

THE INTER CONNECTEDNESS BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND DEVELOPMENT: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL

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ABSTRACT

The world, it can be said, currently revolves around development. This is because the need for development occupies a primary place in the lives of individuals, groups, nations and states. The desire is always for a people to move closer to development. Those who are farthest from it wish they were closer and consistently strive to be closer to it, while those who are close to it wish there were nothing separating them from development. Perhaps, the most intriguing aspect of the situation has to do with those by whom we sometimes measure development. They are involved, at another level, in the race for further development and this involves discovering new frontiers of development and the process increases as much as possible, the developmental gap between themselves and others.

In this situation, the term "Development" turns out to be a very vague term. This is because, in our ever-changing world, there are no archetypes of development. Changes that are considered to be developmental today may be considered primitive tomorrow. Also, what is considered to be developmental in one place may be seen to be index of retrogression in another. This makes it difficult to articulate a definite concept of development.

INTRODUCTION

The link between development and philosophy is assumed to be a fact of the rational nature of man. This is because it is only when one looks at the curious nature of man, that one will understand that every human person has the potential for development owing to the fact that every human being possesses rationality, in the sense that everybody is developing.

It is not that there is no consciousness at all that development should be about people. The Economic and Social Council of the UN in 1962 stated that:

The problem of the underdeveloped countries is not just growth, but development. Development is growth plus change, change in turn is social and cultural as well as economic and qualitative as well as quantitative... the key concept must be improved quality of people's life.¹

Development is of two aspects: the primary and the secondary aspect but they are all interrelated and work towards the well-being of the whole.²

The primary aspect involves the development of human person while the secondary aspect is subordinate to human development and towards achieving the chief goal of man. This secondary aspect

includes social, economic and political development. It is in the relation of the primary and secondary aspect of development that philosophy comes to dine with development; this is where man himself is the subject matter of philosophy because it is known that only philosophy can develop human and the society.

CONCEPTUALIZING PHILOSOPHY, MEANING, CHARACTERISTICS AND NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world, particularly in the developing countries, there is a widespread ignorance on the nature and function of philosophy. Many people under the influence of the natural science and technological advancement conceive philosophy as an abstract and theoretical subject of any relation or relevance to human life.

Certainly, this is a distortion, a misconception and misrepresentation of what philosophy really is. It suffices to say that, generally philosophy is used in ways that imply a certain totality, generality and ultimateness of both its subject matter and method. In the light of this, and since the majority of people have no clear idea about what philosophy “is” they use the word “philosophy” loosely in their daily conversations that is, without the proper understanding of its meaning and nature. It is therefore important to investigate the nature of philosophy, especially in the academic sense of the word. The aim here is to distinguish philosophy from its popular everyday usage.

It was believed that the term “philosophy” was first used by Pythagoras of Samos. The word “philosophy” according to the history of Western philosophy is derived from two Greek words- (Philein) to love and (Sophia) wisdom. Hence, philosophy etymologically means love of wisdom or better still, love of the pursuit of wisdom¹. This assumption must have formed the thinking of Aristotle who begins his treatise on metaphysics with the assertion that all human beings have the desire to acquire knowledge.

PHILOSOPHY AS AN ACADEMIC ENTERPRISE

Philosophers have often sought to confine the word “philosophy” within narrow boundaries. However, in proper usage philosophy has never lost its original meaning. Apart from the aforementioned popular usage of the word “philosophy”, it is also used in a professional, academic and scientific sense. Philosophy is said to be a science when it is referred to as critical and coherent examination of man’s views. Philosophy is conceived by David Hume as a science because he views philosophy as the “first science”². He argues that it consists of every other branch of inquiry, precisely because it is a creation of the human mind. Consequently, a philosopher is one who engages in critical analysis, which involves problems of the universe in general and man in particular. A philosopher tries through critical examination, to evaluate the information and belief of human beings about reality.

The world, and philosophy along with it, has changed a lot since the days of Pythagoras. Philosophers nowadays enter the service to earn their living and if possible, gain scholarly reputation. Many people will certainly deny that the philosopher’s choice is the best as they would prefer a life of action in politics and the professions to that of the apparent useless visionaries who give their whole life to a discipline which probably deserves a little attention for the sake of general culture. In this work, our attention is to show the relevance of this theoretic concern called philosophy for our cultural and intellectual development.

