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# REFLECTIONS ON BOTHO AS A RESOURCE FOR A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY TOWARDS AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT PATH IN MODERN HISTORY

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**Abstract:** Goulet (1996) declared that a new paradigm of development is clearly in gestation. Such paradigm centers on human development as an end, with economic development as the means (UNDP, 1994). In fact, the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), identify human development as a key to social and economic progress. Indeed, MDGs have become a universal framework for development, and a means for developing countries and their partners to work together in pursuit of a shared future for all. However, from all indications, developing countries, particularly in Africa, are not on target on any of the goals. In order to achieve the MDGs, developing countries are urged to mobilize additional resources and break with business as usual syndrome. Thus the challenge of the MDGs underscores the need for Africa to wake up and exploit the opportunities that 'Botho' can offer in the continent's quest for a 'second independence' (Ake, 2001; Nnoli, 2003) and/or a 'second liberation' (Nnaemeka, 2009) from protracted development crisis of the modern history. Such a need, however, according to Tambulasi and Kayuni (2005) begs the question: Can African feet divorce Western shoes? Of course, there is a wider list of thoughts to be produced on that topic. The paper intends to reflect on 'Botho' as a resource for a just and sustainable economy towards Africa's development path in modern history.

**Keywords:** *Botho or Ubuntu, Africa, Just and sustainable economy, Development path, Botho development discourse, Human development, Development discourse, development paradigm*

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## INTRODUCTION

In his speech titled *Philosophy and Development: Towards a Requisite Synthesis for Africa's Socio-Political and Economic Transformation* delivered at the eight session of the Emmanuel Onyechere Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe lecture series held at the Nigerian Institute

of International Affairs (NIIA), Lagos, Nigeria, Michael Anyiam-Osigwe (2006) asserts,

The global development index categorizes Africa as lagging behind every other continent in development and economic growth. Quite a number of states in the continent have in recent development re-

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ports been classified as failed or/and fragile states. This classification does not even spare some of the continent's seemingly more promising and immensely endowed countries like Nigeria. The Puzzle that the African countries present is not borne out of this classification; rather the lacuna appears to hibernate in the apparent inability of the continent to respond positively to development paradigms.

Commenting on the above assertion by Michael Anyiam-Osigwe, Francis Offor in the *Quest for Development in Africa and the Dilemma of Competing Cultural Paradigms* remarks,

The above assertion by Michael Anyiam-Osigwe re-affirms the claim of some intellectuals that the problem with Africa is not essentially that of a dearth of development options, but that it is more fundamentally that of how to "respond positively" to existing development paradigms, with a view to choosing among them, the one that is most appropriate for achieving the goals of development on the continent (Offor, 2007:87).

These observations highlights the need for Africa to wake up and exploit the opportunities that 'Botho' can offer in the continent's quest for a 'second independence' (Ake, 2001; Nnoli, 2003) and/or a 'second liberation' (Nnaemeka, 2009) from protracted development crisis of the modern history. Such a need, however, according to Tambulasi and Kayuni (2005) begs the question: Can African feet divorce Western shoes? Of course, there is a wider list of thoughts to be produced on that topic. This paper relives the old discourse regarding Africa's development path in the modern history by reflecting on "botho/ubuntu" as a viable resource for a just and sustainable

economy towards Africa's development discourse.

### THE "BALANCE SHEET" OF DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE IN AFRICA

The history of the development discourse in Africa is marked by considerable controversy and debates from the radical/dependency theorists as represented by Baran (1957) and the liberal/modernization theorists as represented by Rostow (1960). As Issa G Shivji in *The Changing Development Discourse in Africa* (2005) writes

'From development to poverty reduction,' sums up the trajectory of the development discourse in Africa over the last four decades since independence. This development marks significant shifts, not only in economic approaches and policies, but also in academic theories and political ideologies underpinning the discourse.

Interestingly also, the history the development discourse in Africa is also marked by the emergent development perspectives among African scholars and intellectuals. As Issa G Shivji in *The Changing Development Discourse in Africa* (2005) notes

The development discourse in Africa among African (scholars and) intellectuals is alive, kicking, mentally refreshing and intellectually formidable, notwithstanding declarations of World Bank technicians, called consultants, proclaiming 'the end of development'.

In the conclusion of his book titled *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania*, Goran Hyden (1980) states

The development problematic of Africa is unique. It offers a challenge to the con-

ventional paradigms or models. By focusing almost exclusively on the nature of international economic relations as the cause of underdevelopment in Africa, these paradigms fail to account for the historical uniqueness of Africa notably the pre-capitalist, pre-colonial social relations represented by the uncaptured peasantry who are and remain the primary challenge to development in Africa. The African peasantry, due to its pre-modern economic power and social autonomy, holds development at bay. An inventive, alternative approach is required [to bring them on board].

