

# Analysis of the Five-Fold Role of Philosophy in National Development

Nnaemedo Bartholomew

Dep of Rel. Studies and Philosophy, Abia State University, Uturu

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## ABSTRACT

The role of philosophy in national development raises a big question in the contemporary epoch, given the presumed giant stride of natural science. Ascriptions such as abstract and esoteric discipline, a course engrossed in scandal and at a crossroads, are often the complementary tags attributed to philosophy. Nevertheless, the question remains: Is philosophy as described above, or is it an appellation born out of naivety and prejudice? Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the relevance of philosophy, specifically to national development. Such is necessary to correct the misconceptions and bias above and to accord philosophy its proper domain in national development. Principally, this paper focuses on five areas: philosophy as a rational foundation, roadmap, roof, moral lens, and a national development stimulant. This study considers this as the five-fold role of philosophy in national development. Hence, every other goal of philosophy in national development revolves around these five. The theoretical framework is existentialism, and the method of inquiry is philosophical analysis. The primary data sources are the library and Internet materials. The findings, however, show that philosophy plays a critical role in national development. It constitutes the foundation, runs through the trunk, and materialises in the fruits of national development. To think of national development devoid of philosophy is akin to conceiving a plant without roots. Philosophy constitutes the rational root, rudder, ceiling, ethical/moral compass, and catalyst of national development. This paper, therefore, recommends giving philosophy its pride of place in the academic world, stressing its inevitability in every aspect of national development, and engaging in

philosophy-mending to corroborate emergent national development exigencies.

**Keywords:** *Philosophy, National Development, Rational Foundation, Moral Lens, Analysis, Role*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the issues in philosophy is its relevance to national development. This issue becomes more pertinent when one looks at the natural sciences' role in national development vis-a-vis philosophy. In contemporary society, there is evidence of the significant stride natural science is making. For instance, the world has transited from analogue to digital courtesy of natural science. Today the world is a global village thanks to Information and Communication Technology (McLuhan 1962 & 1964). Unlike traditional communication systems, one can reach a sizeable heterogeneous audience simultaneously and effectively through these modern technologies. A similar giant stride is evident in the field of medical sciences. Today some medical treatments that hitherto took many hours now take a few hours, thanks to the invention of instruments such as lasers. Modern means of transportation, commerce, financial transactions, farming, and electrification (using solar systems) exist.

However, it appears philosophical growth is in reverse order vis-a-vis natural science. Philosophy appears enmeshed in a web of arguments and counterarguments, with one system appearing to oppose, refute and

annihilate the other. Uwalaka (1992) described the situation as the scandal of philosophy, while Nnaemedo (2023) tagged it as philosophy at crossroads. Another matter of great concern is the description of philosophy as an abstract science (Bochenski, 1969). Advocates of this frame of thought accuse philosophy of engaging in issues that do not practically impact human life. Subsequently, some have called for a repudiation of philosophy, especially the metaphysical aspect (Hume, 1975). Belonging to this camp are the analytic thinkers such as AJ Ayer.

Given the scenario above, one would naturally ask, what use is philosophy? What role does it play in human development? Has it any place in national development? Considering the scope of this work, this study concentrates on the last question. Hence, this paper analyses the relevance of philosophy in national development.

### Objectives of the study

This study aims to:

- i. define development and identify different kinds of development,
- ii. clarify the meaning of national development,
- iii. explain national development's philosophy, and
- iv. identify and explain the role of philosophy as the rational foundation, roadmap, roof, moral lens, and stimulant to national development.

### Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is existentialism. As a philosophical school, existentialism "emphasises that philosophy should focus on the concrete individual and his/her problems rather than humans as an abstract concept, whether at the universal or individual level" (Nnaemedo, 2023, p.). So, for existentialists, philosophy aims to better the lots of humans by helping to address their challenges. It rejects essentialism – the view that essence precedes existence, which sustains that humans have a fixed essence. One of the strong existentialist thinkers was

Jean-Paul Sartre, who, unlike medieval thinkers, held that existence precedes essence. Subsequently, he rejected the idea of God, nature, and fixed essence. Correspondingly, man is the author of his destiny and should take responsibility for his actions. In Sartre's estimation, not assuming such responsibility is self-deception or bad faith. However, it is critical to indicate that Sartre's brand of existentialism is fraught with defects. First, its exaggeration of human freedom could enthrone antinomianism with its corresponding anarchy. Second, its proposition for absolute freedom is unsustainable as it champions determinism rather than freedom, given that arguing that one is absolutely free implies that he is not free, not to be free. Instead, he is condemned to be free. Therefore, he is determined to be free, implying that he is determined. For instance, when someone fails to make a choice, he is indirectly choosing, as failure to choose implies choosing: choosing not to choose.

However, existentialism applies to this study because it stresses how philosophy can impact the concrete human situation. In this case, the theory helps to understand how philosophy is relevant to national development.

### The concept of development

Development is from the French term *développement*, meaning growth or progress. Its verbal form is *developper*, which comes from the old French term *desveloper*, comprising *des-* (undo) and *veloper* (wrap up). Hence, *desveloper* means 'unwrap, unfurl, unveil, reveal the meaning of, explain (Elkaim 2001; Nnaemedo, 2020). From this etymological perspective, development means translating from potentiality to actuality, manifesting, and bringing out from hiddenness to perceptibility.

However, given the different development branches, there are equally diverse perspectives to understanding the concept. For instance, Rostow (1960) and Riggs

(1963 & 1964) conceived it economically. Also, some scholars viewed it from an inclusive domain. They held that limiting development to economic or one area of human life is improper (Sen, 1988; Iroegbu, 1994; Bhardwaj, Ansari & Rajput, 2012; Gupta, Pouw, & Ros-Tonen, 2015; Musahara, 2016; and Abuiyada, 2018). Instead, they argue that philosophy should embrace every sphere of human life: socioeconomic, cultural, political, religious, and moral.

Therefore, development is a critical, progressive, and responsible contextualisation (downloading) and uploading of the available human and natural resources in a given society for its integral well-being (Nnaemedo, 2020). First, it requires bringing all available human resources to the realm that would benefit and help humans to achieve the desired purpose. Full development does not occur until humans realise the values' objectives they downloaded. It is insufficient to make an excellent budget or have a substantial foreign reserve. Once these do not improve the people's living standard, it is as good as a story told by an idiot signifying nothing. Thus, a growing economy should positively impact people's lives. Second, the benefit should not be lopsided. It should benefit every aspect of human life. Particularly considering that humans are composed of body and soul intrinsically united.

Such ontological or inherent unity requires the proper function of the two components to achieve good health. When a society swims in affluence devoid of necessary moral ingredients, the result is always an insecurity of life and property. A person in such a scenario is like someone living in a healthy air-conditioned room yet sweating profusely. Consequently, there should be a balance between economic development and other aspects of development. Virtue, according to Aristotle, lies in the middle. So, authentic development should lie between socioeconomic and other societal demands. Genuine development then

requires the integration of the correct percentage of all the aspects of development, each contributing its expected quota to make for integral development.

### **National development and its philosophy**

From the preceding, this study looks at national development as the proper integration of all the human and natural resources possible for a nation to achieve its development vision, mission and objectives. The stress here is on integrating all resources possible, underscoring the need to harmonise all the available resources in a country to achieve the desired objectives. By implication, it condemns hoarding or selfish use of resources. Also, the definition emphasises possible resources to indicate that a nation's resource source extends beyond what is available within its territory. It includes what it can realise beyond its environment and at a particular epoch.

On the other hand, national development's philosophy is the critical, reflective and ultimate rational template regulating national development. It is a set of principles governing the state's diverse developmental projects. National development's philosophy shows the rationale for national development and answers questions such as: *why national development?* Without resolving such fundamental questions, going into any development project at a national level may not be feasible. At most, when one engages in one without addressing the fundamental challenge, he may end up driving a rudderless national development agenda. The result is obvious: loss of focus and eventual capsizing of national development ship.