Philosophy is reflective and critical thinking about the concepts and principles we use to organize our experience in morals, in religion, in social and political life, in law, in philosophy, in history and in the natural science. Few, I think will deny that the man who succeeds in identifying the structure and components of his conceptual system is thereby released from bondage to it. We see the lack of this ability to abstract or stand aside and observe and we smile when we are told the story of the boy who was asked by his father how many fingers he (the father) has and who replied "I don't know" because I can only count my own fingers.³

It is not the case that we are recommending that all lawyers should be legal philosophers or that all scientists should be philosophers of science- these people are busy enough with specific practical objectives. The point we are making is that be it history or law, an important advantage accrues to a discipline when its practitioners know explicitly what assumptions are involved in the language and models it uses.

For if the assumptions are known they can be changed systematically, explicitly and controllably, and no amount of experimental or practical work alone can determine what concepts or paradigms are best to use. Anything therefore that would promote conversation between the practitioners and those who are committed to the analysis and criticism of the conceptual framework of those practices is to be encouraged. This is the rationale for the institutionalized forum for discussion which a worthwhile department of philosophy should be.

THE LAYMAN CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is often employed or used differently in our day to day conversations. Sometimes, it is used to mean an attitude towards a certain line of action, as when someone says: "I approve of your philosophy of doing business" or "I like your philosophy of life"

Philosophy is also used in a non-academic sense. For instance, when we speak of a "person's philosophy", we simply mean the sum total of his/her "belief", the main principles that guide and control his/her life. In this usage, "belief" is used in its broadest sense as comprehending all human life situations. The use of philosophy in this non-academic sense seems to mean that life would be impossible for people without an equipment of beliefs and definite principles to guide those beliefs. Hence, all people, Nigerians and non-Nigerians, have their philosophy and they seem to live according to their maxims and ideas.⁴

In African continent and other continents where the majority of peoples' basic yearnings and drives are largely practical in terms of food, shelter and clothing, the ordinary man's conception of philosophy is even weird. This might be the reason why some people think philosophy is a queer enterprise not worth pursuing. People often ask: "Why do you study philosophy"? Why not be content with the struggle for life and leave philosophizing alone.⁵

People who ask these questions show that they are not indeed familiar with the meaning and function of philosophy. Socrates, an intense genius philosopher, made the meaning and function of philosophy explicit in 399B.C.E, at the age of 71, when he was being tried in impiety. For Socrates, the meaning of philosophy is the "love of wisdom" which he displayed at his trial, while the function of philosophy according to Socrates, is that wonderful opportunity to reflect more deeply on concepts/ideas and human problems. Hence, Socrates believes that "unexamined life is not worth living." Secondly, to Socrates, "it is

the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and other, for the unexamined life is not worth living.⁶

Philosophy makes a rational (reflective) man to think about the basic foundations of his outlook, his knowledge and his beliefs. Now, we want to discuss what development is?

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

Need we ask what development is? Need we seek to define it? The problem is that we are always talking about development. We all assume that what we mean is what the other person means. We speak at cross purpose because while we agreed that development is about change, we are not at all clear about the direction or destination of the change that we desire.

The discourse about development is usually among the elite, making prescriptions about the people. Once, the goal of change was perceived as a desire to become civilized. This was followed by the desire to be Europeanized; later Westernized. When it was objected that these goals implied some ethnocentrism on the part of European colonial rulers and agencies that were setting the agenda, westernization was replaced by modernization as being a more neutral term.⁷ Eventually, it was agreed that modernization, by implying a dichotomy between the traditional and the modern, was also faulty in its analysis. It was therefore replaced by the concept of development which was regarded as more universal.

In all these, no one enquired about the wishes and desires of the people, whether they wanted to be civilized, Europeanized, Westernized or modernized. We assumed that they want to be developed because we say that development is a good thing and we do not go on to define or explain what it involves.⁸

It was argued that development is a term borrowed from Biology. It describes a process through which the potentialities of an object or organism are released, until it reaches its natural, complete, full-fledged form. It is not that there is no consciousness at all that development should be about people.

The key concept must be improved quality of people's life. It is clear, that we have so far failed to develop during the five decades of development. We must take our analysis further so that we can identify what we can do about it. It is all right for the cynics who say that the whole idea of development is illusory.