Sharing the sentiments concluding remarks by Goran Hyden, writing in *Towards an Alternative Development Paradigm for Africa*, Abonyi Nichodemus Nnaemeka (2009: 40) concludes

We may bring the various threads together. The development problematic of Africa is unique because the state has developed in virtual isolation of society. As such, it has immorally denied the population social as well as economic justice. Another development is required involving a second liberation, which will free people to participate in their own development.

Abonyi Nichodemus Nnaemeka (2009: 47) continues and asserts

Be that it may, development project has not failed in Africa. In fact, it just never started in the first place, because of hostile political conditions. It can start and it can succeed. What is required is an entirely new paradigm with new strategy or model that connects with the people's democratic aspirations and social needs – paradigm whose strategy makes the African people the agents, means and

the end of the development taking place in their domain and which can co-opt the essential and tested elements of other conventional paradigms.

Recalling the series of initiatives by Africans themselves aimed at addressing the developmental challenges of Africa, in particular the Lagos Plan of Action and the companion African Alternative Framework for Structural Adjustment, the Joint CODESRIA-TWN-Africa Conference on Africa's Development Challenges in the New Millennium held in Accra on 23-26 April, 2002 notes

Each time, these initiatives were counteracted and ultimately undermined by policy frameworks developed from outside the continent and imposed on African countries. Over the past decades, a false consensus has been generated around the neoliberal paradigm promoted through the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization. This stands to crowd out the rich tradition of Africa's own alternative thinking on development. It is in this context that the proclaimed African initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was developed in the same period as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's Compact for African Recovery, as well as the World Bank's Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?, were discussed (<http://www.twn-side.org.sg/title/twe282f.htm>).

Similarly, Stuart Price in his article titled "*Laying the foundations for Africa's future*" that was published in the *New Africa Magazine* of February 2006 deposits:

Over the years, African thinkers have tried to find a panacea for African development,

but their efforts have often been overshadowed by outside meddling.

Corroborating the above sentiments of the Joint CODESRIA-TWN-Africa Conference and Stuart Prince, Issa G Shivji in *The Changing Development Discourse in Africa* (2005) argues

There have been struggles against SAPs and globalisation in the streets and in lecture halls of Africa... African scholars have severely critiqued structural adjustment programmes and indicated alternatives. Even African states and bureaucracies have not surrendered without some fight. There have been attempts to provide alternative frameworks and plans and programmes such as the Lagos Plan of Action, (1980); The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-economic Recovery and Transformation (1989) and the African Charter for Popular Participation and Development (1990).

Issa G Shivji (2005) continues and asserts

These alternative frameworks have underlined the need for a holistic approach to Africa's development; called for a continental programme of regional integration and collective self-reliance; cajoled African states not to surrender their developmental role, and sovereignty in policy-making; and have attempted to develop a vision of a human-centered and people-driven development for the future of the continent. These African initiatives have been invariably dismissed by the erstwhile Bretton Woods institutions and the so-called "development partners".

These observations illustrate that, in the events of history of development discourse

in Africa, African efforts have been compromised in the quest for Africa's development. For this reason, Africans are called to reclaim their right to think for themselves (Shivji, 2005) as they ascend the wagon of the new paradigm of development that is in gestation (Goulet, 1996). Such paradigm centers on human development as an end, with economic development as the means (UNDP, 1994). In fact, the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), identify human development as a key to social and economic progress. Indeed, MDGs have become a universal framework for development, and a means for Africa and its partners to work together in pursuit of a shared future for all. However, from all indications Africa is not on target on any of the goals. In order to achieve the MDGs, Africa is urged to mobilize additional resources and break with business as usual syndrome, and come up with the African 'state of art' on development (Shivji, 2005) brewed and cooked in the African pot of botho/ubuntu.

#### **THE AFRICAN 'STATE OF ART' ON DEVELOPMENT BREWED IN AFRICA BY AFRICANS: A SNAPSHOT**

In essence, the need to ensure human dignity, freedom from want and ignorance remains critical decades after the dawn of independence when African forged efforts at achieving sustainable development. To a degree, the liberation movement and the struggle against colonialism was anchored on the need to restore the dignity of Africans – especially black South Africans who were stripped of their humanity and dignity by the apartheid regime. As Issa G Shivji (2005) succinctly puts it

The struggle for independence in Africa was first and foremost an assertion of the

humanness of the African people after five centuries of domination and humiliation of the slave trade and colonialism. In the words of Tom Mboya, the struggle for independence was the 'rediscovery of Africa by Africans' while Amilcar Cabral described it as the 're-Africanisation of minds' or 'rebecoming Africans'.

