeria in particular. While western sociologists were engaging modernization and

development of societies and philosophizing developing nations, he contributed to the thoughts and debates vigorously and specifically pondered on *why the 'West has developed and others have not'*. Unfortunately, as was the case with Akinsola Akiwowo, Labinjoh's outstanding contributions were little known and poorly appropriated in Sociology even in Nigeria though very relevant and useful to the adequate understanding of the development quagmire of Nigeria and Africa (Omobowale and Akanle, 2017; Akanle and Adesina, 2015). His intellectual interest was primarily on how best to conceptualize development, drive and sustain development, understand and deploy change, theorize development and deploy concepts and develop/mobilize theories to account for change in Nigeria and developing societies generally. His interest was not only academic and scholarship but also pragmatic, mainly borne out of his frustration with the intellectual shortcomings and shallow scholarly interrogations of the twentieth century Sociology not only in Africa and developing nations but even in the West. This frustration was the main motivation for his intellectual intervention through the unpublished manuscript *Development: A History and Critique of an Idea*. This article is based on the ideas in the above book.

Contrary to Labinjoh's Occidental training, the epistemic background of most Western theoretical traditions, he jettisoned/critiqued knowledge as given from this part of the world. However, one could wonder if there is anything new in his epistemic and theoretical interventions. More so, it could be argued that he was an African who may have been prejudiced against the Occidentals. What is new was the way that he brought out history of philosophy, science, and sociology together to show the connection in the development of underdevelopment in the global context. He presented what was the common understanding of modernization theory and critiqued it both as a theory and in relation to its practical relevance.

This was vividly captured in his submission: *The vast literature on development fails to give any meaning of the concept; they only assume that we know it*. This was why he took deep search into the history of social thought, development history of modernization, intellectual history, philosophy, history of Sociology and history itself to discover, comprehensively and scientifically, what development has meant throughout ages. He was a very dedicated and thorough scholar who would stop at nothing to break new grounds. His attention to details and painstaking scholarship was brought to fore when he spent ten years preparing a manuscript on *History and critique of development as an idea*. Most of the ideas engaged in this article were from the manuscript. Labinjoh was well-bred, very coordinated and was always prepared for class-even with prepared notes. He was also very amusing while delivering his well thought-out and sometimes polemic lectures at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He was a prolific scholar and writer of global repute. He contributed to knowledge locally and internationally and published in reputable referred journals such as *Journal of Black Studies*, *Phylon*, *Africa Spectrum* and *Race*

and Class among others journals. He was also the founder and editor of the *West African Journal of Sociology and Political Science*.

Born in Lagos, Nigeria on 24 March 1940, Justin Labinjoh studied at University of Central London (1967-1970), University College, London (1971-1972), University of Reading (1974-1975) and ended with a PhD at University of Exeter (1975-1977). Before taking up appointment as a Lecturer 1 at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Nigeria in 1977, he taught in various universities in the United Kingdom including Thames University, London, South-Bank University, London, Schiller College, London and Central London University. Until his death in 2001, he taught many courses such as: Elements of Sociology with Basic Methodology, Elementary Analysis of Social Systems, Introduction to Social Institutions, Sociology of Development, Sociological Theory, Types of Sociological Theory, Perspectives in Modern Social Theory, Special Problems in Theory Building, Political Sociology, Principles of Sociology and State, Politics and Industry at the University of Ibadan. He supervised quite a lot of undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations and one of his direct mentees and former doctoral candidate is Professor Akinpelu Olutayo of the Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan.

All the contributors of this article were direct and indirect students of Labinjoh. They were taught and supervised at various levels of education by him. In this article, the contributors present different key issues, themes and cross cutting his thoughts and ideas in manners that readers, scholars, theorists, students, researchers and development thinkers/practitioners/policy makers on and in Africa will find very useful.

