



The Impact of Philosophy on Social Change Dynamics of Social Consciousness in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the links between the process of modernization and the identity politics of philosophy in the social change dynamics of the independent era in Nigeria. A general look at the history of philosophy shows that the scope of philosophy is very wide and has been contemplative in nature. It has played and will continue to play a fundamental role in the history of mankind. Philosophy stands as a hallmark for achieving good human relations in any given society. It is generally seen as a discipline with social consciousness for the transformation of society into different developmental paradigms. The definition of philosophy varies in line with the challenges of the periods in the history of man's evolution. It is quite interesting to understand that in all the phases, it is human wisdom that is being sought as an organ of social change in the realm of particularistic forms of social consciousness. The findings of the study support the thesis that philosophy plays a very important role in the development of humankind by spreading ideas and values that strengthen the thoughts and lives of people. So this paper therefore examines the place of philosophy in the dynamic of social change in the context of its relevance and implications for growth among the masses in Nigeria. The concept of qualitative methodology is adopted in examining several factors closely related to this research.

Keywords: Paradigm, Social change, Philosophy, Social consciousness.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is on the analysis of Philosophy to the dynamics of Social change in promoting human values, culture of rational dialogue, tolerance and restructuring of the ideological foundations within the phenomenology of Social consciousness in Philosophy. Here, we see philosophy as social stratification of meaning. Philosophy as particularistic forms of social consciousness in Nigeria, will lead to the re-organization of people into being in altruistic benefits of others and working to control their own lives, it may help in the elimination of barriers in issues like racism, sexism, classism, injustice, ageism; creation of economic, political and social system that transformed the institutions etc; rules, a behavior, process or structure whose orientations is supernatural, i.e. emanated from nature and must be followed by believers. Philosophy helps to bring an idea of a genuine positive social order of civility necessary for the promotion of common good in Nigeria. In spite of

the differences in the political hegemony in Nigeria, philosophy examine the ethical and moral values inherent in the multi-faceted hegemonic cultures to provide the nation with the right ethical frameworks that will inculcate patriotism and common purpose among the citizens of Nigeria. Philosophy in this direction of rational thinking "constitute a portent tool necessary ingredient that places the citizenry on a better pedestal for the pursuit of meaningful nation-building" (Ihejirika & Asike, 2023:2). Nation building is in fact, required in Nigeria post-colonial state which has gotten independence in 1960, and required to re-organize it's various institutions and social conditions of state, which has been battered by just concluded colonialism in Africa. The consequences of the amalgamation in 1914; the forcing of over 500 different ethnic groups and languages into belonging in one country called Nigeria is indeed a great problem to the nation-building. This particular problem of lack of national integration on the lack of common purpose and nurtured unpatriotic spirit have really

strengthening the use of philosophy in developing a shared sense of identity or community among various groups that constitute “a population of a particular state, and it is considered here in contra-distinction to state building, which limitedly represents the task of building functioning states, which are capable of fulfilling essential attributes of modern statehood” (Dinnen, 2006:01).

In addition to the above observation, we can infer that the sphere of nation-building cannot be done in isolation of philosophy. This is because, there is no kind of civilization in this world without the knowledge of philosophy. The nation building focuses on the practical task of building or strengthening the state institution; and it should be noted that no philosophy exists in a vacuum. This invariably predicts the exigencies of philosophy in the formulation and evaluation of genuine public policy in which theoretically philosophy help us to bring society into right social order by providing the conceptual tools for comprehending human existential realities as they manifest themselves within a given socio-historical space.

2. PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN NIGERIA

Here, we are articulating the significance of philosophy in the dynamic of social change in Nigeria. We literarily place philosophy as an enterprise of genuine social consciousness in human development. It is our position in this paper to evaluate the role of philosophy in social change dynamic of social consciousness in Nigeria. The term consciousness is been viewed as social order that determines one modes of existence. So, philosophy at this juncture, is rationally constructive in the right forms of social conscious. Social consciousness is linked to the collective self-awareness and experience of collectively shared social identity. Philosophy as a social consciousness may stimulate working towards a common goal of social unity and by the experience of rational unity of humanity, we see philosophy as the conscience of society into living in harmonious existentialism. Philosophy sees consciousness as the awareness of being; as the relationship of ‘I’ to non ‘I’; as a property of highly organized matter, consisting in a reflection of reality; as the subjective image of the objective world; and as ideal in contraposition to the material in unity with it. Philosophy is the hermeneutics understanding of reality. It can help people to understand themselves and their place in the

world, by explaining reality, changing society, and anticipating the future.

Nigeria is multi –ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation. It has about 250 ethnic groups with several languages and dialects. There is no nation without problem, but the problem disturbing Nigeria is the problem of corruption s, ethnicity and religion. This has been the causes of conflict in Nigeria, and philosophy is highly needed to correct these anomalies. Philosophy will help to re-orient the people into living in mutual reciprocity, collaboration and into the inclusiveness of living together as a nation. A nation without philosophy – is doom to fail because it helps to bring them into the lime – light of knowing the truth, being rationally constructive in the right forms of social consciousness. This, Ladriere (1992:17) asserts that:

Philosophy is the reflection of experience upon itself, endeavoring to grasp its own constitutions and its own significance and to follow as far as possible the threads of implication which connect human experience with its most remote conditions of possibly... The real content of experience is revealed by the actions and the works in which the life of consciousness manifest itself.