Indeed, it is not surprising that immediately after independence; national development became the passion of politicians and the 'great expectation' of the people. And development was expected to be a product of people – rather than something delivered by "uninterested" state technocrats and the so-called development consultants or partners. As Abonyi Nichodemus Nnaemeka (2009:40) argues, "another development is required involving a second liberation, which will free the people to participate in their own development." Unfortunately, as alluded to earlier, the development path that was charted since the dawn of independence in Africa dismally failed to place Africans at the centre of the development agenda. As a consequent, Abonyi Nichodemus Nnaemeka (2009:47) argues

Africa is currently reeling under one of the deepest and most protracted crises of modern history. These crises have been phenomenally very harsh, tragic and debilitating.

However, commenting on the above crisis facing Africa, Abonyi Nichodemus Nnaemeka (2009:47) continues and asserts

Such has been an invaluable learning experience. In fact, it has taught Africa a great deal about how not to go about development and even a little about how to pursue it. (Indeed), pushed to the brink of survival (Africans) have apparently re-

alized that they have to take their destiny in their hands as (in the words of Ake and Nnoli) they struggle for a "second independence." They have realized that they cannot escape underdevelopment until public policy becomes an expression of their democratic will and connects with their social needs.

Challenged to chart a development path that effectively responds to developmental needs of the African people, African scholars and intellectuals are now willing more than ever to chart a different development path that places Africans at the centre of the development agenda. According to Issa G Shivji (2005) African scholars and intellectuals are indeed tackling the challenge of development in Africa. He contends that all indicators in the academia and scholarship are such that Africans are indeed reclaiming their right to think for themselves (Shivji, 2005). He broadly summarizes the new development perspectives that are emerging in the debates of African scholars and intellectuals as follows:

Firstly, African scholars agree that there is a clear need to go beyond stabilization fundamentals to developmental fundamentals. While stabilization policies and measures may be necessary, they are not sufficient. They have to be conceived within the larger context of building a self-sustaining economy rather than as short-term shock therapies.

Secondly, approaches and concerns of political economy on state and society have to be brought back in the discourse on development. A critical assessment and appreciation of the developmental discourses of the nationalist period is essential.

Thirdly, the state must reassert its devel-

opmental role, not so much as an executive or a regulatory agency, but as an organized force with a vision and an operational programme. It must both protect nascent sources of domestic capital, as well as take account of, and provide for, the basic needs of the population as a whole. The role of the South-East Asian states in this regard, particularly in the development of human capital, is often cited in support. In sum, the state must play a lead role in the long-term planning so as to place the economy on the developmental path towards an integrated economy.

But, fourthly, the state itself has to be reformed and restructured. The despotic colonial and the authoritarian post-colonial state cannot play a popular developmental role. Its limits have been reached. The reformed state must have its roots in the people and must seek legitimacy from the people. It must seek a new social consensus and build its legitimacy not only on the economic terrain – development – but also on the political and legal terrain of popular participation, freedoms, rights and stable constitutional orders.

Some African intellectuals, not without evidence, have questioned the suitability and viability of the liberal democratic model for Africa. They have forcefully argued that Africa has to go beyond liberal to social democracy which would address not only the question of formal equality but that of social justice and equity as well. Formal democracy with multiparty and five-year elections too has come under scrutiny. The experience of the liberalization of the state over the last couple of decades does not inspire confidence or hope. Popular democracy, grassroots democracy, local democracy, new democracy, etc. are the new concepts being discussed and debated.

Fifthly, African scholars are revisiting the nationalist period and the aborted national project. There is renewed interest in the Pan-Africanist vision. There is no way, it is argued, Africa can truly develop in the face of the threat of marginalization by the new imperialist assault called globalization, unless it unites. This time around, Africa has to go beyond regional integration and free trade agreements and work towards political unity, a Federation of African States. The nationalism and national liberation of the globalization age is Pan-Africanism, it is asserted.

In this respect African intellectuals have severely criticized and exposed the limits of the apparent “African” initiative, the New Economic Partnership for African Development or NEPAD. NEPAD is another form of donor-dependent program seeking more aid and assistance and predicated on further integration in the unequal global structures. Calling it a ‘feudo-imperial partnership’ Adebayo Adedeji says, the objective of NEPAD is ‘for the African canoe to be firmly tied to the North’s neo-liberal ship on the waters of globalisation’ (Nyong’o et. al. eds, 2002:36).

Sixthly, the debate on the vexed question of agency continues unabated. Is there an African national bourgeoisie capable of leading a genuine capitalist development or do we just have comprador bourgeoisies serving the needs of foreign capital? Is state-centred socialist development, based on popular forces, the only alternative? In any case, is a socialist alternative feasible in the light of the unipolar hegemony of imperialism? Or is it even desirable in the light of the experience of the former Soviet-bloc countries? Or, shall we develop a transitional ‘model’, called ‘new democracy’, based on what Samir Amin calls ‘national popular forces’?

(Shivji, 2005 accessed at <http://www.pam-bazuka.org/en/category/features/29728>).

