

HUMAN NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT: A PERSPECTIVE FROM AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The main issue that inspired systematic African philosophy is the critical comments from renowned Western scholars that nobody of African origin has contributed anything of note to world civilization. The controversies engendered by this accusation seem to have been adequately dealt with as questions on the contribution of Africa to world civilization are rarely asked. Beside the evidence that Egypt is the cradle of all civilizations, including Greek civilization that currently dominate the world, there are other well documented accounts of great Africans who made land breaking contributions to humanity. Therefore, the most recent question seems not to center on what Africa has contributed but what Africa can contribute to humanity. This question is very important because it goes right back to the debate on African identity. With data collected through the documentary method and analyzed using content analysis, this study examined African idea of human nature and development and in this context determines how the continent can contribute to development in the current context of globalization. The paper discovered that Africa has communitarian idea of both human nature and development and recommended that these understandings can be deployed to mitigate the ongoing clash of civilization ravaging the world.

Keywords: Development, Culture, value system, personhood, human nature, communalism

Introduction

In research on world civilizations, many Western philosophers, anthropologists and historians have elaborated the following view about Africa and Africans: Africans are foolish and incapable of reasoning that is why nobody of African descent has contributed anything of note to world civilization. For instance, the great German philosopher, Hegel (1956) once stood on the 'holy' world philosophic rostrum in Europe and solemnly foretold with European pride that the development of the heart of the history of humankind like the route of the Sun rises in the East and falls in the West. But after falling in the West, it will no longer rise in the East, for the West occupies the center of the world. Typical of Hegel's 'racist' thinking is the characterization and categorization of societies into three namely, the rational, traditional and the charismatic. African societies are categorized to be primitive society; as a traditional one, which is characterized by piety for what has always existed, typical of conservative and relatively changeless societies in which effective sentiments predominated. To Hegel (1956), Africans undertake every activity except ability to reason or reflect philosophically. He writes:

In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness had not yet attained to the realization of any substantial existence.... Thus distinction between himself as an individual and the universality of his essential being, the African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his existence has not yet attained.

Thus, Hegel did not only deny the Negro the ability to philosophize but also the capacity for religion or religious piety. He posited that the Negro is yet to go beyond his instinctual behaviour to identify a being outside of himself. It is from this understanding that Hegel dismissed Africa as an irrelevant part of the world. He contends:

At this point, we leave Africa not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world: it has no movement or development to exhibit... what we properly understand by Africa is the Unhistorical, Underdeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the world's history.

In the same vein, David Hume a prominent Scottish Philosopher of his time, argues that Africans of black extraction have no capacity to reason and are therefore unproductive, and that Europeans are civilized while the former are not. According to Hume (1997, p. 33), nature has made some people to have higher levels of mental capacities than others. He used the Negro as an example of those who do not have mental capacity. Hume asserts, in his most infamous footnote:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation...Not to mention our colonies, there are Negroe slaves dispersed all over Europe, of which none ever discovered any symptom of ingenuity amongst them, no arts, no sciences.

Following the same line of thought, Levy-Bruhl (1945, p. 43) questioned the veracity of an untutored African knowing about God. For him, the African way of thinking is non-logical and full of inner self-contradiction. He described Africans as:

A set of primitive people who had no idea of natural explanation; a people whose dreams are real experiences lacking the mental wherewithal to distinguish between subject and object, good and bad, moral and immoral. Primitive, barbaric, irrational, un-civilized and most importantly people without capacity for critical and rational thinking- qualities that is natural to doing philosophy and civilization.

This explains why the same scholar considered Africans to be pre-logical, alogical or anti-logical. Pre-logicality applied mostly to primitive mentality, which means that Africans do go all out to avoid contradictions. What Levy-Bruhl claimed to have established here is the view that the African situation is that of unphilosophy rather than pre-philosophy; that is, that Africans are incapable of reasoning and therefore of any type of development or civilization because you need to be able to reason before you can think of civilization.