Western Development Evolution

One of the most critical agenda of humans is development. Humans have made attempts at improving on human situations right from time immemorial (Schwartz, 2012). Justin Labinjoh rightly captures it, noting that humans' efforts at improvement of life situations have been captured variously as progress, social change, modernization and development (p. 2¹). Contemporaneously, there is a divide along development matrix with those assumed to be more advanced, nomenclatured 'the developed', while those otherwise are called underdeveloped. The Global North is privileged to be accustomed as the developed while the Global South takes the notion of underdevelopment (Ayoob and Zierler, 2005; Arrighi, 2001). Worse still, in the comity of continents in the Global South, Africa takes the position of the least developed (Mignolo, 2011; Levander and Mignolo, 2011). This is a conceptualization of inferiority which, Labinjoh notes, the Third World, in general, and Africa, in particular, has accepted.

¹This, and many others to follow in this article, refers to relevant page(s) in the Labinjoh's unpublished manuscript *Development: A History and Critique of an Idea*

How did the “development” concept emerge and why has it become a matrix of global classification of nations? To analyse this, Labinjoh critically examined human progress and constructions of development thoughts from cradle to renaissance, enlightenment and modernity, linking these thoughts to sociological contributions. He notes that Western orientation of change and progress has always been linked with evolution (p. 1²). To him, evolution was wrongly seen as works of nature and the physical environment devoid of man’s intervention! Could change really occur without man’s involvement? Man has always been part and parcel of his environment. Man has interacted with his environment, and social change and progress has been influenced through human activities. Evolution is no linear-natural event; it is social, involving human activities and interactions (Meagher, 1999; Maryanski and Turner, 1992). The recognition of human function in change has made the study of sociology of principal importance. Hence, the founding fathers of Sociology; Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Marx Weber and Herbert Spencer, among others, have variously theorized the construction of the human society and social environment.

Labinjoh identified 4 elements which characterize the thoughts of these thinkers. These elements are *universality of nature* (the belief that the world is one and should be same), belief in *stages or epochs* (the idea that human societies experience definite periodic stages), the idea of *purpose* (the assumption that every change and stage must be for a reason) and the idea of *immanence* (that change occurs everywhere). These Western thoughts remain dominant in global development research and policy as they have been uncritically accepted by developing nations’ leaders as sacrosanct. Despite the dominance of these ideas for more than a century, the Third World has had little development success, failing to “close development gap” (Olutayo, Olutayo and Omobowale, 2008).

Starting with the 16th to 17th Century Enlightenment period, Western thinkers gradually defined the conceptualization of state and territory. Nation-states were growing and they were contesting for territory. French thinker, Jean Bodin (1530-1596), evolved the concept of sovereignty (p. 27). Sovereignty clearly defines a state, its territory, people and government. It is an ontological concept which defined a clear-cut territory with a sovereign as head. Sovereignty, in essence, defined a nation, its supreme authority over its subjects and its capability to make laws. Thomas Hobbes extended Bodin’s ideas by stating that “social contract” binds subjects to states, with sovereigns who are not subject to their own laws (p. 28). Hobbes describes a state as “an artificial machine based on a social contract and controlled by an absolute monarch with unlimited, perpetual, and indivisible sovereignty” (Peters, 1967: 178). This was indeed a state of development then because, to them, a territory which was able to emerge as a state with a recognized sovereign had “progressed” and/or was “developed”. For these reasons, European nations

² As in 1 above

intermittently warred until territories were clearly defined under powerful sovereigns (Bates, 2007; Lithman, 2004).

Embedded in the views of social contract, were also notions of individualism. People subject their allegiances to the state not by social bond, but individually. Hence, Western thought laid emphasis on the individual as an agent of competition and change in the quest for survival. Hence, Labinjoh expounded the ideas of Bodin positing the strategic importance of "...time and its epochs, of causes and processes involved in the understanding of history..." (p.34). In short, social evolution is historical, and an understanding of the past and consequent processes and realities reveal the present. Hence, movements through theological, metaphysical and scientific stages are reflections of man's attempts at interpretations and development, especially in Europe. The scientific stage (or modern epoch), is principally predicated on experiments and empiricism, individualism and mercantilist economy. Driven by individual quest for competition and profit within burgeoning capitalist economic systems, powerful Western monarchs commissioned explorers to find new lands and peoples, first for trade and, later, to institute economic and political imperialism through colonisation (Khair, 2008; Bassil, 2005).