To attend to some of these questions raised and observations made above, the paper has found it imperative to reflect on “Botho” in order to envision a just and sustainable economy towards Africa’s development path in the modern history. Botho/ubuntu is a comprehensive resource that emerges from the African culture that has the potential to inject moral quality in the discourse about development in Africa. Indeed, there is a moral quality about development, “a quality which has its roots in the morally correct or incorrect choices made by people” (South African Catholic Bishops Conference, 1999). Thus Botho/ubuntu can be paramount and essential to the transformation of development discourse in Africa. It has the potential to unleash the African ‘state of art’ on development (Shivji, 2005) that is so much needed along Africa’s development discourse in modern times as the next section below will demonstrate.

### **BOTHO: RESOURCE FOR JUST AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY TOWARDS AFRICA’S DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE**

In his revised version of the 9<sup>th</sup> Raul Prebisch Lecture titled *Towards a New Paradigm of Development* delivered at UNCTAD in Geneva on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1998, Joseph Stiglitz argues

If global capitalism is to be made more democratically inclusive and economically sustainable, more holistic approach to development is needed. Such an approach should embrace a social, moral and environmental dimension as well as an economic one.

Joseph Stiglitz (1998: 76-77) continues and asserts

For the essence of development ... is change and transformation, and the individual and societal challenges and opportunities such change and transformation bring with them ... the changes that are associated with development provide individuals and societies with more control and influences over their destiny. Development enriches the lives of individuals by widening their horizons of choice and freedom and reducing their sense of isolation. It reduces the afflictions brought on by disease and poverty and environmental degradation, not only increasing life spans, but improving the quality and vitality of life.

Commenting further in his concluding remarks, Joseph Stiglitz (1998: 102-103) notes

Development is possible, but also ... development is not inevitable ... Development is not just the matter of technical adjustments, but a transformation of society. It requires a holistic and coordinated approach and modes by which these goals are advanced... a successful development transformation affects not only what we do, but how we do it. This broader perspective not only affects the processes of development. It argues for openness, partnership, participation and moral responsibility – words too often sound like appeals to the politically correct nostrums of the day ... (but) there lies behind these words a theory of development as well as evidence that processes can lead to more successful development efforts.

*Echoing* Joseph Stiglitz expressed sentiments above, the paper views botho/ubuntu

as a broader perspective that can be the foundation of development in Africa, and indeed provide a holistic and coordinated approach by which development goals are advanced in the context of Africa. This is exposed in some detail in this section below and in the sections to follow. Botho/ubuntu also has a potential to lay the foundation toward a theory of development in Africa. Such a theory of development can be deployed to bring about the transformation of societies in Africa in development terms as envisioned by Joseph Sliglitz and others like Issa G Shivji, Abonyi Nichodemus Nnaemeka, Goran Hyden and Stuart Price whose viewpoints have been alluded to in the paper.

Botho is a Sesotho and/or Setswana word that explains personhood and humaneness. It is synonymous with other African concepts found in many societies throughout Africa such as ubuntu in isiZulu and isiXhosa. It is expressed in the saying “motho ke motho ka batho” which literally translates into the idea or notion that a person is a person through other persons. The concept of Botho is succinctly clarified and articulated by Mbiti when he poetically states, “I am because we are and since we are therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1988). Botho entails in summary, “respect, empathy, respect and compassion for others”. Being human or ‘motho’ or having botho is the “marker of knowledge and truth in the concrete areas, for example, politics, religion, law (economy and development)” (Ramose, 2001: 1). According to Jack Whitehead, botho “articulates a world view or vision of humanity... as an integral part of eco-systems that lead to a communal responsibility to sustain life.” ([www.bath.ac.uk](http://www.bath.ac.uk)).

The Basotho and/or Batswana use the term botho to describe a person who has a well-rounded character, who is well-mannered, courteous and disciplined, and real-

izes his or her full potential both as an individual and as a part of the community to which he or she belongs. Botho is an example of a social contract of mutual respect, responsibility and accountability that members of society have toward each other and defines a process for earning respect by first giving it, and to gain empowerment by empowering others. On the other hand, botho is a philosophy that promotes the common good of society and includes humanness as an essential element of human growth and development. In African culture the community always comes first. The individual is born out of and into the community, therefore will always be part of the community. Interdependence, communalism, sensitivity towards others and caring for others are all aspects of botho as a philosophy of life (Le Roux: 43). Botho as an African philosophy of life helps to identify the goals and purposes that a particular society holds dear. In fact, humanness is very important in botho as an African philosophy of life in the sense of seeing human needs, interests and dignity as fundamental to human existence.