Another Western philosopher of German origin who has downplayed the ability of Africans to reason or to cultivate any kind of civilization is Immanuel Kant (1997, p. 57) who begins his account of Africa by classifying humans into different classes: 'White' (Europeans), 'Yellow' (Asians), 'black' (Africans) and 'red' (American Indians). For Kant, "the American India that inhabits America, the Africa, the Asia and the Hindustan appear to be incapable of moral maturity because they lack talent a gift of nature." In Kant's moral categorizations, the Americans are impervious to education because they lack the 'affect and passion.'" "The Africans can only be trained or educated as slaves and servants... because they lack true (rational and moral) character."

Thus, Kant makes two distinct allegations about Africans. The first allegation he makes is that "the Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling." By this Kant means that the Negroes of Africa have minds that dwell on trivial matters or matters of little importance. The second allegation by Kant is that blackness itself resembles stupidity, that is, that someone who is black is stupid. While referring to a statement made by a Negro carpenter, Kant (1997:57) in his *On National Characteristics (1724)* avers, "this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid." This judgment was made not in assessment of the value of the Negro's statement but based on his colour. For Kant therefore blacks are inherently stupid or rather irrational and incapable of contributing anything worthwhile to world development.

During the Slave Trade and colonization, the claims explored above provided theoretical groundings and justification for the subjugation, exploitation, oppression and ill-treatment of Africans who were construed to be less human than their Western counterparts. Hugh Trevor Roper's (1996, p. 9), anti-intellectual stance captures this atmosphere:

It is fashionable to speak today as if European History were devalued: as if historians in the past, have paid too much attention to it, and as if nowadays; we should pay less. Undergraduates seduced as always by the changing breath of journalistic fashion, demand that they should be taught the history of black Africa. Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none or very little: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European pre-Columbian America. And darkness is not a subject for history.

Scholars hardly endorse denigration stance these days and some of those who made the claim are known to have renounced their positions before their demise. According to Jahn (1958, p. 97), in Levy-Bruhl is found "a rare example of scholarly integrity. In his

posthumous notes, he asks himself how he could have ever conceived so ill a hypothesis and he comes to the conclusion that the logical structure of the human mind is the same in all men.”

Be that as it may, that the ability of blacks to reason is no longer being questioned in mainstream Western scholarship does not mean the end of white racism against the blacks. Currently, the new face of this form of racism consists in the claim that in the world, there is only one real civilization, that is, Western civilization. Other civilizations either lack vitality or have converged into Western civilization, which is a “universal civilization suiting everyone” just as Western values are global values. Therefore, the most recent Western attack on Africa is no longer on what Africa has contributed but on what Africa can contribute to the development of humanity in the current era of globalization. This question is very important because it goes right back to the debate on African identity; that is, what can Africans, coming from the background of their unique identity contribute to human civilization?

To address this new form of white racism against Africa in particular and blacks in general, this paper is divided into two major parts: operationalization of terms, where African concepts of human nature and development are discussed and African Contribution to Current Global Debate on Development, which analytical explored what Africans can contribute to development in the contemporary world.

African Understanding of Human Nature and Development

Before going into the conceptualization that is required in this section, it is important to underline as Tempels (1959) explained many years ago that African ontology and epistemology of anything is enshrined in African language and culture. However, one problem with this method for which even Tempels himself has been criticized is that it can give the impression that Africa is a region with one culture. This would be an erroneous impression as Africa is the most culturally diverse continent in the world. According to (Okafor & Emeka, 1998):

In Africa there are over a thousand ethnic groups, each having its own culture, but these have been broadly divided into eleven culture areas namely: Hottentot, Bushman, East African cattle, Western cattle, the Congo, the Guinea Coast, the East Horn, East Sudan, West Sudan, Egyptian, and Mediterranean. Each of these may be divided into sub-culture areas.

However, as (Okafor & Emeka, 1998) further observe, in spite, of all these many languages and culture, it is still possible to talk about African culture in the singular sense. Using Nigeria as an example, they maintain that there are some countries in the African continent, such as Nigeria, with various cultures within the same country, yet we still as a rule speak about that country's (Nigerian) culture.