Of course, modern development is traceable to 16th Century development thoughts in Europe (p. 39), laying emphasis on individualism (or individual rights and freedom subject to the rule of a sovereign) and empiricism for progress. Early development thinkers adopted peculiar empirical method modelled after those of the natural sciences. Empirical method became the standard, outside of which epistemology was regarded unverifiable, unempirical and thus false. Nevertheless, the 17th Century was still "God-ridden" (p. 45) with Christianity predominating across Europe (p. 61). Empirical facts were accepted along with religious faith, as long as empirical epistemology did not conflict with religious convictions, especially those bordering on theological basis of monarchical systems on which states were based. It is important to note however, that Thomas Hobbes, in his classic book, *Leviathan*, affirmed that the justification of absolute monarchy outside common theological presentations is not as straightforward. Hobbes submitted that the brutish nature of man, culminating in "the war of all against all" could only be prevented by a strong and absolute sovereign.

In essence, progress entailed movement from a bad situation to a better one that is defined in terms of civilization in technology, governance, values and all aspects of human endeavours. Civilization entailed progress predicated on scientific advancement. Seventeenth Century Europe particularly experienced scientific advancements in terms of technological innovations. The success was attributed to the triumph of empiricism and universalism of Western culture within Europe. Hence, European development thinkers conceived peoples in two forms: the primitive (who showcase an earlier stage of European (human) development and the civilized (who have experienced progress). Theoretically, all peoples outside Europe were primitive, and so should be civilized through colonialism to usher them into Western universalism, without which the

primitive would remain crude. In reality, however, colonialism was only an economic agenda justified by civilization claims (Olutayo and Omobowale, 2007; Martin, 1986; Roy, 1984; Munford, 1978; Bauer, 1969). Colonialism ultimately favoured European colonial powers at the detriment of the colonized.

The Enlightenment- Rationality in Unilinear Progress: Reflections on Justin Labinjo's Thought

Despite his training at the University of Exeter, England, Labinjoh's approach to sociology and development discourse was critical and of Historico-Philosophical paradigm. His writings were often blended with very high capacity to observe and compare events and phenomena of the past from the stand point of the present social know-how, emphasising on qualitative tool as a more potent instrument to unravel underlying social realities and processes that connect the links between the past, present and the future. His ideas and thoughts were consequently guided and dominated by deep understanding of influential personalities and processes that cut across arts, humanities and the social sciences. It is therefore not a surprise to note in Labinjoh's writing a thought pattern that oscillate between historical-philosophy and humanities heavily dressed in social scientific presentation of the 21st century. His thoughts enjoyed the beauty of narratives carefully knitted together from historic-philosophical perspective as a way of unravelling social issues and to make predictions about such issues from present understanding that rely on historic-philosophical social facts which, to Durkheim, are external to man; passed from one generation to another; and can only be understood by connecting preceding social fact with present to predict the future of any society.

His Western oriented training notwithstanding, Labinjoh refused to be totally influenced by the Western development ideas. This, he was able to do, to a great extent, by exposing the tool of analysis and explanation of development from Western perspective to the various transformations in the Eastern World and Africa. The fact that these other parts of the world had experienced development, not in line with the Western conception and orientation (and in some greater dimension too), showed, firstly, a very wide gap in the understanding of the concept of development by the West. Secondly, it revealed the weakness in Western idea of the concept of development and, more specifically, the cultural chauvinistic tendency of Western superiority over and above other regions of the world. It is for the two reasons above that we discuss Labinjoh's idea of development. He simply saw development as a 'process' meaning that someone could actually see development of a specific society as it transits from one level to another; particularly from a lower level to a higher level, with better impact on the living conditions of the people. This process can also be paused at a point in time to see development at a 'state' in the life of a society.