Accordingly, botho is a principle very appropriate for a just and sustainable economy towards Africa’s development path in modern history. For example, Botswana’s Economic and Social Development Agenda is based upon five national principles, which are: Democracy, Development, Self-Reliance, Unity, and Botho. In fact Botswana’s Vision 2016 acknowledges botho as one of the tenets of African culture: “It encourages people to applaud rather than resent those who succeed. It disapproves of anti-social, disgraceful, inhuman and criminal behaviour, and encourages social justice for all. Botho as a concept must stretch to its utmost limits the largeness of the spirit of all Batswana. It must permeate every aspect of our lives, like the air

we breathe; so that no Motswana will rest easy knowing that another is in need. The five principles are derived from Botswana's cultural heritage, and are designed to promote social harmony, or *kagisano*. They set the broader context for the objectives of national development, which are: Sustained Development, Rapid Economic Growth, Economic Independence, and Social Justice. Botho must be central to education, to home and community life, to the workplace, and to national policy." (<http://www.ubotho.net/Botho-Vision2016>).

In the context of development, the paper believes that botho/ubuntu holds the key in rethinking Africa's development discourse. In order to promote botho as the ideal norm and/or resource for a just and sustainable economy towards Africa's development discourse, there is a need to provide a comprehensive understanding of its meaning and some explanations associated with botho/ubuntu. The next section provides the snapshot of these meanings and explanations associated with the concept of botho/ubuntu that can be deployed in development discourse in Africa.

### **EXPLAINING BOTHO AS A RESOURCE TO DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE IN AFRICA**

Reporting on the Labour Party Conference themed *Labour: the future of Britain* in BBC News Magazine dated 28 September 2006, Sean Coughlan writes

Ubuntu (that is botho). That was what Bill Clinton told the Labour party conference it needed to remember... "Society is important because of ubuntu."

Writing further in BBC News Magazine dated 28 September 2006, Sean Coughlan continues and asserts

The former president, husky-voiced and down-home with the delegates, gave it (that is Ubuntu) a folksy flavour, describing it in terms of needing to be around others to enjoy being ourselves. "If we were the most beautiful, the most intelligent, the most wealthy, the most powerful persons – and then found all of a sudden that we were alone on the planet, it wouldn't amount to a hill of beans," said Mr Clinton.

Commenting on Sean Coughlan's story above regarding Bill Clinton's remarks about botho/ubuntu, Dr. Kennedy Lweya, Haywards Heath writes

Ubuntu is an excellent traditional as well as modern Africa worldview. The concept has a powerful meaning and potential to transform the world into one of better understanding and respect for every human being – it is about treating others as we would to be treated. It is about a sense of sharing, belong and togetherness including the fact that no human being is an island. Thanks Bill for the timely advice to Labour and the world (BBC News Magazine, 2006).

Similarly, Omorodion Osula, Boston, USA notes

No man is an Island and a tree cannot make a forest so the saying goes in Bini, Edo state of Nigeria. I strongly agree with former President Clinton in the use of the word Ubuntu. Let us be our brothers' keeper. The fortunate should lend a helping hand to the unfortunate. Unity is strength (BBC News Magazine, 2006).

And Lawrence Mba, Toronto, Canada also comments further thus

The essence and depth of 'ubuntu' as a concept lies in the age-long African philosophy and practice of communalism and shared objectives. You are your neighbours' keeper. With the emergence of 'western civilization' we are increasingly becoming individualistic and competitive. Capitalism and the philosophy of every person for himself is a challenge for ubuntu. We are all extricably linked and if you buy into the philosophy of ubuntu then I have your back and you have mine. I am because you are – togetherness is it (BBC News Magazine, 2006).

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in his 1999 book *No Future Without Forgiveness*, says: "Botho/Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language... It is to say, 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in what is yours.' In the same book, Archbishop Desmond Tutu offered a definition of botho/ubuntu thus:

A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu further explained botho/Ubuntu in 2008:

One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu – the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality – Ubuntu – you are known for your gen-

erosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu\\_\(philosophy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_(philosophy))).

Louw (1998) suggests that the concept of botho/ubuntu defines the individual in their several relationships with others, and stresses the importance of botho/ubuntu as a religious concept. He states that while the Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* ("a person is a person through (other) persons") may have no apparent religious connotations in the context of Western society, in an African context it suggests that the person one is to become by behaving with humanity is an ancestor worthy of respect or veneration. Those who uphold the principle of ubuntu throughout their lives will, in death, achieve a unity with those still living.

Nelson Mandela explained Botho/Ubuntu as follows:

A traveler through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve? ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu\\_\(philosophy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_(philosophy))).

These explanations and/or observations point to the importance of the role of the concept of botho can play in development if taken seriously. Indeed, botho has entered

the popular culture lexicon around the globe since 1990s, and talk spreads throughout economics, politics, sports, business, development etc. For example, at the 2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), there was an Ubuntu Village exposition center (World Resource Institute, 2002). Ubuntu was also a major theme in John Boorman's 2004 film *In My Country* (New York Times, 2005). Former US president Bill Clinton used the term at the 2006 Labour Party conference in the UK to explain why society is important (Coughlan, 2006). The Boston Celtics, the 2008 NBA champions, have chanted "ubuntu" when breaking a huddle since the start of the 2007-2008 season (Kiszla, 2007).