### **Five-fold role of philosophy in national development**

"To understand an age or a nation, we must understand its philosophy" (Russel, 1961, p.11). By implication, to understand the concept of national development, we must understand its philosophy, which captures its vision, mission, and goals. Its philosophy

is vital in its formulation, execution, and perfection. This study identified five roles of philosophy in national development: rational foundation, roadmap, roof, moral lens, and stimulant.

### **Philosophy as a rational foundation of national development**

Every sphere of national development has a specific philosophy behind it. This rational foundation is the bedrock on which its development edifice rests. As a rational bedrock for national development, philosophy performs three functions:

- i. provides a link between national development and other substructures,
- ii. cushions the friction between the development projects' agents and their immediate environments, and
- iii. ensures steady resource supply from immediate environments

Philosophy links national development and other substructures as it constitutes their base. That is why it is one of the primary requirements for any national developmental project, as it spells out the project's vision, mission, and objectives in clear and unmistakable terms. These objectives link the development project with other substructures, which are the theoretical foundation of other social events or the philosophies of those events. These substructures are the rationale for the existence of the events. The national development philosophy links the national development projects with these other substructures, ensuring proper coherence. Hence, it is one of the requirements for any government development proposal approval. Even in the educational sphere, every discipline requires well-defined philosophy before receiving authorisation from an appropriate school authority. Without this, no educational programme receives accreditation or approval.

Philosophy cushions the effect of the frictional force between the national development projects and their immediate environments. Often, tension arises between national development project management and their immediate environments. If not

adequately managed, pressure of that sort could stagnate developmental projects and even endanger the lives of the project managers. To avoid this, every national development partner ensures that the philosophy of their developmental project forecloses such a scenario. They start with this philosophy and refer to it in moments of crisis between them and their immediate environment. Consequently, this philosophy helps them resolve such problems and prevent future occurrences.

Besides, philosophy ensures a steady resource supply from immediate environments. Success in any national developmental project requires a mutual relationship between the project management and the immediate environment. This relationship is not a one-time affair; it continues as long as the project lasts. The environment contributes human and natural resources to any project located in it. Nevertheless, the project's philosophy ensures proper integration of these resources for optimal project management and realisation.

### **Philosophy as a roadmap for national development**

The function of national development philosophy does not end at the sub-structure of national development. It extends to project execution and guides national development from straying, breaking, bursting, shrinking, stagnation, and lateral growth or outgrowth.

Philosophy guides national development from straying by providing it with a firm basis for take-off. Besides, it directs it as it progresses. Consequently, it gives it an essential roadmap to guide and regulate its operations at the superstructure (visible structure). Another significant role philosophy of national development plays is shielding it from breakage due to horizontal force, representing those obstacles to national development that operate around its trunk. They do not act on top of the project. Instead, they act around the project. It comprises projects that appear inferior to

national development projects yet affect it adversely—these act horizontally, forcing possible project breakage.

Besides, philosophy guides national development from bursting. External influences could cause national development project managers to overstep their bounds. Such arises when project managers attempt to go beyond the philosophy of their national development projects. Consequently, this introduces in the system an opposing development project philosophy. Furthermore, when it can no longer resist the pressure, the result is a bursting of the entire system. However, national development philosophy protects national development by ensuring each project lives by its vision, mission, and objectives.

As well, philosophy saves national development from shrinking. A development project shrinks when it runs short of its philosophy. A project can run short of its goals by making minimal or no use of the philosophy behind its establishment. When this happens, a development project loses the very sinew and fluid that lubricate and maintain it. The persistent shrinking of the project could finally result in the project's death.

Philosophy saves national development from stagnation. National development could also experience stagnation due to the failure of a project manager to abide by the programme's philosophy. When a national development project loses sight of its philosophical foundation, it loses its bearing. After losing focus, the development plan could veer off its track. Once such happens, the result is stagnation in the project in view. The term stagnation does not necessarily mean staying in a place. It entails the failure in the realisation of the development project. Even when a visible structure grows, such could not stand as progress given that it contrasts with the development's philosophy.