Labinjoh views development as a state of being whereby society has transcended certain barriers or obstacles to human comfort and existence through the conscious manipulation of the internal resources of the society at a point in time, coupled with the ability to cope with external influences. So as a progress, development will mean the various internal mechanisms consciously put together or harnessed by the people over a period, such that it causes transformation of the society from a state to another, which can make it definable as 'developed'. The transformation, however, must have evolved institutions to maintain the 'developed' state of being. The empirical evidence of development recorded in the orient as against the theories and experience of development in the occident compelled Labinjoh to explore further reasons for the non-unilinear development. And, just as we argued earlier, he did his analysis yet from historic-philosophical perspective by critically digging deep into the idea of progress particularly in the Enlightenment period. He did not only explore the concept of progress as a variant of development in the early societies; but, in fact, queried what actually progressed in the progress of those societies.

He submitted that the ideas of progress of the 17th and 18th centuries thinkers, typified by Turgot (1727-1781), his contemporaries and predecessors, explained progress in societies based on a unilinear progress arrived at 'through a universal history of mankind' are not only awkward, they are equally empirically invalid and theoretically unsatisfactory in accounting for variation in progress noticed in different parts of the whole world. Labinjoh argued that 'if there is a universal history of mankind, then the explanation that cultural differences represent different stages of development is illogical, and the familiar analogy breaks down'. The awkward growth noticed in humanity was not sufficiently explained by the 17th and 18th century thinkers because of limited knowledge at that time and the broad nature of the concept of humanity and of course its vagueness. These three reasons accounted for why he argued that, perhaps, we should not be critical of the 17th and 18th century thinkers' understanding and explanation of progress in societies because they actually had foresight in anticipating system theory, which was later developed beyond anticipatory level by Ludwig VonBertalanffy (1901-1972). Although Von Bertalanffy was influenced by Durkheim and Max Weber, he was 'actually credited with being the originator of the form of system theory'. The same way Labinjoh was not comfortable with the linear explanation of social change, particularly from Western perspectives, Von Bertalanffy, a theoretical biologist, was equally dissatisfied with the way linear cause and effect theories explained growth and change in living organisms (Friedman and Allen, 2011).

What is common between Von Bertalanffy and Labinjoh is the fact that both were re-acting to the weakness in unilinear explanation of change. The duo also expanded the ideas of the 17th and 18th century thinkers about change beyond reductionist tendency of understanding the whole by breaking into its parts. As a concluding remark, it is convenient to say that the 20th century (and that in agreement with Labinjoh) actually unmasked a more 'theoretically

acceptable and empirically validated explanation that the development of some parts of the humanity has been causally linked to the non-development of the other parts'. In the same vein, Von Bertalanffy's system theory sees "system as a whole, with its relationships and interactions with other system, as a mechanism of growth and change" (Friedman and Allen, 2011). The position of the duo above probably explains the vagueness and opaque nature of the 'rationality' in unilinear progress of the enlightenment period and more so the unsuccessful attempts of the third world countries to develop, following Western theories, which dominated development studies in the early 1940s and 50s or more. Following his ideas on Western Development Evolution and, Enlightenment- Rationality, Labinjoh saw the need to further ground his thoughts and ideas as he sought to show how the history of Western Europe informed, and is still informing Sociology, and particularly, Sociology of Development which has been dominated by modernization theory. To achieve this, he engaged the historical and epistemic praxes and binaries of Orientalism and Occidentalism, as precursors of Modernization, in very useful and helpful manners. This forms the subject matter of the next section.