The notion of internal progress into the paradise of a classless and godless society died with the collapse of communism. But we cannot because of that abandon the hope, or stop making the effort to grow and improve the quality of life of the people⁹. Without exerting our own internal effort to development, we are doomed to be perpetual servants, former slaves, in the global society.

There are, of course, many sides to the failure of development. Some people stress the failure of Government and leadership. Others place the emphasis on military rule which prevented the growth of the political class and scorched the initial experiment in democracy. There is the moral crisis manifested in widespread corruption, and the range of people who would go along with what they know to be wrong until they no longer know just how wrong it is. There is, in fact, a feeling of moral chaos, of total loss of values and lack of respect for human life. Also, development can be viewed in different analysis. It can be social, economic, political, religious, human, educational, technological and environmental e.t.c. According to E. KolawoleOgundowole,

The term development is self-realization. This implies the resources of geosphere, imagination to achieve overall societal objective. It entails the increasing expansion of what a purposeful self-reliance's mind, poised at full self-reliance and recovery can do with simple object of his immediate geographical and historical environment. Hence, it may be said that development is not so much a matter of what we have, but of what we do with what we have, how we do it, and how well.¹⁰

Hence, development entails self-realization. This means that human person is the central maker of development of the environment. This is targeted at making the person to realize his full potentiality. The primary aspect of development of developed country is development of the human personality. Indeed, moral development is the most important or relevant aspect of national development. Real development is the development of the mind, which is primary, the focus of philosophy and the integral part of human being. Hence, philosophy when viewed as a discipline that deals with ultimate values can be as the sole agent of development. Thus, philosophy interrelate development.

EVALUATING PHILOSOPHY AND DEVELOPMENT

Professor Sodipo conceives philosophy in a broad sense as:

Reflective and critical thinking about the concepts and principles we use to organize our experience in morals, in religion, in social and in political life, in law, in philosophy, in history and in the natural science.¹¹

In this definition, he underscores the wide-ranging nature of the philosopher's concern, the philosopher, he says, is concerned with human experience in all its dimensions. A significant point in Professor Sodipo's conception of philosophy is his belief that the primary goal of philosophy is to extend the frontiers of human freedom. For him, it is easy for an individual, even a society, to be imprisoned by "the structure and components of his conceptual system or what can alternatively be called his form of life¹². What does in this regard is to help the individual to develop the "ability to abstract or to stand aside and observe¹³ this form of line. This is with a view to determining aspects of it that are of value and, therefore worthy of preservation (even accentuation) and those that have become dysfunctional, therefore worthy of rejection.

We can argue that philosophy is not in any way a luxury. Rather, it is, so to say indispensable to human existence, as Sodipo has rightly argued. In making this claim, he would no doubt be in agreement with one of his contemporaries and friends, Professor Kwasi Wiredu, when he writes thus:

Not everybody need become a professional philosopher, but to a certain degree, everybody is a philosopher. In truth, no one has a choice whether to have some philosophy or none at all. In this connection, we may recall the words of Jesus Christ. "Man", he said "should not live by bread alone, but by the word of God.

But if man shall not live without the word of God, even less shall he live without a philosophy, for how, otherwise shall he attain the very conception of God? How shall he attain a conception of value of

what to live for? How, in short shall he attain a general and integrated outlook upon the world in which he lives? Clearly, the choice is not between having and not having a philosophy but rather between having one that is consciously fashioned or an inherited and largely unexamined one¹⁴.

It is clear from Professor Sodipo's definition of philosophy that, for him to have an "inherited and largely unexamined philosophy" is to be confined to bondage. Hence, his emphasis on the importance of abstraction and objectivity, defined here in terms of the capacity for self-criticism, in philosophical practice. The need for these intellectual qualities in Africa is a transitional society and should be clear. For not only does this society need to appreciate "the place of knowledge in life, and of change"¹⁵ the people also require the application of "deep criticism and analysis"¹⁶ to their traditional systems of thought to enable them to reject what is outmoded and cultivate that which is of value in African culture.

