Philosophy and the Pillars of Human Development
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Abstract

The concept of human development involves the attempt to address the challenges of human living. By building human capabilities, human development represents the bid to improve human condition, given that a society only presumes development which pays insignificant attention to the growth of its human resources. Efficient and sustainable human development has conceivably been anchored on equity, sustainability, productivity, empowerment, cooperation and security. Being basically philosophical principles, these pillars of human development remain essential basis of measurement for United Nation’s Human Development Index (HDI) which takes into account statistics such as life expectancy at birth, an education index and gross national income per capita. With the philosophical tool of critical analysis, this paper establishes how these pillars are and remain the philosophical foundations of human development, the engine of societal development. The paper identifies the problems associated with non adherence to these principles and proffers options for bettering human condition through strengthening the tenets of these pillars in the face of multifarious global adversities.

Key words:
Human development, Humanism, Philosophy

Introduction

The essential attribute of man is his definition as a rational animal. A prominent feature of this rationality consists in the ability of self determination, self realization and self actualization. In known history, philosophy has been at the frontier of human development. The social contract theories represent man’s prime desire for an organized society since the precarious state of nature remains brute, unpleasant and undesirable. Man can only have a retarded and endangered development in a state of war propelled by egocentric passion. With
nature’s bequeathal of inherent potentialities, together with the provisions of the natural environment, man is set on the path of self realization.

But then, man’s self development is not delimited. Emmanuel Kant would hold that humans as rational agents should not be ethically considered as a means to an end, but as ends in themselves. But being at the same time a social animal, man’s self development is within the context of the society. Without negating the import of independent personal development for the purpose of self actualization, human development serves the ultimate purpose of the preservation and advancement of humanity within the context of society. The historic paradigm shift of emphasis from supernaturalism to naturalism cum humanism was borne out of the need for a scientific development of humanity and its society. Issues revolving around this shift have engaged humanists of various inclinations.

Philosophy and Human Development

The homocentric outlook of the present globe equally obtrudes man at the epicenter of philosophy. From antiquity, philosophy has championed the cause of human development. Ancient philosophers like Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, not only formally initiated what is today regarded as the ‘mother of all sciences’, but led the inroad into humanity’s cognitive development. That Egypt is the cradle of human civilization is African philosophic claim. Inquiry into reality, a human specific ability, is essentially motivated by the ultimate need for human development. Thus, the quest for the meaning of being and ultimate reality necessitates metaphysics which ordinarily would be misconstrued by schools like naturalism, positivism and empiricism to lack humanistic content. Jack Powell(2014) had posited that:

The term "metaphysics" applies to a branch of philosophy focused on defining reality. The goal of metaphysics is to help those who study it understand reality and the world around them, and to help them achieve enlightenment. Oftentimes people turn to metaphysical studies when they are unhappy with something in their lives or when something is not working as they'd like.

He stated furthermore that:

The two main questions all metaphysicists ask regularly are "What is there?" and "What is it like?" The goal of these two questions is to gain clarity on major philosophical questions, such as the meaning of life and what happens after a person dies. Answering these questions requires a
different process for each individual, but the process is personal and involves reflection and Self-discovery.

Metaphysics is important for the development of the rational and spiritual aspects of man. Various ontology, theism, and aspects of medieval philosophy are metaphysical strands found in philosophy of religion. The dichotomy and reconciliation between faith and reason, the sacred and the secular are aspects of man’s spiritual concern which philosophers of various strata have grappled with and attended to.

Philosophy is essentially an epistemic endeavour in so far as it thrives on the quest for knowledge of which crucial purpose is human enlightenment. For philosophy, man is essentially a rational animal. His rationality requires development through education. If knowledge acquisition (education) remains a vital aspect of human development, enquiry into the meaning, nature, source, subject and object of knowledge constitute a more basic human developmental apparatus. The lingering debate between rationalism and empiricism remain attempts at addressing staring epistemological issues. Beaming its critical search light on education, philosophy:

…address questions in and about pedagogy, education policy, and curriculum, as well as the process of learning, to name a few. For example, it might study what constitutes upbringing and education, the values and norms revealed through upbringing and educational practices, the limits and legitimization of education as an academic discipline, and the relation between educational theory and practice.(Wikipedia)

Human development must take cognizance of the moral aspect of man and thrives on multifarious values spread across all facets and spheres of human existence and endeavour. Philosophy champions enquiry into varieties and degrees of values defining and refining, describing and prescribing as well as multiplying human developmental value options. Together with theories of values, ethicists are concerned about human conducts in terms of stipulation of moral norms towards a stable humanity. Utilitarianism, theories of justice, ethical pragmatism, theories of equality, rights and freedom are part of many philosophical attempts at developing the moral aspect of man.