Labinjoh and the Thought Precursors of Modernization: Orientalism and Occidentalism

Modernization processes, approaches and theories remain among the most enduring and established explanations of development (Akanle and Taiwo, 2013; Akanle and Adebayo, 2013). From the Comtean, Parsonian, Durkheimian, Tonnian and to Rostow's renditions, just to mention a few, modernization perspectives continue to be significant in explaining and attempting historical trajectories of development in the developing world (Akanle, 2013). While many development experts, theorists, scholars, thinkers and practitioners have deliberately and indirectly programmed and taught within the development paradigm over the years, only few have attempted in-depth historical understanding of the development of modernization perspective. This background explains the orientation of Labinjoh's intervention in his engagements with the development of modernization. In attempting to contribute to the understanding of development processes of the world and to call modernization to account, Labinjoh traced the orthodoxy of modernization and its thought and practice to Orientalism and Occidentalism. In fact, one of his most critical and detailed development interventions was his historical development engagements with what he called 'Modernization I: The Re-Birth of Orientalism and Modernization II: The Twentieth Century Occidentalism'.

His interest was not to debunk modernization perspective in these essays, but to deepen intellectual understanding of its historical precursors; in order to prevent vacuous understanding. While modernization perspectives is popular, the poor understanding of its development processes remains the bane of appropriate deployment of the perspective and a challenge to Third World development. According to Labinjoh,

Modernization approach to development, both in its theoretical pretensions and its empirical justifications, is a carry-over of an ideological tradition that began a few decades before the appearance of Weber's essay on the Protestant Ethics.

Modernization theory thus has a long history beyond what most contemporary development thinkers know or acknowledge. While modernization theory has since peaked and appears to have lost much of its popularity, most existing policies and intellectual thinking still rehash and repackage major thoughts of modernization. Also, most of the existing development perspectives launched from modernization- be it World System Theory, The Centre Periphery Paradigm, Dependency Theory, Globalization Theory or even Postmodernism, for example, are either a reaction to, or a wearing of modernization in another grab. This is to the extent that these other perspectives engage in bifurcation of the world in terms of space, culture, institutions, thoughts and development capabilities and interactions.

Also, modernization tradition, according to Labinjoh, was formed and incumbent upon deliberate philosophical orthodoxy of western thought which came to climax in decided and deliberate intellectual, knowledge and practice distortions of the nineteenth century. These distortions were focused, intellectual and profound and manifest in geography and culture. These distortions became expedient as nations and people across the world interact across time and space. Once these patterned interactions aggravate and linger, intellectual contest for supremacy in development driving and articulation become strategic and expedient. The geographic and cultural divisions, constructions, descriptions and juxtapositions of the world by the development thinkers of the time led to the development of development systems of the *occident* and *orient*. The period of geographic and cultural mapping coincided with the period of infusion of ideology into social theorizing of mid-nineteenth century which also drove the emergence and development of Modernization Approaches.

The ideological and intellectual contests and mapping became profound between the Christian Europe and Islamic East. The ideological infusion crossed the spaces of culture, politics, geography and economics. The geography, idea, culture, politics and economics of Europe/West as a region came to be considered superior while those outside the West came to be considered inferior relative to the West's, which, to them, held the keys to constructions of ideological narratives. The ideological developments and constructions profoundly stemmed from extremities of tendencies to construct and perceive non-western things, practices, institutions, cultures and spaces as inferior to what is existing in the West. Explaining this further, Labinjoh maintained that

non-western institutions, practices and cultures are the ontological negatives of the occidental ones and that their essences (be they values or ideas) are dysfunctional for positive change- and positive

change is what societal development or modernization is all about!!!

The place of historical development of modernization *approaches* are very important because, according to Labinjoh, *to apprehend them properly, we have to go back to an earlier age for their antecedents*. This means, for anyone to understand modernization approaches in-depth, a journey to development histories of thoughts, ideologies and regions is critical. Just as it is today, that development outcomes and pathways for the developing world, and Africa particularly, are constructed and benchmarked against the West of Europe and America, in the Nineteenth century, Europeans constructed the only two worlds- the West and the East. At that time, the East consisted of India and The Bible Lands.