Nevertheless, the problem that could arise in this context is the question of justification, namely, how to justify that it is correct to talk about African culture in the singular sense? (Okafor & Emeka, 1998, p. 79) response to this question is that “The differences and cultural diversities in African notwithstanding, there are enough similarities among these

cultures that legitimizes us to talk about the entity 'African culture.'" They identify four areas where this harmony is most obvious which includes: the whole aspects of African cosmology, African communalism, African ethical belief system and burial rites. These among other practices according to them, are common among all African societies. Similarly, Hannah Kinoti (1999) argues that, although Africa is a vast continent and much fragmented in terms of languages, beliefs and customs, there is adequate evidence from various studies that where the basics of cultural and moral assumptions are concerned, the bottom line is fairly solid. It is therefore possible according to him, to generalize to a large extent. In the light of all these, this research will base its interpretation of African concepts of human nature and development on elements that run across the various cultural and language groups in Africa.

Human Nature in Africa

Scholars in African anthropology or African value system generally identify two theories in African understanding of human nature, namely: the normative and the descriptive understandings. The normative understanding is the aspect that is of interest to this study and therefore is the only aspect that shall be explored.

In approaching African normative understanding of human nature, M.L. Igbafen (2014, p. 125) claims that, "to speak about the normative aspect is to argue that being a person in African world is beyond a descriptive reference to certain biological constituents. This means that in Africa, a person is not defined or discussed by referring to the natural sciences, but to traditional and everyday opinions as they can be found in oral traditions and ordinary language, especially in proverbs."

In his "*Bantu Philosophy*" Placide Tempels (1959, p. 100) expound this teaching contending that for the Bantu unlike in West, *muntu* (man) is not divided into body and soul but is defined in terms of relationships. Tempels adds that "the living *muntu* is in relation of being to being with God, with his clan brethren, with his family and with his descendants." According to him "Bantu Psychology cannot conceive of man as an individual as a force existing by itself and apart from its ontological relationships with other living beings and from its connection with animals or inanimate force around it."²⁰ This shows that Africans do not live individualistic life like the Westerners.

Elaborating on the moral dimension of this communalistic understanding of human nature, Tempels claims that for the Bantu one becomes a person by performing worthy acts in the community or by fulfilling social obligations. He writes:

It is always to accord with the conception of force that the Baluba speak of *Muntu mutupu* to indicate a man of middling importance devoid of real force: while the *Muntu mukulumpe* indicates the powerful man who has his part to take in the community. The word *muntu* inherently includes an idea of excellence or plenitude. And thus the Baluba will speak of '*ke muntu po*' "this is not a *muntu*" of a man who behaves unworthily (p. 101).

This idea is also captured by Igbafen (2014, p. 125) when he writes that in Owan culture

“like other Africans, an individual may be referred to as “not a person” if his or her conduct is considered repulsive and at variance with the values and norms of the family, the clan and the community.” By this he means that he or she has acted or behaved contrary to acceptable norms and values. It is important for us to mention that the underlining idea in Tempel's concept of man is the fact that it is the community that defines a person.

Mbiti (1997, p. 106) also expounds the view that it is within the community that the African finds meaning:

In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group. Physical birth is not enough: the child must go through rites of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the entire society. These rites continue throughout the physical life of the person, during which the individual passes from one stage of corporate existence to another. The final stage is reached when he dies and even then he is ritually incorporated into the wider family of both the dead and the living.

Thus, Mbiti thinks the individual's links to the community are of such an enduring nature that they can't be separated from her own existence. The community also has a role in ensuring that the individual is indeed transformed into a real person. For Mbiti, biological birth alone is not enough. There has to be some induction into all the stages that he calls 'corporate existence', and an individual cannot do that induction on her own, she requires the assistance of her fellow human beings in her community to attain that existence. “It is a deeply religious transaction. Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people.”