Furthermore, in 1999, the World Council of Churches on its eight assembly that marked its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary themed one of its plenary "Ubuntu and the African Kairos" (World Council of Churches, 1999). A decade later, Ubuntu was the theme of the 76th General Convention of the American Episcopal Church with the Ubuntu logo including the text "I in You and You in Me" (General Convention, 2009). On June 18, 2009, in her swearing-in remarks as U.S. Department of State Special Representative for Global Partnerships, Elizabeth Bagley discussed ubuntu in the context of American foreign policy (US Department of state, 2009). Indeed, the 2010 FIFA World Cup currently hosted in Africa by South Africa is dubbed to be buzzing with "the spirit of Ubuntu" (Kasanda, 2010) as humanity is celebrated.

In the context of development, the paper believes that the observations above raise convincing argument that botho/ubuntu holds not only the key in rethinking Africa's development discourse but it is also an imperative towards Africa's economic recovery.

In order to promote botho/ubuntu as the ideal norm and/or resource needed towards Africa's development path and economic recovery, it is important to highlight some features or essential elements associated with botho/ubuntu. In this regard the next section provides the snapshot of these qualities or essential elements associated with the concept of botho/ubuntu as they relate or pertain or applied to development discourse from an African perspective.

### **APPLYING THE QUALITIES OR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF BOTHO TO DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE IN AFRICA**

No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Contient, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.

Meditation XVII, a 1624 prose work by John Donne quoted in Anthony Raspar, 1987

The passage quoted above from the 1624 prose work by the English writer John Donne unequivocally captures the essence of botho/ubuntu and the very qualities or essential elements associated with it. This is exposed in some detail in this section below. The paper argues that the concept of botho/ubuntu can form the basis of Africa's social and economic development policies, and indeed also form the basis of development blueprint needed for an African model of development. Essentially, botho/ubuntu invokes a new sense of responsibility for humanity in development terms. As President

Obama succinctly puts it in his inauguration speech, “What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility – a recognition, on the part of every ... (person), that we have duties to ourselves, our nation(s) and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character than giving our all to a difficult task” (Weichel and Nussbaum, 2010).

Corroborating the botho/ubuntu sentiments expressed by President Obama, on June 18, 2009, in her swearing-in remarks as U.S. Department of State Special Representative for Global Partnerships, Elizabeth Bagley discussed botho/ubuntu in the context of American foreign policy, stating that “In understanding the responsibilities that come with our interconnectedness, we realize that we must rely on each other to lift our world from where it is now to where we want it to be in our lifetime, while casting aside our worn out preconceptions, and our outdated modes of statecraft”(US Department of state, 2009). As the African saying goes, “When there is Peace in the individual, there is Peace in the family. When there is Peace in the family, there is Peace in the community. When there is Peace in the community, there is Peace in the nation. When there is Peace in the nation, there is Peace in the world.” This African saying thus captures Obama and Bagley’s sense of responsibility in botho/ubuntu terms, and further epitomizes the essence of the spirit of botho/ubuntu whose deployment in the discourse of development in much needed in the context of Africa.

According to Kimberly Weichel and Barbara Nussbaum in an article written for Ode Magazine on May 12 2010, entitled, ‘The Spirit of Ubuntu in America,’ they

state, “Ubuntu is an African word that embodies so much of what we seek in society today... It is the spirit of oneness, unity, and compassion, and expresses itself in a desire to help others and include everyone” (Weichel and Nussbaum, 2010). They continue to elucidate the spirit of African ubuntu thus, “We live in a world of vast differences that can truly enrich our lives. Yet it is important that we learn how to honour these differences, and reduce misunderstandings. Ubuntu reframes a new way of being, through patience, tolerance and respect” (Weichel and Nussbaum, *ibid*). As Archbishop Desmond Tutu says, in ubuntu “my humanity is caught up inextricably in yours. When I dehumanize you, I inexorably dehumanize myself. The solitary human being is a contradiction in terms” (Weichel and Nussbaum, *ibid*). Nelson Mandela explains, “The spirit of ubuntu – that profound African sense that we are human only through the humanity of other human beings – is not a parochial phenomenon, but has added globally to our common search for a better world” (Weichel and Nussbaum, *ibid*).

Further extrapolating the qualities associated with botho/ubuntu, Weichel and Nussbaum (2010) describe botho/Ubuntu thus

Ubuntu is the spirit of peace – it’s the spirit of respectful win-win – meaning that if a solution doesn’t work for you, then it doesn’t work for me either. Yet it goes beyond Western concepts of me and you to “I evolve and grow because of you and in relation to you.” It refutes the mores of our past decade of “look out for number one,” the competitive motto “it’s about winning,” and the capitalist value of “more is better.” Our ability to be fully alive and fulfilled is integrally linked

through our relationship to the actions, perceptions and attitudes of others. It is the spirit of cooperation in action.