Development is a multi-dimensional concept. There are many aspect of development which includes primary and secondary aspect. They are interrelated and work toward the well-being of a whole. The secondary aspects are subordinate to and direct towards the primary part, through which they make their contribution as a whole. The secondary aspect is of no advancement to the primary, to neglect the primary part of development is to deny what development entails.¹⁷

However, the primary part of development would correspond to the human dimension, while the secondary part would correspond to infra-human dimension. The latter includes the land, the natural resources, the roads, the building, and machines.t.c. All these are important in any country that seeks to be developed. They are not of primary importance, consequently; the primary aspect of development in any country is the development of human person. In other words, the development of any country must begin from the foundation, which is the human personality. All other aspect of development is subordinate and instrumental to the development of human personality.

Another dimension on development emerged with the publication of the First Human Development Report in 1990, which declared at its onset that people are the real wealth of nation, upon this basis; development is identified with "human development". Here human development can be defined as a process of enlarging people's choices. The choices initially defined were the opportunity to lead a long and healthy life, the opportunity to acquire knowledge and the opportunity to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living.¹⁸

The report also defines three key indicators for measuring human development. These are life expecting at birth, access to quality education, and command over resources needed for a decent living standard. The report declares that this conception of the nature, goals and measurement of development is inspired by philosophers such as Aristotle and Immanuel Kant, as well as by political economist such as Adam Smith, Ricardo and Marx.¹⁹

Any economic development that does not pay attention to human development will be a sheer propaganda. Human development is person and community centered. A human full of potential is developed in the community of person. The goal secures by community and person centered, development is a horizon of self-enhancing values. The various project (rural electrification, roads and pipe-borne water) undertaken by many African communities, unassisted by their various government, are indicative of the realization that many have champion their own development in the midst of irresponsible government.²⁰

Furthermore, meaningful development can only be rooted from the human person. Philosophy has a vital contribution to make to the development of human person. A very important aspect of the development of human personality as moral development has adequately responded to this challenge through its distinct area of inquiry called ethics. Ethics has been variously defined according to J. A. Agboidhi “ethics is the morality of human action or norms of human behaviours.”²¹

Moral maturity of the citizen is a mark of human development. What this implies is that development will continue to elude us as a nation, if the citizens are morally underdeveloped. Ethics also deals essentially with human values. In human society; development should be guided and under-printed by a set of goals. The goals of society are its values.

The development of a society largely depends upon a clear definition of its values and how the values are applied in real concrete world. Apart from the fact that philosophy attend to the moral health of a people or nation, it makes people to realize the importance of ideology and its relevance to development.²² In this context, philosophy helps a person, people or society to cultivate and live by values whose observance will ultimately result in the best interest of common good. The point here is that a person or nation should take seriously the teaching of philosophy. It is through this study, there can be reduction in immoral act, which is a cause of present stagnant economy in Nigeria in particular.

In view of the importance of human person, authentic development in any society or nation can be attained if this consists mainly on the development of the mind. The ability of the mind to critically see things and seek meaning and intelligibility of thing is important aspect of development which is through the human person. This particularly is the contribution of philosophy to development and by this fact; the certainty of interconnectedness between philosophy and development is of no doubt.²³ The sole aim of philosophy is to promote critical thought and once it fails to do this, it has no justification.

According to Sodipo, African philosophy must be critical. But being critical is not enough. African philosophy must also be social. To be social, it has to be rooted in the life of the community and have an impact on society. In other words, and in plain expression, philosophy must be useful. It must be in the service of social development, by assisting in the clear formulation of the problems that require attention and generally, promoting on understanding.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the critical examination of the interconnectedness between philosophy and development is essentially to show that there is no way we can talk of development that we do not on the other hand talk of philosophy. The fact is that philosophy is essentially a reflective activity. To philosophize is to reflect on human experience because philosophy is one of the powerful forces that sharpens man’s attitude and the structure of societies.²⁴

Philosophy has a vital contribution to make to the development of human person (moral development) which indeed is the primary aspect of development. Development is made up of two aspects; the development of the human person is the primary aspect, while structural artifacts as the tractor, vehicle, investors and houses e.t.c. are the secondary aspect. It is important to know that national development is primarily the development of human person²⁵. Based on this fact, we cannot talk of development without the

human person; it therefore means that we cannot deny the interconnectedness between philosophy and development.²⁶ This is because philosophy in itself involves development.

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