The emphasis that Mbiti frequently points out is that the individual is never alone. She is a communal being who finds herself in a community of people who share with her agonies and joys. Mbiti said when the individual suffers she will not be alone, and when she marries her kinsmen are there to celebrate with her, even the children that she bears are never just hers alone but belong to the whole community. The place of the individual in the community is a strong membership of that community which is constitutive of her identity and governs the way she leads her life. One cannot think of the individual without thinking of the community. The symbiotic relationship that exists between the individual and the community is inseparable and neither can do without the other. It appears as if it would actually become incoherent to speak of either without speaking of the other as this quote from Mbiti will show: “Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.” This is a

cardinal point of the understanding of the African view of man.”

Another writer who conceptualized African normative theory of personhood is Polycarp Ikuenobe (2006, p. 117), who affirmed that in communal African tradition “...personhood is a status earned by meeting certain community standards, including the ability to take on prescribed responsibilities that are believed to define person- such responsibilities may be defined in terms of personal achievements that are worthy of social recognition.” He went further to state that “...this conception of human nature is plausible only because of the notion of community and its place in people's normative and conceptual scheme.” This normative conception of human nature came out clearly under the sub-heading where he treated “personhood and achievements: Unoka and Okonkwo.” He reiterated that personhood is achieved through obedience to and ability to use communal norms to guide one's actions. He claims that “an elder is not simply someone who is chronologically advanced in age. Age is respected, certainly but age alone does not bring the recognition associated with personhood; personhood or elderhood comes from achievements and excellence.” He went on to quote Achebe to underscore the importance of achievements in attainment of personhood: “age was respected among his people, but achievements are revered.” He buttressed this with the words of Wiredu who said that respect that is given to age in African culture is not arbitrary. The justification for such respect comes from the expectation that a person of old age ought to have requisite personal and social achievements, experience, knowledge and judgment to warrant recognition and respect. He made it clear that Achebe believes a that young person can achieve the social recognition and status that elders and kings get if he works hard to achieve personal and communal honours. Consequently, since personhood “... is acquired partly, based on one's achievements, one gets the sense that Okonkwo was on a sure path to achieving personhood or elderhood.” Achebe used the character of Unoka, Okonkwo's father, to show that not all old people are accomplished enough to be recognized as persons. Thus, he writes: “Unoka is an individual who was not considered a person or a grown up in the moral sense because in spite of his old age he had no socially recognizable achievements.” Hence, for him Unoka was a failure because he did not get social recognition which is required in the community for achieving personhood (pp. 121-122). The underlining point here is that Africans understand human nature as communally oriented and man as a being-with-others whose humanity is judged incrementally according to the way he relates to his community.

Development in Africa

In the previous section, African understanding of human nature was conceptualized. On the whole, Africans see human nature as being-with-others, implying that man in Africa is a being that realizes himself within the community in the midst of others. It follows therefore that any attempt to fashion out an African understanding of development must take into account the indexes necessary for the realization of human nature in the African context. This will require answering the question: what is a good life from an African communitarian understanding of human nature. Also, since man by nature is communalistic according to African worldview, actualizing a good life will need a well ordered social environment and this will in turn require addressing the question: what is a just society according to African communalistic view of human nature?

These two aspects of African concept of development will be examined here. The first question pertains to the nature of the good life. In the exposition of African normative theory of personhood as a moral theory, we have already furnished an answer to this question. One way to answer it is in terms of asking: what is the goal of man according to African communalistic view of human nature? The good life as articulated in the previous section is a function of the individual's ability to develop her distinctive moral capacities, which in the African tradition is understood to be her social nature (Lutz 2009). A good life therefore, is a function of the agent living a life exuberant with other-regarding virtues, like being generous, loving, friendly, sharing, having empathy, and so on.

