**Nature of Tiv Metaphysics in the Light of the Challenges of Development**

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**Abstract**

Man’s life has been challenged in various ways. Despite the numerous challenges a man faces in life, no man seems to give up easily on life. The Tiv people are blessed with both human and natural resources, yet they have not been experiencing these endowments in their lives for several decades. There are new waves of knowledge which appear to be motivating factors for an integral development of society. The Tiv people are yearning for change in every sphere of their lives. The desired change can come about when the people are able to answer the following questions; what is the true nature of development and how is metaphysics related to development? How virile is the Tiv value system in meeting up with the challenges of development in contemporary society? The answer to these questions is obtained in the way the Tiv person conceives reality and the human person and how such understanding contributes to the actualization of the Tiv society. The study recommends that the Tiv aspirations are directly linked to Tiv's conception of reality which is the Tiv metaphysics. This is the new approach to understanding the link between metaphysics and

the development of the Tiv society.

Keywords:

change, Culture, Development, Knowledge, Metaphysics, Person, Tiv

**Introduction**

The Tiv society has been morally degenerated due to the manner some members of society pursue their basic human needs in life. The attitudes of some leaders reveal that they sought for these basic needs outside the socially approved bounds thereby triggering injustice, violence and destruction instead of peace and development. The refusal of leaders in Tiv land to apply the metaphysical understanding of reality and man in the art of governance for sustainable justice, peace and social development actually motivated me to embark on this study.

The Tiv land is highly underdeveloped despite the abundant rich human and natural resources. One wonders why the Tivs are not moving with the pace of development in the world. Fundamental questions are inevitable. They are; what is the true nature of development and its relation to metaphysics? Are there any causal relationships between Philosophy, Metaphysics and Development? Has the nature of Tiv metaphysics any concomitant relationship with development in Tivland?

**Metaphysics, Philosophy and Development**

Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy. It is the “first philosophy” because it is the foundation of all intellectual knowledge with the aim of understanding reality for the purpose of creating the desired change in any society. Karl Marx once declared that: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it”.[[1]](#footnote-1) The philosopher attempts to understand why life is as it is and the principles governing life. Development is “change”. Quantitative changes result in growth, while qualitative change is linked to development. Agazzi Evandro relates this when she said that: “Development is a process to which some value judgment is attached; positive judgment as in the application of the phrase “well developed” to a thing or state and negative judgment as in the application of the phrase “underdeveloped” to a thing or state”.[[2]](#footnote-2) The emphasis here is not about relating development not just with value judgments; it is an insistence that values are the vital forces that challenge a man to conduct himself in actions that would culminate in both human and infrastructural development. This integral development is primarily built on the worldview of a people. What is important is the fact that the human being is guided by the choices made in a particular environment. Ackoff Russell while narrating his “Aha” experience as quoted by Acosta-Pasricha Josephine thus:

I came to realize this on the island of Leyte in the Philippines during World War II. After hostilities on that island was over, a group of soldiers with nothing else to do, began to convert their camp into a community that provided a high quality of life. They used nothing but native materials, with which they were initially unfamiliar, and their imagination and ingenuity....[[3]](#footnote-3)

This is the kind of initiative a philosopher like Raimon Panikkar presents in the relationship between philosophy and culture as: “...philosophy and culture are “elements” of the human reality. ... philosophy could represent the eyes that scrutinize that journey, and culture, the earth on which Man is walking during his concrete pilgrimage”.[[4]](#footnote-4) Culture becomes the element that nurtures the philosophy of a people. So, when a culture cannot contribute to the progress and development of the society, then the cultural factors that militate against human progress must be removed. This is the point where metaphysics of the Tiv people becomes necessary as an enhancement of the development of the society.

**The Nature of Tiv Metaphysics**

The nature of Tiv metaphysics and philosophy is traced to their distinct features of Tiv worldview concerning what reality is and their conceptualization of man who is a thinking being. The Tiv metaphysics understands reality as truth-pursuing rather than good-pursuing. African ethics has its foundation built on their conception of man and reality. Any attempt not to understanding these concepts leads to a poor perception of the philosophy of the African person. African ethics is communitarian in nature. Though there is no unique ethics among the different ethical systems in Africa.

Nevertheless, African ethics is inherently character-based and the quality of the individual’s character is very crucial to the moral life, but the individual needs the help of the bigger society to ensure that adequate knowledge is imparted on its members. The belief in the choice of good over evil is tied to the idea that the gods of the land are the sources of the community’s ethical codes and laws. When the pattern of life is not followed man becomes sad and cannot actualize himself. When these elements are internalized and achieved then the impact of metaphysics on development is greatly appreciated and cherished.