They (2010) continue and assert

Ubuntu also calls for cohabitation, which is not only about living with others harmoniously but also about accommodating other people's ideas, and "genuinely seeking to understand before proceeding to persuade them." Ubuntu teaches the value of inclusivity and the search for reciprocal understanding. Ubuntu is a key ingredient for peace as it calls us all to respect the traditions of others and incorporate them into the whole. Ubuntu is a pathway to peace as it is inclusive and self-critical, reflective and accommodating. So ubuntu for (humanity) invites us to "establish harmony in diversity and creativity in community."

And speaking of the power of botho/ubuntu for inclusivity perhaps in all human endeavors, Russel Botman remarks

Being human is relational and cooperative... the concrete person is a web of interactions, a network of operative relationships. These relationships are not mechanical ones; they do not allow for a competitive individualization which would damage the dignity of the human being. The dignity of human beings emanates from the network of relationships, from being in community ... cannot be reduced to a unique competitive and for personal ego (<http://www.crvp.org>).

In this sense, every person's humanity is thus ideally articulated through his or her relationship with other beings in botho/ubuntu solidarity and collective consciousness. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz (1996) de-

scribes solidarity as value associated with botho/ubuntu thus

Solidarity has to do with the actions of those not directly suffering from a situation of depression in concert with those who are. It is both an attitude and practice. Solidarity is an ethical principle; a direction for human life should follow. Operating both as a virtue (character trait and norm (guide to human behavior). Solidarity refers to the community of feelings, interests, and purposes that arise from shared sense of responsibilities; it leads to action and social cohesion. [It] moves away from the false notions of disinterest and altruism and demands love of self [and others]. It is praxis of mutuality, an intentional, reflective action aimed at building of community.

In Botho/ubuntu solidarity and consciousness, "the self is perceived primarily in relation to the perception of the others" (Laden, quoted by Kamwangala, 1999:2). According to Russell Bortman, this is also due to the view that an individual (or the self) is a social and relational being and thus is perceived in cooperative terms. In his own words, "the human being is not only a personality, but also a sociality" (<http://www.crvp.org>). In a nutshell, the qualities associated with botho/ubuntu depicted in this section point that botho/ubuntu is an African life ethics. As Mnyaka (2003: 154) states that botho/ubuntu implies that, "the natural rationality of the person thus immediately plunges him/her into the moral universe, making morality an essentially social and trans-individual phenomenon focused in the well being of others." In ethical terms, botho/ubuntu thus stipulates the requirements of responsibilities expected of human beings in their relationships with each other

at any given time. As Mokgoro (1998) states that botho/ubuntu is “the basis for a morality of cooperation, compassion, and communalism and concern for the interests of the collective respect for the dignity personhood, all the time emphasizing the virtues of that dignity in social relationships and practices”.

The good news is that the botho/ubuntu perspective sketched in this section has been incorporated in international development philosophy but its reach needs to be aggressively extended in Africa’s development discourse. For example, according to the Cocoyac declaration adopted in October 1974 by a symposium convened by UNEP and UNCTAD on patterns of resource environment and development strategies, it was explicitly stated that “the goal of development should be not to develop things, but to develop man” (Hoselitz, 1960: 121). That same declaration goes on to state that “development must be aimed at the spiritual, moral and material advancement of the whole human being, both as a member of society and from the point of view of individual fulfillment” (Harrison, 1983: 41). The point is well made: people should not be seen or conceived as the Kierkegardian solitary individual; rather they should be seen in the sense elucidated by a renowned African scholar, J. S. Mbiti, which reads, “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1969: 24).

As it is the case now already we can see that the current development discourse in Africa is missing some very important insights of botho/ubuntu. New development discourse/paradigms in Africa need to show that for the well-being of the individual in society, we need a new conceptualisation that emphasizes botho/ubuntu as a resource for a just and sustainable economy towards

Africa’s development Path and economic recovery in modern history.

In a nutshell, we can already see that botho/ubuntu calls for a new development paradigm and/or development discourse in Africa that strengthens not only the well-being of individuals but of society as well. The current development paradigms and/or development discourses are lop-sided because they have failed to see the continuum between individual and society and vice versa—a point aptly made by Arthur Koestler (1978):

No man is an island; he is a “holon.” Like Janus, the two faced Roman god, holons have a dual tendency to behave as quasi-independent wholes, asserting their individuality, but at the same time as integrated parts of longer wholes in the multileveled hierarchies of existence. Thus a man is both a unique individual and a part of a social group, which itself is a part of a larger group, and so on... thus polarity between the self assertive and integrative tendencies is a universal characteristic of life. Order and stability can prevail only when the two tendencies are in equilibrium. If one of them dominates the other, this delicate balance is disturbed and pathological conditions of various types make their appearance.