The second question pertaining to the question of what constitutes a just society is yet to be answered in the light of the normative theory of personhood. This question in some sense is political, insofar as it deals with the question of how to order society with the single overarching theoretical burden of what it means to give everyone their due, concerned with what “the shape our social life should have as a whole” (Larmore 2012, p. 2). To ask the question “what is a *just* society?” we are trying to delineate the content of the value(s) that ought to shape our social life as a whole. As a point of departure, it is safe to open our elucidation on the question of a just society by submitting that it is characteristically one that renders the moral possible. A society is just if it allows all individuals to be able to pursue the good life or if it makes that pursuit possible in terms of social arrangements.

The pursuit of a good life is each individual's responsibility. It requires, however, a robust organization of the whole social life. The crucial question then to pursue is: what are the basic conditions and/or features of a just society that will render the pursuit of the normative concept of personhood possible for all? Thus far, at least, we can rightly suppose that a just society is one that is arranged to create conditions conducive for human beings to achieve personhood; however, there is need to be fairly specific about some of these conditions in other words, to be unequivocal about the basic goods or values that are necessary for human beings to pursue the communalistic life. This consideration forces us to ask two related questions. On the one hand, we have to grapple with the conditions that might permit all human beings to stand as equals in society (moral egalitarianism), and on the other hand, we have to reflect on the basic goods that are necessary for human beings to self-realization (the common good).

The Condition of Equality

The first consideration central to questions of justice pertains to human nature. It seeks to understand the facets of human nature in virtue of possession of which human beings come to stand in the comity of justice. What is the distinctive feature of human nature that accounts for their moral status (dignity) and therefore their equality to every other individual in society? To best illuminate this point, take John Rawls's theory of justice, according to which individuals are objects of justice precisely because they possess the capacity for reason (we owe them respect), and it is this capacity that allows them to be equal to every other individual and allows them to be party (as subjects) in the initial situation.

The respect anticipated here tracks ontology, where one is respected merely because they

possess the relevant onto-moral properties. In Rawls's account, moral status (which secures the equality of all human beings) is a function of our capacity to reason. According to African communalistic understanding of human nature, in contrast, human beings have moral status in light of their capacity to develop morally virtuous characters (Gyekye 1992, pp. 109–13). According to the African view, a just society is one that recognizes our humanity the distinctive feature that accounts for equality of others for what it is. It is for this reason therefore that Ramose (2009, p. 308) notes:

Most African languages have in their vernacular a saying synonymous with the Sotho, *motho ke motho ka batho*. This means that to be human is to affirm one's humanness by recognizing the same *quality* in others and, on that basis, establishing humane relations with them.

Here, Ramose informs us that African communalism requires us to recognize the quality (ontological feature) that accounts for the moral status of all human beings.

To further make this point, Ramose invokes a moral maxim, *feta kgomo o tsware motho*, that he construes to amount to the following philosophical rendition: the practice of *feta kgomo o tshware motho* . . . requires the moral education based upon the principles of sharing, concern for one another and the subordination of wealth to the dignity of the human person as *motho*. (2009), p. 302). *Motho* is the Sotho word for a human being, as *kgomo* is for a cow. In most African traditional cultures, cows represent wealth. The significance of this saying is reminiscent of Kant's distinction between price and worth (Kant 1996). A cow's value is captured in terms of price insofar as it varies according to external circumstances of the market; and, the value of a human being (*motho*) is captured in terms of worth insofar as it is inherent, unconditional, and absolute. In other words, the African view's talk of recognizing the quality or the humanity of others is a call to respect their superlative value (dignity). Human dignity surpasses all other values, and it is in recognition of this individual fact or quality that we should react positively to others by forming sharing relations with them (Toscano 2011). So, at the heart of African normative theory of personhood is a creation of a society responsive to the dignity or equality of all human beings.

Recognizing others' humanity throws us into particular kinds of relations with them sharing or caring relations (Ramose 2009, p. 302). The value of human beings is located in their ability to realize their true humanity rather than in their autonomy, as is wont in some dominant Western moral systems. The African view values most about a human being her ability to lead a morally genuine life, a life of virtue:

Man can then be held as a moral agent, a moral subject not that his virtuous character is a settled matter *but that he is capable of virtue*. . . . A person is defined in terms of moral qualities or capacities. (Gyekye 1992, p. 111)

Gyekye settles the question of what confers moral status to human beings: the capacity for virtue. It is not the actual exercise of virtue that makes one the object of equal moral respect; rather, it is this facet of her humanity. A just society recognizes this feature and operates on the logic of care to let individuals develop this ability. We can conclude that

the first condition of a just society is one of equality, captured by the human capacity to develop a virtuous character. All human beings ought to be respected because they possess this onto-moral feature.