Philosophy considers critical thinking very vital to the development of the cognitive aspect of man. With studies in logic, philosophy champions humanity’s project of valid reasoning. Man cannot claim to be
operating at the zenith of his rationality in fallacious reasoning. Thus, studies in basic philosophy and logic remain an essential intellectual initiation into the world of higher institutions of learning.

To enhance the socio-political facet of human development, philosophy basically recognizes man as both a social and political animal and habours numerous socio-political theories which attend to his socio-political concerns in differing existential situations. In the bid to resolve the inherent conflict within human society, philosophy delves into the study of the social and political nature of man and his relationship with others. In recognition of the dynamism of humanity and for an organized and stable society, philosophy, in its prescriptive nature, multiplies political options for feasible and reliable governance.

Despite the conceptual attempts of anthropology in studying the nature of man, humanism remains the adept philosophical approach to human development.

The Humanism of Human Development

The shift of human existential cum developmental focus around theism to humanity preoccupied the renaissance period with the discovery of reason and enthronement of science. Put succinctly, humanism entails, “…any philosophy concerned to emphasize human welfare and dignity, and either optimistic about the powers of human reason, or at least insistent that we have no alternative but to use it as best we can” (Blackburn, 2008:171)

This definition tends to approximate mainly modern humanism which according to American humanist, Fred Edwards(2014) is:

...also called Naturalistic Humanism, Scientific Humanism, Ethical Humanism, and Democratic Humanism, and is defined by one of its leading proponents, Corliss Lamont, as "a naturalistic philosophy that rejects all supernaturalism and relies primarily upon reason and science, democracy and human compassion." Modern Humanism has a dual origin, both secular and religious, and these constitute its sub-categories.

The humanists’ conviction and rational appeal accentuate the import of the concept to human development. In its tenet, man and humanity can progressively achieve holistic development with recourse to the provisions of science and technology. Human development would involve openness to the avenues of modernity for improved conditions of living. The feats of humanistic precepts ought to permeate and revolutionalize all facets of society. The
import of humanism on human development can be gleaned from Edwords’(2014) inciting digest thus:

Once we leave the areas of confusion, it is possible to explain, in straightforward terms, exactly what the Modern Humanist philosophy is about. It is easy to summarize the basic ideas held in common by both Religious and Secular Humanists. These ideas are as follows:

1. Humanism is one of those philosophies for people who think for themselves. There is no area of thought that a Humanist is afraid to challenge and explore.

2. Humanism is a philosophy focused upon human means for comprehending reality. Humanists make no claims to possess or have access to supposed transcendent knowledge.

3. Humanism is a philosophy of reason and science in the pursuit of knowledge. Therefore, when it comes to the question of the most valid means for acquiring knowledge of the world, Humanists reject arbitrary faith, authority, revelation, and altered states of consciousness.

4. Humanism is a philosophy of imagination. Humanists recognize that intuitive feelings, hunches, speculation, flashes of inspiration, emotion, altered states of consciousness, and even religious experience, while not valid means to acquire knowledge, remain useful sources of ideas that can lead us to new ways of looking at the world. These ideas, after they have been assessed rationally for their usefulness, can then be put to work, often as alternative approaches for solving problems.

5. Humanism is a philosophy for the here and now. Humanists regard human values as making sense only in the context of human life rather than in the promise of a supposed life after death.

6. Humanism is a philosophy of compassion. Humanist ethics is solely concerned with meeting human needs and answering human problems—both the individual and society—and devotes no attention to the satisfaction of the desires of supposed theological entities.

7. Humanism is a realistic philosophy. Humanists recognize the existence of moral dilemmas and the need for careful consideration of immediate and future consequences in moral decision making.

8. Humanism is in tune with the science of today. Humanists therefore recognize that we live in a natural universe of great size and age, that we evolved on this planet over a long period of time, that there is no compelling evidence for a separable "soul," and that human beings have certain built-in needs that effectively form the basis for any human-oriented value system.