Philosophy saves national development projects from unnecessary outgrowth. Deviation from the development project's

philosophy could also result in unnecessary outgrowth around the project. The goal of national development philosophy is to guide matters of development. It streamlines the project to its destination, ensuring every aspect falls in place. It prevents obstacles in any development resources and provides swift movements to their respective termini. It is crucial to remark that failure to abide by a national development philosophy is the cause of most development issues in Nigeria today. Unfinished or poorly constructed roads, poor health and educational facilities, and half-baked graduates are all indices of unnecessary outgrowth in our national development. All these are traceable to failure to utilise national development's philosophy in the respective areas.

### **Philosophy as an upper roof of national development**

As mentioned earlier, philosophy serves national development at the substructure and superstructure. It also provides an upper roof or ceiling to national development projects against policies and trending practices inimical to their realisation. These phenomena constitute scorching sun, thunderstorms, and snowfalls on the projects. Precisely, they act as a gravitational force on national development programmes. They work directly on the roof of national development projects to achieve ends such as dwarfing, disfigurement, dissolution, crushing, eroding, or sinking of the projects. The project's philosophy always comes to the aid of the development project at such times. It helps intercept the downward thrust of the force of gravity on the superstructure and ensures its proper discharge at the base. In this case, the philosophy of national development acts as crisis conductors at socioeconomic, moral, religious and cultural levels, respectively.

The philosophy of national development provides a shield against the above phenomena by offering it an impermeable roof. As long as this philosophical ceiling is intact, there is no fear about the success of any national developmental project. In that



sense, it would always provide the development project with every cover required for full realisation.

### **Philosophy provides a moral lens for national development**

Every national development programme must have a solid moral footing. Each should be for human beings' ultimate happiness. It implies that every product of national development should have human beings at heart, no matter its sophistication. No developmental project is worth the name if it fails in this regard. Before embarking on any project, the first consideration is its relevance to humans. Interestingly, ethics is one branch of philosophy that addresses such.

As an aspect of practical philosophy, ethics deals with human acts and not acts of man. It concerns those actions for which human beings could be held culpable. These are actions humans perform voluntarily and consciously. A human act is unlike the act of man, which does not involve willingness. The act of man does not involve premeditation. It is involuntary and reflexive. No one should be held guilty for it.

So, through its ethical branch, philosophy defines, from the outset, the essential attitude required in any organisation and for any national development programme. The attitude regulates the relationship network within the organisation and its immediate environment. It implies that ethics is the soul of every national development. Without this essential element, national development loses sight of its *terminus a quo* (starting point) and *terminus ad quem* (arrival point). Contemporary society faces many security challenges: herders, banditry, kid/adult-napping, cybercrimes, the menace of unknown gunmen, drug abuse, etc. All these results from a society where people emphasise development devoid of the integral good of human beings. The essential features of such a society are functionalisation and reduction of humans

to mere things, and not ends in themselves, as Kant (1785) had indicated.

### **Philosophy as a catalyst to national development**

A catalyst is a substance that activates the rate of a chemical or physical reaction but remains unchanged after the reaction. The philosophy of national development also plays a similar role in national development. It accelerates the rate of national development but remains unaffected by the aftermath of the development. Such is evident in the various philosophical theories that have brought multiple changes in the world. Specifically, Omoregbe (2011) noted a number of these theories: Socrates's moral revolution, Plato and Stoic's emphasis on asceticism, the thoughts of John Locke, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, and Jean Jacques Rousseau. For instance, Socrates' philosophy brought moral revolution among the youths of his era. They accused him of corrupting the youths. Subsequently, the state authority forced him to drink hemlock, which led to his death. Plato and the Stoic's stress on asceticism made many people renounce material acquisition during the Hellenistic era. It is also glaring that the philosophy of John Locke, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Karl Marx contributed to shaping Western society. The same applies to the thought of Montesquieu and Jean Jacques Rousseau. In particular, Rousseau's social contract significantly influenced the French Revolution.