The Common Good Condition

The second consideration constitutive of justice involves the objective goods necessary for human beings to be able to function. It is not enough merely to have the capacity to nurture and develop a virtuous character. For justice to be robust, there is need for an account of the basic goods necessary for human beings to actualize or realize their moral possibilities. In other words, when there is need to recognize what it means to be human in terms of the capacity for virtue, it is crucial to supply the sociopolitical and economic goods necessary for moral agents to be able to pursue personhood. This condition in the African moral discourse is usually captured by an appeal to the idea of the common good, an idea that refers to the objective list of all the goods be they social, political, and economical necessary for a human life to be possible in the first place (Gyekye 1992). The idea of the common good is usually captured by appeal to the Siamese crocodile with two heads and one stomach: The part of the motif relevant to moral thought is the single stomach. . . The common stomach . . . *indicates that at least the basic interests of all the members of the community are identical*. It can therefore be interpreted to be symbolizing the good of all the individuals within a society. (Gyekye 2009)

The basic assumption of African communalism is that human beings manifest diversity and divergence in many areas, but when it comes to what a human being needs to be able to function as a human being and to achieve the moral goal of achieving a sound character, a core of shared values or goods is necessary for all human beings (Gyekye 2004, 2010). Thus, to talk of the common good is to talk of the core goods that all human beings need to self-realization. A just society therefore provides basic goods for a human being to be able to make something of their humanity.

The discussion above suggests that a just society, according to communalism has two crucial facets. First, it functions as the basis of respecting the human capacity for virtue. Human beings are equal in virtue for merely possessing this capacity; it is precisely because human beings have this capacity that morality is possible. Second, justice requires that the basket of human or basic goods is available for human beings to be able to lead a moral life. Conversely, an unjust society is one that does not properly recognize what it means to be a human (moral status) and one that does not provide the common goods necessary for a human being to pursue personhood. To offer some concreteness to this talk of a just society as imagined by African communalism, the remaining part of this section offers an account for why colonization and apartheid (in South Africa) are great evils, insofar as they are instances of injustice.

First, colonization and apartheid were evil precisely because they failed to respect the humanity (capacity for virtue) of African people; hence the racism and sexism that characterized these political regimes. Second, these regimes were evil because they systematically removed the common goods necessary for a robust human life. The dispossession of land, the destruction of history, culture, and heritage, the destruction of economies and political structures—all were activities of removing the common good.

By taking land and cultural inventions for imagining and navigating life was to make life intolerable for the humanity of African people. The disruption effected by these made communalism impossible. Apartheid and colonization were evil because, in some sense, they cut off African people from the domain of morality (Molefe 2018a).

An objector might here argue that talking of respecting persons for their capacity for virtue (dignity) and providing the common good is the same thing as talking about dignity and human rights, as is dominant in Western moral-political discourses. This is far from the truth. Yes, to talk of respecting persons because they possess a particular capacity is tantamount to talk of dignity, which is a feature of human nature (Toscano 2011), but to talk of the common good is radically different from a talk of rights. The morality of rights imagines entitlements held by individuals against the state and others, which engenders duties owed to them in virtue of these rights (Feinberg 1970). The force of the rights held by individuals is ordinarily understood to trump other social goals or goods. In contrast, talk of the common good imagines a social morality that elevates other-regarding duties as the essence of morality—the idea that we have duties to advance the welfare of (all) others. In this moral scheme, rights are secondary; in fact, they are trumped by the social goals of providing basic needs necessary for each individual to be able to self-realize himself (Menkiti 1984). This should come as no surprise, given that dignity is a universal feature of most moral systems of the world (Donnelly 1982, p. 306), but African moral systems tend to respond to the dignity of human beings by emphasizing duties instead of rights.