Critically, it is under trajectory that Philosophy provide the ethical framework necessary for reasoned decision making which propels nation building in Nigeria. Philosophy is seen as hermeneutic understanding of reality and it is an epistemological tool of bridging the gap between people and culture. It helps to remove all the atavistic inhibitions in our traditions. Philosophical understanding will help us know the type of the society we are and the type of government that will be proper for Nigeria. It will bring the system of rationality that there is no essential difference among the ethnic groups in Nigeria. Philosophy is like a Social engineering. It will enhance us into living harmoniously in the society, by enabling us to fit in well in interpersonal, inter-ethnic and international relationships.

More so, the idea of human nature and rights of man in the realm of justice and fairness has been evaluated in the work of Philosophy. Philosophy has an idea of promoting good of everyone in the society and for this, scholars like Thomas Aquinas, Rousseau, Hobbes, John Locke, John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Karl Marx etc have done a great job on the concept of human rights.

In a more comprehensive interpretation, this work is set to determine the actual philosophical significance in the dynamic of social change in Nigeria. So, have we extol the virtue of philosophy in the judicial interpretation of distributive justice in Nigeria, there is an extensive theoretical Philosophy that challenges the essence of distributive justice in Nigeria. A long – standing line of “quota system” interpretation portrays inequality as a structural compound of conflict in Nigeria. Thus, it is against this backdrop that philosophy will engender a positive result to justice, it will bring the clarification of meaning into a better understanding of distribution, by given a legitimate right of distribution of national resources equitably in Nigeria.

On a related note, regarding this, Nozick asserts that:

Let us call a principle of distribution pattern and non-pattern principle of justice or set of characteristics which specifies how the distribution is to be achieved. It must weigh the sum of natural dimension (Nozick, 1974:156).

Nozick sees this as an infringement on individual liberty. According to him an individual must voluntarily transfer their resources and any infringement on that by the government in a way of taxation, is an unjust act and a violation of individual rights for ownership of property. Perusing through the content of Nozick’s value of justice as discussed above, it is clear that the application of the notion in Nigeria State, would give rise to good governance. As Oguejofor (2012) holds, “governance has to do with the management of the common good”. So, Philosophy as a rational thought is a pursuit of common good in society and it as such a veritable goal of justice among people of different ethnic groups in Nigeria.

In terms of the ethnic and religious conflict in Nigeria, philosophy has played a major role in the resolution of the conflict. Philosophy involves the clarification of concepts and understanding of life. It exposes our ignorance in many things that are not necessarily important in our culture, thereby removing the ambiguity and vagueness in our ontology. Thus, with this in question, it will find reason in revealing the ambiguity in religious doctrines which may be harmful to the society. Philosophy therefore, is a rational scrutiny of religious claims. It critically examines the exigency of overzealous religious inhibitions in human existence. Philosophy is important in moulding of individual character through the subjective moulds of

living in critical thinking and in rationalization of ethics and values of life. Philosophy under the realm of ethics is a normative inquiry or “what is” and about “what ought to be” in our moral attitudes. Philosophy therefore, under systems of ethical theories, transforms our values into rational altruistic benefits to man. In its entirety, its evaluative purposes and meanings are wholly based in the essence of humanitarian paradigm to better the environment and people of Nigeria. Philosophy helps to make them a better citizens.

As stated above, it is good to know that Philosophy has formulated the survey of controversial and pressing issues in public policy and it is seen as benchmark for the development process in Nigeria. It has a great impact in underlying the principles of human rights in Nigeria, through the following factors:

1. The preservation of Individual Life.
2. The preservation of Individual Autonomy.
3. The preservation of Principles of Truthfulness.
4. Justice and Fairness to citizens.

In terms of education, Philosophy in its nature is both a first order discipline and a second order course of inquiry, and has helped to enlightens and creates an awareness that adapts us into prevailing cultures. It helps in the re-evaluation of our previously held benefits and knowledge into good rational way of living together. Through the process of critical thinking, students are challenged to ratify their knowledge in either by deductive or inductive reasoning, to think beyond the surface level of ascertaining truth. Thus, it is in this way, that they exploit the merits of resolving the complexities of life.

In the realm of public policy, the philosophical justifications of public policy analysis are mostly by utilitarianism, with action being justified as producing the greatest net benefit for the society as a whole. Thus, in Nigeria it has helped in the formulation and evaluation of public policy agenda, through promotion of quota system to carry everybody along in reciprocity.

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Philosophy helps us to rationalize into common humanity, into living together, into life of rational scrutiny, into being moral responsible, into having good character, into living in peace in reciprocity. So, with regards to Nigeria, philosophy could be a good supporting tool for a harmonious

existentialism, through proper restructuring of the polity, educational system, and judicial interpretations on the areas of retributive and distributive justice.