Western European Thinkers defined the West as the Occident and The East as the Orient and the Orient was constructed as the development opposite of the Occident- the Occident being the better and the more developed region with also better development landscapes and potentialities (see Snodgrass, 2003; Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001). Binary projections of regions and cultures were codified in political theory, philosophy, political economy, fiction and propelled through all ideological apparatuses beyond Europe. These early development projections and deployment of the Occident and the Orient were elaborately discussed and propelled by Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber for example. They wrote and studied elaborately (normatively, theoretically and empirically) within these projections and they canvassed the paradigms aggressively, especially with unrivalled and unprecedented empirical sophistication and appeal.

Such sophistication and appeal were showcased convincingly through, for instance, Weber's *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and The Marxian Classics. Labinjoh also identified the Occidental and Oriental paradigms and projections in the works of Ali Mazrui as he traced the possibility and plausibility of an Islamic Mode of Production to the works of Karl Marx and Georgy Plekhanov. For Said (1981), the projections of the world in terms of development as the Occident and the Orient were mere style of thought and sometimes fundamentally contradictory in practical development terms. Occidental and Oriental creations of societies are generally self-creation and self-identification of the West in struggle for intellectual and regional supremacy and orthodoxy. This intellectual self-creation and self-identification by the West however lingers till date. Even though the West is also not entirely homogenous, Christianity as a religion is a rallying and unifying force of the Occident while the conceived different and 'inferior', according to Western development thinkers, is predominantly Islamic Orient.

Religion as development parameter of regional construction is not only problematic but dangerous and the danger remains till today. The tendency in the West today is to see all non-Western nations as less developed (or 'pariah')

if critical of the West) and all Western countries as developed, more inclusive and more peaceful. For Labinjoh, this ideological picture and construction was incumbent upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and, most of the time, the Occident. Generally, the notion of the West/Occident and the East/Orient were man-made social creation and the Orient is particularly cultural creations of the West, particularly the British and the French. According to Said (1978), *to speak of Orientalism is to speak of a British and French cultural enterprise*. It is important to note that the projections of regions as Occident and Orient were never a chance occurrence.

The projections were largely part of the capitalist agenda to lord western economic agenda over the Orient just as slavery and colonialism were imposed upon Africa as economic agenda and intellectual propaganda. The ultimate goal was to impose Western economic- industrial- systems and political trajectories and dominance on the Orient with Europe as the economic and political centre as well as headquarters. Modernization approaches were largely ontological and epistemological instruments to legitimise, propagate and drive projections of regions as Occident and Orient for economic and political gains of the West. Interestingly, the contextualization, contestation and propagation of these gains practically and ideologically subsist (Olutayo, Olutayo and Omobowale, 2008) even in 21st century and development scholars and practitioners must be conscious of this and they must be continuously appreciated and factored into scholarly and practice interventions.

Modernization: The Twentieth Century Scienticism and Occidentalism

In today's world, the celebration of western civilization has somehow dictated the conception of social change and has guided the discourse on the roles being played by the natural sciences in shaping societal values, the understanding of self and the reflection on social institutions (Appleyard, 1992). That is, occurrences in West set the pace and tone of perceived development across most parts of the world. Generally, the nineteenth century is a summation of the process of historical change. It connects social problems with a wide range of audience and defines its cutting edge. It is therefore not surprising that our lives, as it is presently constituted, is dominated in the 21st (twenty-first) century by technological innovations that have been developed through the exploitation of scientific knowledge of the West. Tom Sorell, a philosopher, offers a more accurate definition of scientism, when he argued that the concept could be seen as putting high values on natural science in comparison with other branches of culture. Scientism, therefore, is the idea that natural science is made up of the most influential worldview or form of human knowledge, and that it is superior to all other interpretations of life. Thus, according to Hammer (2001):

Scientism is the active positioning of one's own claims in relation to the manifestations of any academic scientific discipline, including, but not limited to, the use of technical devices, scientific terminology, mathematical calculations, theories,

references and stylistic features – without, however, the use of methods generally approved within the scientific community, and without subsequent social acceptance of these manifestations by the mainstream of the scientific community through e.g. peer reviewed publication in academic journals. (p. 206)