9. Humanism is in tune with today's enlightened social thought. Humanists are committed to civil liberties, human rights, church-state separation, the extension of participatory democracy not only in government but in the workplace and education, an expansion of global consciousness and exchange of products and ideas internationally, and an open-ended approach to solving social problems, an approach that allows for the testing of new alternatives.

10. Humanism is in tune with new technological developments. Humanists are willing to take
part in emerging scientific and technological discoveries in order to exercise their moral influence on these revolutions as they come about, especially in the interest of protecting the environment.

11. Humanism is, in sum, a philosophy for those in love with life. Humanists take responsibility for their own lives and relish the adventure of being part of new discoveries, seeking new knowledge, exploring new options. Instead of finding solace in prefabricated answers to the great questions of life, humanists enjoy the open-endedness of a quest and the freedom of discovery that this entails.

Pillars of Human Development

The dynamism of human society entrenches the dynamism of human development. Feasible and sustainable human development must be anchored on some value laden conceptual and empirical factors. Existential circumstances coupled with developmental perceptions do determine the number of factors upon which the human development of any given society rest. Thus, the relativeness of human developmental situations engenders varying accounts of the pillars of human development. Slideshare articulated fourfold pillars of human development thus:

- **Equity:** Equity refers to making equal access to opportunities available to everybody. The opportunities available to people must be equal irrespective of their gender, race, income and in the Indian case, caste.

- **Sustainability:** Sustainability means continuity in the availability of opportunities. To have sustainable human development, each generation must have the same opportunities. All environmental, financial and human resources must be used keeping in mind the future. Misuse of any of these resources will lead to fewer opportunities for future generations.

- **Productivity:** Productivity here means human labour productivity or productivity in terms of human work. Such productivity must be constantly enriched by building capabilities in people. Ultimately, it is people who are the real wealth of nations. Therefore, efforts to increase their knowledge, or provide better health facilities ultimately leads to better work efficiency

- **Empowerment:** Empowerment means to have the power to make choices. Such power comes from increasing freedom and capability. Good governance and people-oriented policies are required to empower people. The empowerment of socially and economically disadvantaged groups is of special importance.

In Wikipedia’s account:

There are six basic pillars of human development: equity, sustainability, productivity, empowerment, cooperation and security.

- **Equity** is the idea of fairness for every person, between men and women; we each have the right to an education and health care.

- **Sustainability** is the view that we all have the right to earn a living that can sustain our lives and have access to a more even distribution of goods.
• Productivity states the full participation of people in the process of income generation. This also means that the government needs more efficient social programs for its people.
• Empowerment is the freedom of the people to influence development and decisions that affect their lives.
• Cooperation stipulates participation and belonging to communities and groups as a means of mutual enrichment and a source of social meaning.
• Security offers people development opportunities freely and safely with confidence that they will not disappear suddenly in the future.

The exclusion and inclusion of cooperation and security in the fore adumbrations remain instances of the reality of relativeness and change within the segment of human development.

 Philosophy and the Pillars of Human Development: The Nexus

In its critical and analytic stance, philosophy remains frontal in assuming the onerous task of generating concepts for addressing ranges of existential issues. The need to place humanity on the path of civility, progression and sustainable development necessitates the philosophic enquiry into the nature of man, in both specie and genera, in relation to the variances of society. The social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau are ever relevant materials for human socio-political development in the ever changing globe. Reflecting on the place of philosophy in man’s political platform, Onigbinde(2009:180) submits that:

Ancient philosopher such as Plato and Aristotle held that human beings are by nature animals. In addition, which had a great deal of theory to give it support, many philosophers to our day have given considerable attention to the central questions of politics: What are the basic principles of proper social conduct? Such well-known philosophers as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Marx, Dewey, and in our time, Sartre, Marcuse, Rawls, Nozick, and Hyek developed elaborate philosophical principles they believed would give us answers to that question.

For Locke, equity derives primarily from equality of nature’s bequest of rights to life, liberty and property to all men. Commonwealth is conceived for better maintenance of these rights. Men unite into civil society or the polity by resigning their judicial and executive natural powers to a central government. For the end of body politic and government, Locke in Laslett(1992:331) posits that;

The only way whereby any one divests himself of his Natural Liberty, and puts on the bonds of Civil Society is by agreeing with other Men to joyn and unite into a Community, for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure Enjoyment of their Properties and a greater security against any that are not of it.
With legislative and executive positive powers, government is saddled with the responsibility of ensuring the provision of equal opportunity and security for good livelihood of citizens and invariable development of society. Thus, equity, sustainability, empowerment and cooperation are only feasible within the context of adequate security.