**Reality in Tiv Philosophy**

The Tiv people understand reality as *mlu u taregh* which means the way reality is. *Tar* is the place upon which man dwells. The Tiv people prefer to discuss their relationship between *Aondo* and man as the Creator and the creature. The Tiv person may be seen as given in to the *mlu u taregh* to the point that he does not find solace in the way life is treating him in a given circumstance. He becomes hopeless in the face of suffering and desolation. Life becomes meaningless. He refuses to swim against the challenges of life. Life is a continuum for the Tiv people. Life in itself is a prime value in Tiv society. It is the life that makes the Tiv person work towards achieving a fulfilled life. Life involves the individual, the land, the people and the cosmos.

A new way of life prevalent among the Tiv people as life is full of challenges is the idea of *ya zwa poo* (eat and have your mouth full) a clear manifestation of human greed (*hua*). This is translated into a vice which has inhibited the development of the Tiv people. Socially, the Tiv people practice egalitarianism. Politically, they lack a central political authority. It is apt to declare in agreement with Anshi that: “The Tiv are an independent people, who have no tradition of royal families, cohesion, a central authority and a unifying code”.[[5]](#footnote-5) What is important is that they were to live together as a people. Eugene Rubingh wrote about brotherhood in Tiv saying that:

One’s genealogy is important to the Tiv as securing one’s place in the tribe. The sense of corporate responsibility is great because of the common ancestry of the group. Each individual has a stake in the woe and weal of all; in fact, the individual is submerged into the group with whom he is identified.[[6]](#footnote-6) The implication is simple. The Tiv people are ontologically linked with one another through the value of truth (*mimi*) and nothing else can come in between them. The pride of the Tiv people is measured by their degree of truthfulness. This brings out the value of metaphysics in society.

**Human Person in Tiv Philosophy**

A person as understood by the Tiv people is different from one being a human being. A new born child is a human being, a young boy and girl are human beings, a woman is a human being, but none of them can be referred to as a person in Tiv society. Who then is a person in Tiv? Personhood is associated with the conduct of an individual particularly the man. He is not just a composition of body and soul. He is someone who has *vanger* (chest). This power is not personalised, but used for the common good of the community. The word for person in Tiv is *or*. When women are in a village and a stranger comes in and asks, *Or ngu hen ya ne?* Which is translated to mean “Is there any person in this house?” the women would reply, *eii or ngu ga saa se kwase* this is interpreted to mean “No there is no person here except women”. The application of the concept of personhood in Tiv society is more sociological than metaphysical.

The moral nature of both sexes is not affected by this understanding. This brings us to the idea of moral responsibility which is the outcome of rational assent. This is what is captured in the Tiv notion of the unity of the human being in life or death. On one hand, there is no separation between the body and soul. The human being becomes an allembracing being, truth-seeking, truth-affirming, promise-making, justice-seeking, other-accepting, and law-abiding. This task brings us to the ultimate goal of providing the man with “a sense of who he is, that he is someone, and he has an intrinsic value... which provides him with fulfillment and contentment as much as possible”.[[7]](#footnote-7) Indeed, our own kind of development is that which the human being seeks to maximize the realization of the self. The Tiv people are restive as a result of hunger, thirst, flood because the leaders are corrupt, indignant and unjust to the vulnerable members of the society. Society has become a war zone where children, pregnant women and virgins are desecrated with impunity.

**Conclusion**

The study clearly shows that a cordial relationship between metaphysics and development will go a long way in bringing true development to the Tiv society. People will no longer be conceived as tools for the aggrandizement of others, but equal persons that can assist one another on the path of development. It is in this way that metaphysics contribute to the actualization of the human being and the Tiv society. The study recommends that the Tiv aspirations are directly linked to Tiv conception of reality which is the Tiv metaphysics. This is the new approach to understanding the link between metaphysics and development of the Tiv society.

**Endnotes**

1Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”. In Marx Karl (1818 – 1883); Engels, Friedrich (1820 – 1895) *German Ideology*. 3rd ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 617.

2 Evandro Agazzi, “Philosophical Reflections on the Concept of Development” in Kucuradi, Ioanna (ed.) *Development: The Idea and the Concept.* (Ankara: International Federation of Philosophical Societies, 1993), 18-24.

3 Josephine Acosta-Pasricha, Philosophy and Culture, with Russell Ackoff [*http://knol.google.com/k/philosophy-and-culture-withrussell-ackoff#*](http://knol.google.com/k/philosophy-and-culture-withrussell-ackoff#)

4 Raimon Panikkar, *Religion, Philosophy and Culture*. <http://them.polylog.org/1/fpr-en.htm>

5 Martin Wang Anshi, *Ieren: An Introduction to Tiv Philosophy*, 1 – 2. 6Rubingh Eugene, *The Sons of Tiv*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), 60.

7 Scruton Roger, *A Dictionary of Political Thought*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 422.

1. Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”. In Marx Karl (1818 – 1883); Engels, Friedrich (1820 – 1895) *German Ideology*. 3rd ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 617. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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