Scientism: A History

The history of scientism dates back to the early seventeenth Europe in the period popularly known as the era of scientific revolution (Olso, 2008). This era marked the ascendancy of new method of examination that was deemed a success and it elevated the use of logic and reasoning. The love for the power of natural science surged among the enlightenment intellectuals who were averse to the belief that science will not only enhance an improvement in the quality of life but that it will also help to promote moral engagements among the people. The popularity of the enlightenment era instigated the conversion of many Catholic churches into what was then known as ‘Temple of Reason’ in France (Dostal, 2016).

However, the 19th century was greeted with a more enduring and powerful expression of scientism that was known as the system of positivism. The approach was made popular and driven by August Comte who developed the approach around the works of David Hume, a philosopher, who propounded the method of empiricism and skepticism from a positive philosophy. He suggested that the roles of a scientist could be divided into two. One, that scientists have the task to demonstrate how various phenomena, inclusive of human behaviours, becomes subject of invariable natural laws and, two, that scientists have to downplay the number of the natural laws to a manageable number of natural laws by unifying them ultimately. Comte also made a clear point in the trajectory of intellectual history, which he described as the “The Law of Three Stages”.

He suggested that every branch of knowledge goes through these three stages. The first of this stage, according to him, is the theological or fictitious stage, the second is the metaphysical or abstract, and the third he called the scientific or positive state. Comte was of the opinion that through the continued advancement of human understanding, religion would fade away, philosophy and the humanities would be transformed into a naturalistic basis, and human knowledge would ultimately become a creation of science. Any other ideas outside that jurisdiction would be likened to pure superstition or fantasy. Comte’s preoccupation however was with social reform. He was of the opinion that once the society is reformed, social order would be achieved. Some basic characteristics of Nineteenth century Scientism include: summation of process of historical change to the study of man and society, heralded the era of philosophy of history and climaxed the search for laws, drew theoretical inspiration from nature.

Despite its rise as an explanation of societal transformations of the late 1960s to the early 1980s, modernization theory’s major failing was its

ethnocentrism, lack of reflexive sophistication and its tendency for over-empiricism. Its rise as a rather ‘universalising’ perspective was precipitated by the optimistic acceptance of science as the answer to all human problems, including social ones. This optimism was engineered by the appreciation for the omniscience of physics and mathematics and the belief that everything and anything could be fathomed by science. Just as sociology was triggered into being by the success in biology and physics, what has come to be known as the modernization thoughts arose as an outcome of various intellectual and philosophical efforts. As with physics, biology and sociology, the modernization approach emerged in the 19th century but not in a fashion free from epistemic inadequacies as already highlighted in the opening section of this article.

Sequel to the 19th century, the twentieth century started off, and continues to be, an age that demands empirical answers to urgent questions. The intellectual gymnastics and attempts of that time to understand the social man converged the efforts of philosophy to birth “the movement known as Logical Positivism...” This movement (on which the birth of modernization was predicated) actually trafficked upon the guilt philosophers felt at not being scientists or at not being researchers producing reliable knowledge in the mode of science (P. 195³). The guilt among philosophers over whether they were qualified to be called scientists marked the end of the 19th century. Attributes of that epoch also included: the need to pour oil on the troubled waters stirred by this intellectual diversity, the necessity to forge a harmonizing science at understanding the world and not just Europe (which hosted the rise of philosophy), and the need to include the rest of the world in their (European philosophers’) calculations -after all European ‘civilization’ was spread world-wide (p. 196).