In all the instances above, philosophy only stimulated national development. It merely aroused the players in national development to see beyond their present situation to the future proposed by the respective philosophical school concerned. At the same time, today, their thoughts spur others to action and could influence them better, indicating that philosophy could stimulate national development. Consequently, Bochenski (1969) notes: "The people make a laughing stock of the philosopher as a

person harmlessly absorbed in his ideas... though really he is a terrifying force, and his thought has the effect of dynamite... despite its apparent unimportance, philosophy is even a powerful force in history" (p.8). It means that philosophical ideas bear practical results in people's lives and could be positive or negative. The impact of Hegesias' lecture at Alexandria in Egypt represents a typical example of the possible harmful effect of philosophical ideas. His lecture was such that many people who attended it went and committed suicide. The government authority of the day had to stop it abruptly (Armstrong, 1965; Copleston, 1962; Omoregbe, 2011). So, philosophical ideological tools are such powerful dynamic instruments whose impacts are often beyond the expectations of their inventors. They appear subtle yet grandiose in operations. Like every ideology, they are immortal. Even when they seem obsolete and moribund, one can critically decipher their indisputable influences in contemporary thoughts. Of course, one could notice that some contemporary ideologies are ancient thoughts reinvented or acted anew, a renaissance and recodification of classical thinking, perhaps a reaffirmation of the Ecclesiastes' dictum that nothing is new under the sun (1:9). However, it is wrong to interpret this dictum as implying a humanity devoid of creativity and innovation. Instead, one should consider it from the portal of humans' inability to create from *nothing*. Whatever is, is out of something that already exists. Nevertheless, from the already existent, one can create something new.

### RECOMMENDATION

Considering the crucial role of philosophy in national development, this paper recommends that the government should:

- i. Introduce philosophy teaching in primary and secondary schools, which will help inculcate critical thinking early in children's education development. Children who are taught philosophy early will probably become great

thinkers, given that the human mind, as John Locke opined, is a tabula rasa at birth. The practice will accord with the principle of catching them young.

- ii. Constitute a national philosophy development board, comprising mainly outstanding philosophers, to superintend national and institutional philosophy development and to serve as a think tank at various strata or tiers of the government: local, state and federal. This board will also be critical in national policy formulation, reformulation, development, implementation, and assessment.
- iii. Make philosophy a two-semester course in tertiary institutions. It is a fact of experience that teaching philosophy for only one semester does not allow students to study the course in-depth. Therefore, extending it to at least one academic year is necessary to ensure a better grasp of the course, given that philosophy is not only an academic discipline but an inevitable life accompaniment.
- iv. Incorporate classical writings such as Plato's Dialogues as one of the compulsory books at the secondary school level. Introducing children to the rudiment of critical thinking is necessary very early in life. Such will expose them to the thinking process of early thinkers and helps to remodel theirs.
- v. Ensure that philosophers handle the courses in ethics in all academic departments. Such helps to expose the student to the nitty-gritty of philosophy and prepares them for future leadership, given that no one offers what he/she has not (*nemo dat quod non habet*).

### CONCLUSION

Philosophy plays a five-fold role in national development: rational foundation, roadmap, upper roof, moral lens, and stimulant. As a rational foundation for national development, philosophy links and cushions frictional force between the development projects and other sub-structure. It ensures a

steady resource supply from their immediate environment. Philosophy is also a roadmap for national development as it shields it from straying, breakage, bursting, shrinking, stagnation, and excessive lateral growth or outgrowth. As an upper roof to national development, philosophy protects it from the sun's scorching, rain and thunderstorm, and snowfalls. Philosophy acts as the conscience of every national development project. Thus, it offers a moral lens for responsible and human-bound development. Finally, philosophy stimulates national development, accelerating its ascent to its *terminus ad quem* (arrival point).

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