African Contribution to the Global Debate on Development

From the foregoing, it is obvious that African view of human nature would define development in terms of some moral ends, and would emphasize that we need just means to secure such ends. The idea of just means, in the idea of African concept of development would be captured in terms of the “means of means” (Dower 2008, pp. 189–90). This facet of development requires the moral evaluation of the options and routes we select to pursue development. For example, Goulet (1996) makes a distinction between the ethical and engineering approaches to development, which signals the crucial difference between ends and means. Development as an ethical enterprise involves some basic or final value, in light of African communalism to achieve personhood. Talk of economics, as an engineering approach, refers to economic growth as a means to development.

The methods we employ to pursue development by providing necessary goods, be they food or infrastructure or something else, must be consistent with our moral ideals and goals as specified by the ends we espouse. Put simply, we have many ways to pursue development, but we should employ only those that are morally sound and in consonance with our human nature. Take, for example, Dower's talk of means:

One of the things which the ethics of the means brings out is the fact that development ethics has, so to speak, a number of dimensions. Much of development ethics is part of social, political or public ethics; that is, the ethical issues are about how public policies and laws can, for instance, deliver the moral goals of social justice, protect human

rights, express democracy, protect the environment, or provide the right education for the next generation. (2008, 189)

The intention here is to offer a theoretical principle that will account for how the ethics of means is to be understood according to African normative concept of personhood. At the heart of African communalism is the moral goal of achieving a good character, but how does the agent achieve a good character? One salient answer to this question invokes harmonious relationships. The best way to pursue moral perfection is by being embedded in them. At the heart of the ethics of communalism is the idea that social relationships serve as the best moral instruments to achieve communalism:

At the centre of traditional African morality is human life. Africans have a sacred reverence for life. . . .To protect and nurture their lives, all human beings are inserted within a given community. . . . The promotion of life is therefore the determinant principle of African traditional morality and this promotion is guaranteed only in the community. Living harmoniously within a community is therefore a moral obligation ordained by God for the promotion of life (Metz 2007a, p. 329).

Here, a different moral end is offered as the goal of African ethics: life. The interest is the means prescribed for securing that end, which is the metaphysical imagination that God naturally inserted human beings within a given community. Morality, it is assumed, is guaranteed only in the community. Further, relationships deemed morally relevant for securing the good can be characterized in terms of living harmoniously, an obligation required for achieving the moral end of promoting life. In this ethical system, human beings can achieve the ideals of personhood only by living harmoniously with others. The point here is that moral perfection is possible only in cooperative relationships. This same point is appositely captured by Shutte:

The goal of morality according to this moral vision is fullness of humanity. Moral life is seen as the process of moral growth. Just as participation in community with others is the *essential means* to personal growth, so participation with others is the motive and fulfillment of the process. (2009, p. 96).

The discussion above makes clear that self-realization is the proper moral end posited by African understanding of growth as a moral theory; and furthermore, cooperative relationships with others are the essential means for achieving it. The direct implication of this moral logic for the development is that it will highly prize paths and options that are participatory and cooperative. Development, if it is one influenced by African communalism must involve people's participation and cooperation, directly or by representation.

This way of thinking about means will have implications for how decisions will be made about which paths or options are to be followed in pursuing development: consensus will

be the characteristic feature of making decisions about policies (Gyekye 1992). In other words, policy options that will be the most consistent with African view of human nature are those that emerge in the context of deliberations that result in consensus, rather than majoritarianism or external impositions. This is so because majoritarianism marginalizes the minority, but consensus seeks a decision as accommodative as possible, with no losers and no winner-take-all attitude (Wiredu 1996).