The foregoing needs, altogether, led to the birth of the modernization approach. Tenets of modernization instruct that societies of the world must be understood, explained and defined in line with European civilization. Although radical changes later greeted European civilization, these radical changes fed not only on technological advance but also on ‘scientism’ – the confidence in science in its crudest form. Part of the disequilibrium of that time was the First World War and the Second World War. These two events, particularly the latter, was prominently marked by the rise of devastating, ruinous and destructive technology which later jumpstarted industrialization – one of the two centerpieces of modernization viewpoint. “Modernization ‘theories’ emerged during that period and attempted to supply, knowingly or unknowingly, answers to two problems forced on mankind by that war” (p. 197). Two tendencies that arose with modernization were: the desire of one race (Occidentals, Westerners or Europeans) for total domination of the world

³ This refers to the page number of an unpublished manuscript *Development: A History and Critique of an Idea* by Dr. Labinjoh.

and the increase in scientific knowledge which actually confused rather than improve the social man.

Six notable attributes of modernization theory were identified in the article, especially with regards to Africa. First, was that modernization was not a theory but rather a methodological framework, no more! Its prescriptive propensity is so strong and 'visible' but it hardly stands qualifiedly as a theory. This is because "theories do not prescribe, they describe" (p. 198). Its unsubstantiated claim to positivism also helps to exaggerate its pretensions to being a theory. Consequently, modernization became gradually equated with Westernization. Westernization, however, at least, as used by modernization, preferably represents a process or a processual route of becoming modern, a certain historical type rather than the very symbol of the modern or all societies as modernization will later preach. Besides, modernization also represents intellectual imperialism. In sustaining hegemony exerted by modernization, through epistemic dependency, Africans have ironically empowered the process of their own servitude exacted by the preachments of modernization.

The second characteristic of modernization is that it represents an attempt to theorize process and processes, because of their mutability and consequent uncertainty. But, in so doing, they have always eluded the grasp of purely positivistic explanation. Surprisingly, this happens even on the level of meta-theory which modernization tries to assume. Part of the fluidity which modernization fails to effectively conceptualize is the tendency and capacity of each society to express themselves uniquely, especially through 'post-war nationalism'. With its tendency to 'prescribe', modernization, therefore, became prophetic. Hence, prophecy, which had been the preserve of religion, mystics and astrologers, became the province of philosophers postulating modernization (p. 199).

Modernization's third attribute is its shallow empiricism. A common and clear example of this empirical shallowness is modernization's proposition that traditional societies lack achievement orientation and rationality. Yet this view is neither a theory nor an explanation of a behavioural pattern. The fourth characteristic(s) of modernization approach to development are two defining processes, around which its historical explanations of change generally revolve. These are namely industrialization and urbanization with the consequent structural differentiation which they fostered. Modernization's explanation of these two change indicants principally ascribes supremacy to the West. To this end, Smelser opines that it is important to define industrialization relatively and subjectively rather than Eurocentrically, as Modernization theory asserts (p. 201). These two forces should, therefore, not be seen as European monopoly only capable of being brought about by Europeans and their civilizations (p. 202). Ultimately, the history of technology begins not presumably with Occidentals but, rather, with human beings using tools to act on nature. Hence we can argue that all the regions of the world have, at various stages, had their quantum of technology and some of these regions have been industrializing. The fifth characteristic of modernization

approach to development is ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism has actually been a major feature of Western social thoughts – particularly the various macro conceptions of social change better known as philosophies of history. The sixth characteristic of modernization approach to development is that, in both theory and practice, the phenomenon of modernization created an unnecessary, unnatural and destabilizing historical stage in the evolution of the third world societies. In short, the fact that modernization as a process and, as a practice, is ideologically followed and politically adhered to, remains a principal precursor of under-development, particularly the under-development of Africa (p. 211).

Conclusion

In this article, we have presented the contributions of Justin Labinjoh at critically examining Western oriented development theory and development sociology discourse. Hence, development is not unilinear and neither is it restricted to the dictum of the Western modernisation perspective. Development is relative, context-bound and dependent on existing realities of the people concerned. Justin Labinjoh has adequately captured this in his critic of Western conceptions of the Orient and Occidental development discourse, which largely informed the modernisation theory. In short, modernisation theory lacks universalist essence it is designed to provide, because development is relative and contextual.

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