Empowerment is a very essential pillar of human development. The greatest basic human empowerment is education. Maintaining that man is a rational animal, philosophy from antiquity champions the cause of man’s intellectual development. If education remains man’s formation in character and learning, Socrates was executed for his intellectual cum moral formation of ancient Greek youths. Prior to the diversification of learning, the fields of mathematics, physics, alchemy, medicine and law were aspects of philosophical studies. Philosophy can rightly be reckoned as the mother of all sciences. In his *The Unreal Universe*, the Indian physicist, Manoj Thulasidas(2014) asserts that:

Philosophy is considered the mother of sciences. To a student of science whose faith is entirely with physical sciences, this claim may sound like the wishful thinking of a frustrated philosopher, but philosophy is a unique field. It addresses questions in every aspect of human life, and its techniques apply to problems in any field of study or endeavor. No brief definition expresses the richness and variety of philosophy; it is nothing less than the attempt to understand the universe as a whole. Its sphere of interest is boundless. It is a reasoned pursuit of fundamental truths, a quest for understanding, a study of principles of conduct. Philosophy seeks to establish standards of evidence, to provide rational methods of resolving conflicts, and to create techniques for evaluating ideas and arguments. These techniques, of course, provide the basis for modern sciences.

In his theory of dialectical materialism, Karl Marx conceived of human and societal development within the context of socialist economy. Economic empowerment as an essential parameter of development, ought to be societal driven. On the contrary, that is, when economic development is capitalist oriented, thriving essentially on lust for self gratification and desire for private gains, human development will be shriveled around capitalist exploiters. When Marx located the end of historic-materialist dialectical evolution of humanity in communism, his intent was simply the entrenchment of viable and maximum human productivity for the fullest realization (development) of human nature. The concern here is that Marx’s economic thesis, whether successful or not, contributes enormously in rousing modern approaches to man’s economic
empowerment/development. The involvement of all men in economic productivity enhances integral development. In this sense, massive unemployment portends great danger to human and societal development.

The socialist thoughts remain a vital philosophic foundation of empowerment and cooperation. This is coupled with philosophic theories of liberty and human rights. Commonwealth ought to ensure adequate freedom of citizens to contribute to the development of societies. In the contemporary time, the ideals of cooperation, especially in trade unionism, have permeated even the capitalist economic settings, so that capitalism remains reasonably relevant in a wide democratic world.

Only philosophic conceptual relevance of pillars of development does not justifiably attend to the import of philosophy to human development. The very pertinent issue would be the place of philosophy in the advancement of the values of these pillars especially in the contemporary world. Philosophy is ever dynamic as philosophical thoughts continue to evolve alongside immanent changes in reality. In its critical and normative core nature, philosophy burrows into all fields to question their fundamental assumptions with the intent to keep their theories and practices within the frame of reason. Consequently, there is currently the philosophy of virtually all disciplines and spheres of existence.

Contemporary philosophers like Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama present brazing human developmental theories with very contemporary relevance. In his The Origins of Political Order, Fukuyama(2012: 459) posits that:

Modernization theorists placed a strong normative value on being modern, and, in their view, the good things of modernity tended to go together. Economic development, changing social relationships like the breakdown of extended kinship groups and the growth of individualism, higher and more inclusive levels of education, normative shifts toward values like achievement and rationality, secularization and the development of democratic political institutions were all seen as an independent whole. Economic development would fuel better education, which would lead to value change, which would promote modern politics, and so on in a virtuous circle.

Reflecting in between the lines of Fukuyama’s above submission, one sufficiently finds inferences of the pillars of human development. The virtuous circle on which development thrives cannot be feasible without the basic and integral
development of the rational agent (man), who stands as the driver of development. For man to remain an agent of developmental advancement, humanity ought to rove around equity, sustainability, productivity, empowerment, cooperation and security.

Conclusion

Significant attempts have been made in this piece at reflecting on the import of philosophy to the pillars of development. The piece has relatively exposed the divergences in the submissions on the pillars of human development. These divergences are considered not mutually exclusive. Philosophy is vital for the conceptual origination of both human development and its pillars. Not just ending at the conceptual, philosophy continues to trail issues of human development with procedural consistency.

Works Cited