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation and has been encountering a lot of crisis relating to ethnicity, religion, politics and economic problems. It is unfortunate that these have generated a lot public concern about the future of Nigeria federation as a political entity. More so, colonialism and its multi-dimensional impact is highly a big factor of socio-cultural economic and political significance in Nigeria numerous problems. The centrality of this problem is the major cause of ethnocentrism and divisiveness in Nigeria state. Asike (2017) "corroborated this by saying, that colonialism with its re-organization of institutions and social condition of states in Nigeria, destroys African ontology". Yes, it destroyed the very existence of our being in African culture. Sadly the capacity of the people to contend with these challenges of re-organization is somehow difficult, because of the enculturation and acculturation of the African people into being either in Arabic-Islamic traditions or Euro-Christian traditions.

It should be noted that no philosophy exist in a vacuum, so, it is on a related note that there is need for an intellectual re-structuring in Nigeria. Philosophy is a social phenomenon which derives its being from the experience generated through the continuous interaction between human beings and their environment and between themselves. Thus, as philosophy resonates through the cultural experience, it is also required in shaping the human existential realities in Nigeria as they manifest themselves within a given socio-historical epoch. Thus, it is based on this consideration that we opine, that the clarification about the socio-political identity, ethnicity and religion remains a burning issue in the debate about the solutions occurring from the examination of Nigeria's existential ontology.

Perhaps, it is philosophy as the rational political thought, will help to ameliorate the difficulties in our socio-political intercourse, which put Nigeria in the incessant political strife. Philosophy as a discipline, will codify all the various differences in our cultures into a unified theory of common humanity. Philosophy at this juncture, will help to re-invent a consciousness of a common humanity that is based on shared values, reciprocity and shared responsibility or shall we say, there is need to evolve a theory of unified culture in Nigeria. Reciprocity here epitomizes the concept of

unity in diversity, by living together in mutual existentialism. Reciprocity therefore, is the notion of shared responsibility in the interaction of cultures.

CONCLUSION

This paper is a critical analysis on the importance of philosophy in dynamic of social change in Nigeria. In the paper, we undertake a critical exploration of the rules of philosophy in the attainment of social consciousness in Nigeria. Here in this paper, we envisioned philosophy as a treasure-chest of ethical principles of harmony that brings people together into a community of good citizens. Philosophy under this trajectory has helped in removing the illusion of tribal sentimentalism in Nigeria. Udoidem, corroborated this by saying that "the greatest tragedy of human existence is the illusion of separateness, when in actual fact, we are closer and more related to each other than we are of in nature" (Udoidem, 2021:1).

Thus, it is here at this juncture, that philosophy enables us to bridge the gap in our differences on the illusion of our separateness. Our task must be to set ourselves free from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole humanity in one bond of unity. Philosophy embraces us together as one united country through the democratic process of governance and leadership capital. The task of philosophy is to ask epistemic and existential questions that is necessary for arriving positively towards the realization of our well-being. Democratic governance is one essential foundation of good states and philosophy therefore provides the meaningful development of values necessary for the egalitarianism, fairness, justice, mutuality and tolerance in our shared cultural existence in Nigeria.

Philosophy helps in the formulation and evaluation of public policies. It checks if the implementation, enforcement, and evaluation of policies are fair, just and inclusive of every person in the country. Philosophy examines the nature of rule of law on the positive legality of law in the protection of the citizens.

Thus, it is very pertinent to know the relevant of philosophy to democratic culture and that this is being advocated with regards to the kind of politics that is being practiced in Nigeria today. On a related note, regarding this, Kwasi Wiredu (1980:14) asserts that African philosophers have a role to play in transforming our society. Literarily, he expressed that "the function of philosophy everywhere is to examine the intellectual foundation of our life by using the best

available mode of knowledge and reflection for human being". Philosophy critically under this guess becomes a guide and point of reference to the issues that involves human well-being.

Hence it is on a related note, that we envisioned the numerous problems that are confronting us today in Nigeria which we need to embark upon on the nature of Philosophical inquiry. Today in Nigeria, our task is to liberate the people from the shackles of poverty, judicial corruption, insecurity, nepotism etc. There is a total breakdown of discipline and lack of focus by the political parties. They lack the interest of the populace in their leadership capital. Thus, we are detoured to undertake a historical survey of all these problems and outline the best possible way to solve these problems. Hence, it is on this ground that we should articulate the intensive philosophical theories and critical thinking awareness in solving numerous problems in Nigeria. Thus, it is on this note, that it is an indisputable fact that philosophical ideas shape human history, develop and transform both man for the good of all. This is why the Philosophical Association of Nigeria is launching their campaign of humanitarian paradigm to promote their ideas of critical thinking and creative thinking as well as moral reasoning that will equip man with the appropriate character of right conduct in relation to oneself and to others in building a peaceful, just and united Nigeria.

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