Applying these reflections to contemporary African realities, this section argues for botho/ubuntu as a firm foundation for economic development in Africa. The challenge facing Africa is to develop theoretical paradigms based on botho/ubuntu that can focus and ultimately illuminate the ideological constellation obtaining in the continent. With botho/ubuntu-based development paradigms, Africa may not have to appropriate foreign-conceived theoretical frame-

works as has traditionally been done. In botho/ubuntu, Africa has rich African traditional resources to guide her own development. Indeed, if one person is because we are, and if we are because one person is, and if we as Africans deeply believe in the value of an integrating botho/ubuntu in development discourse, then neither the individualism associated with libertarianism nor the nationalism espoused in the name of economic development à la mercantilism is an appropriate paradigm for Africa. The paradigm workable in Africa would be one that recognizes that the well-being of the individual overflows to the well-being of society and, conversely, the well-being of society can be meaningful only if experienced in individual people's lives – botho/ubuntu development discourse.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The paper opens up concluding remarks of reflections on botho as a resource for a just and sustainable economic towards Africa's development path and economic recovery in the modern history with a quotation from the Human Development Report 1992 which stated that:

Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, many other opportunities remain inaccessible (1995, 11).

In fact, as alluded to earlier the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), identify human

development as a key to social and economic progress. Indeed, MDGs have become a universal framework for development, and a means for African countries and their partners to work together in pursuit of a shared future for all. However, from all indications African countries are unfortunately not on target on any of the goals. Is it because African feet cannot divorce Western shoes? Certainly not necessarily the case! The paper has argued that the problem lies with the foundation of Africa's path towards economic recovery and/or development in general. It has put forward botho/ubuntu as an ideal foundational resource towards Africa's development path and economic recovery. The paper has also argued that the qualities or essential elements associated with botho/ubuntu make it an attractive resource for a just and sustainable economy towards Africa's development Path in modern history.

On June 18, 2009, in her swearing-in remarks as U.S. Department of State Special Representative for Global Partnerships, Elizabeth Bagley introduced the notion of "Ubuntu Diplomacy" with the following words:

In 21st century diplomacy, the Department of State will be a convener, bringing people together from across regions and sectors to work together on issues of common interest. Our work no longer depends on the least common denominator; but rather, we will seek the highest possible multiplier effect for the results we can achieve together.

We will also act as a catalyst, with our Foreign Service Officers launching new projects in tandem with those NGOs, philanthropies, and corporations at the front lines of foreign affairs to discover

untapped potential, inspire fresh ideas, and create new solutions.

And we will act as a collaborator, leading interagency coordination here in Washington and cross-sector collaboration in the field, with our Ambassadors working closely with our non-governmental partners to plan and implement projects for maximum impact and sustainability.

In the same way that Secretary Clinton has often said that ‘it takes a village to raise a child,’ we are now realizing that we must apply a similar approach worldwide. It takes a shared, global response to meet the shared, global challenges we face. This is the truth taught to us in an old South African principle, ubuntu, or ‘A person is a person through other persons.’ As Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes this perspective, ubuntu ‘is not, “I think therefore I am.” It says rather: “I am a human because I belong, I participate. I share.” In essence, I am because you are.

We are truly all in this together, and we will only succeed by building mutually beneficial partnerships among civil society, the private sector, and the public sector, in order to empower the men and women executing our foreign policy to advance their work through partnerships.

This is Ubuntu Diplomacy: where all sectors belong as partners, where we all participate as stakeholders, and where we all succeed together, not incrementally but exponentially” (US Department of State, 2009).

Taking cues from Elizabeth Bagley’s notion of “Ubuntu Diplomacy”, the paper equally argues for the notion of “Botho development philosophy” towards Africa’s economic development path. Development in

Africa will have to be based on botho – a collective effort, David Kaulem has very aptly gotten the point, “the only thing that can further true development in Africa is unity, true common spirit; Africa will not be able to base [her] struggle [against her enormous problems of development] on individual effort” (1990: 108). The question for Africa in the present circumstances is: which way should it go? The paper has demonstrated that Africa needs solutions that are typically African in order to address the kind of challenges posed, not least because these challenges are themselves typically African and unprecedented. Specifically, there is need to draw on the African notion of botho/ubuntu where individual and social interests are not in a hostile relationship. Rather, the need is for individual and social interests to form a continuum, in which individual well-being is only possible in a well-ordered society but at the same time where a well-ordered society can be made up only of happy and healthy individuals – botho development discourse. Thus in the botho/ubuntu conception that “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am”, Africans have a relationship such that whatever is injurious to society is injurious to the individual; similarly whatever is injurious to an individual is injurious to society. Accordingly, the evil of colonialism as experienced in Africa, ostensibly for economic development by the colonizers, was not only injurious to the individual but to society as well.

## BIOGRAPHY

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