Another crucial facet to consider is to approach development in ways that are consistent with the cultural values of African view of human nature. Here, by *values*, I am specifically referring to norms that are salient and characteristic of a particular place and culture: customs (Wiredu 1992, p. 193, 2008, pp. 334–36). For example, some of the cultural values salient among African people are the value of consensus over majoritarianism; the fundamental goal of reconciliation and not retribution; to imagine socially cooperative ways to build wealth or economies as opposed to individualist and competitive ones; to distribute goods on the moral logic of needs and care, as opposed to that of rights (Metz 2007a, pp. 324–26). These cultural values are consistent with a society that highly values the possibilities of each individual to realize her own true self. These values emphasize the duty to respond positively to individuals who may be in need for the sake of ensuring they are not obstructed from their goal of personal development. In light of the above, we see that a just society is one that truly respects human beings for their capacity for virtue and one that puts in place conditions necessary for human beings to self-realization. These conditions operate on the logic of love and responsibility, not rights. Each individual and social institution has a mandate to respond caringly to individuals' needs and provide social goods for individuals to be able to pursue personal perfection.

In the context of the forgoing, the world stands to gain from an African understanding of development that departs from the dominant individualistic right-oriented Western concept of development to a concept of development that is community based. In this understanding of development, man is viewed as a being that can only actualize himself within a community such that to promote the good of the individual and that of the community coalesced. Hence, any developmental policy that promotes the needs of the individual as against the common need of the community is in itself considered anti-development in the African context. This concept of development is important especially following the recent global resurgence of cultural and ideological conflict resulting from struggle over resources for development. The struggle for supremacy between the West and especially China and the exploitation of countries in the developing world will be resolved if this African model of development which is human and community based is deployed to cushion the effect of the current dominant Western model of development that promotes individual rights and exploitation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the past, main stream Western scholarship represented Africans as a people that lacked creative thinking and thus who have contributed nothing of worth to world civilization. This denigrating presentation of Africans were in time refuted through the concerted efforts of Africans and sympathetic Western scholars who showed that Africans like

human beings all over the world are rational and have made contributions to world's development.

However, this discovery didn't end Western racism against people of African origin. White racism reinvented itself and appeared again in the form of questioning what Africa as a continent can contribute to world development in this era of globalization. The logic underpinning this contention is that in this age of globalization the only viable value system and development model is the Western system, ipso facto, no people other than the West has something of value to offer to humanity on today's world. This seems to be the reason the West led by America has been passionately pursuing the goal of universalizing democracy.

This study has shown that this assumption is erroneous. Accepted, the West through democracy and modern science has brought almost every part of the world under the influence of its value system but this does not mean that Western values are the only viable values driving human civilization. The error in the assumption that only the West has the monopoly of charting the path of development for other parts of the world consists in viewing development through a Western prism. In this context development is measured based on the triad concepts of politics, sociology and economics.

While not completely discrediting this concept of development, this study contends that taking singly it has the negative tendency of generating conflict by creating inequality, misappropriations and exploitation of individuals and groups in the society. The study discovered that the concept of development rooted in African value system and understanding of human nature which promotes equality and the common good stands a better chance of helping man to actualize his nature which in actual sense is the real goal of development. In this context the study claims that this is what Africa has to offer and what the world stands to gain from Africa's concept of development.

The paper therefore makes the following recommendations:

1. Policymakers and the academia around the world while not abandoning the economic understanding of development should invest more energy in promoting the African humanistic, community based view of development. Doing this will help to discourage the unbridled capitalistic acquisitism and exploitation that characterizes the present dominant Western idea of development.
2. The Western world need to come down from their exalted throne of arrogance and self-importance to relate and enter into dialogue with African culture on the basis of brotherhood and equality. There is no gain denying that European culture has contributed something significant to human civilization but Europe needs to understand that other cultures, African culture in particular has something unique to contribute to world civilizations.
3. Africans, especially governments and institutions in Africa, on their part need to rise up from their state of self-pity resulting from Western racism to discover and project to the global stage the uniqueness of their cultural heritage. Every culture, especially African culture, the oldest continent in the world has something innovative to offer to the world; arguing to the contrary is not only racism, it is also a high level of academic insincerity.

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