

Original Paper

Exploring Existentialist Democracy as Alternative Ethics for Human Sustainable Development in Africa

Daniel O. Adekeye^{1*}

¹ Ondo State University of Science and Technology, Nigeria

* Daniel O. Adekeye, Ondo State University of Science and Technology, Nigeria

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Abstract

The challenge of reconciling private and public interests is a major concern for scholars, formulators and managers of development policies and implementations. This challenge has attracted a great deal of attention in classical philosophical and political discourses. Marxism presented the development of class-consciousness in terms of the relationship between the individual and his or her group. Classical liberalism represented the growing intellectual and political forces against all social and political systems that impeded the release of energies and passions of the individuals. However, this paper observes that these classical theories may be inadequate in their analyses and prescriptions as guides for the understanding of group-individual relationship. Therefore, the paper proposes existentialist democracy as an alternative theory leading to a new paradigm for development in Africa.

Keywords

Africa, democracy, development, ethics, existentialism, liberalism, marxism

1. Introduction

The challenge of reconciling group and individual interests has been widely addressed under the major social identity discourse (Oyeshile, 2005; Owolabi, 1999, 2003; Adekeye, 2014, 2018). One of the salient issues of the problem of social identity has remained the challenge of reconciling the autonomy of the individual and his/her responsibility to prioritize the community interests over his/her personal liberty (Oladipo, 2001, p. 10). This problem also underscores a major concern in development discourse. It involves the consideration for the wellbeing of the human person in national development agenda. To this effect, it is of interest in this paper to question the extent at which the individual interests are considered in the formulation of development policies. What does sustainable development mean to the individual? What is the real measure of human development? What are the conditions for ensuring

sustainable human development? What is the nature of interdependence (if any) between personal and national sustainable development?

Very critical in the African development discourse is the socio-economic situation of the individual. The total wellbeing of the majority of persons in Africa is far below the average or minimum as desired by the collective aspiration of mankind which is captured and articulated in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The quality of lives in most of the African states is on a constant decline, reflecting very poor and glooming statistics on life expectancy rates. For example, World Health Organization (WHO) reports continue to emphasize that healthcare indicators for Nigeria are among the worst by global rankings (WHO, 2007; WHO, 2018). According to the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), "Nigeria [one of the largest economies in Africa] shoulders 10% of the global disease burden and is making slow and arduous progress towards achieving the targets for the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" (SERAP, 2018). Most of the poorest countries of the world and Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) are on the continent of Africa. Many African states have become despair in their struggle against poverty and have subsequently resorted to managing impoverished populations. Some politicians and supposed national leaders have identified poverty [material and mental] as very potent instrument for sustained political oppression, leaving the continent of Africa with massive poor populations, weak institutions but very "powerful" and "affluent" politicians.

Various scholars have pointed to the very cogent reasons for underdevelopment and its corollaries (conflicts, terrorism, unsustainable debts, etc.) in Africa which include but not limited to incompetent leadership, large scale financial impropriety, unabated grafts, obsolete and corrupt civil service, frustrating bureaucracy, the nature of global economic system and poor governance. While these scholars have discussed the problems and some have proffered solutions, a major gap still exists. The gap which inspires this paper is that very little attention is devoted to the direct impact, implication and dynamics of African underdevelopment from the perspective of the individual person. There are indeed, lots of sweeping statistics being released by various national and international agencies leading to over generalizing assumptions. Besides the fact that some of the statistics presented only reflects the positions of their sponsors, they seldom capture the exigency of the individuals within the territorial scope. Very often, the data presented to reflect the superstructural economic position of the states do not adequately capture the foundational economic realities of the individual persons in the respective states. This amounts to committing the *fallacy of division* which consists of inferring incorrectly a conclusion that speaks of the properties of the parts of the whole from a premise that speaks of the properties of a whole. The Catholic Church is a very rich institution, but that does not make individual catholic faithful very rich persons. The implication of this error is that development discourse; most of the time is influenced or determined by these data thereby devoting all of the intellectual and professional energies to "common good that does not enhance personal good". Apart from being a fallacy, this sweeping generalization is also a reflection of the classical problem of simply equating the personal development with public

development. Therefore, this paper argues that though the two realms of development -private and public- are related, interdependent and mutual; they are neither synonyms nor constant conjunctions. Another shortcoming of the African development discourse is the implicit meaning of poverty. Poverty is mainly conceived in the narrow economic and materialistic sense as the lack of purchasing power of the individual. Poverty is, in line with this conception, measured in relation to the capacity of the individual to access material commodities and services which are directly proportional to one's position in relation to the distribution of the factors of production. It is worthy of note that this conception of poverty is insufficient, if one considers humans as not merely material but also psychic and spiritual. Poverty is basically a human deficiency which relates not just to the human material body but human emotions and spirit. Therefore, any discussion about human development which neglects any of the aspects and dimensions of the human person is not only inadequate but also misleading and unfit for any serious consideration. Poverty ought to be considered and discussed holistically as an overall deprivation of complete wellness of the human person. Therefore, human development discourse in Africa ought to be holistic with necessary consideration for socio-cultural, environmental, political and economic aspects of human existence. The classical Aristotelian moral maxim notes that virtue lies in the middle of extremes. Hence, a proper ethics for human development in Africa is such that advocates a well-reasoned balance of all the aforementioned dimensions of the human personality.

In this paper, we have identified, reviewed and adapted two major socio-political ideologies namely: Socialism and Liberalism, as ethical frameworks providing guidance or principles for conceiving and establishing the idea of the "individual", his proper relationship with the "group" and a social order where the group and individual interests are adequately integrated without compromising the essence of either. While these classical ethics seem to be masterpieces with immediate impacts (sometimes revolutionary) on socio-economic and political terrain of their period, it is clear that they remain historically and ideologically inadequate for the African development struggles. Therefore, an attempt is made here to provide an alternative ethics for human sustainable development in Africa.

2. Marxian Class and Class Consciousness

The Marxist conception of social identity can be traced from his notion of class and class-consciousness. The Marxist theory of classes and class-consciousness articulates the situation of the individual within the social group and also expresses the dynamics of interrelationships between different classes of the society. The point we need to note from the onset is that the concept "class" in the Marxist sense, is a perfect illustration of a social identity, which could be political, economic, religious, gender, etc.

A class, according to Karl Marx is a product of the facts of life within the society, where "life" is to be understood as people developing their material production and their material intercourse (Marx & Engels, 1975, p. 37). For Marx, it is the *being* of the class that precedes its *purpose*. The being of any class is the comprehensive synthesis of all factors at work in society (Mészáros, 1986, p. 58). This becomes clearer in the following quotation:

It is not a question of what this or that proletarian [individual], or even the whole proletariat [group], at the moment considers as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is, and what, in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do. Its aim and historical action is irrevocably and clearly foreshadowed in its own life situation as well as in the whole organization of bourgeois society today (Ibid, 57).

The above passage suggests that the social status of an individual or that of a group determines the action or the role of the individual or the group. Subsequently, the individual or the group thinks and behaves within the confines of his or her social status. In other words, the social status with its corresponding social roles imposes consciousness on the individual and group. The Marxist idea is thus, consistent with the Feuerbachian *inversion principle* (Nola, 1993, p. 311) in which predicate and subject are interchanged.

According to Marx, consciousness or class-consciousness as the case may be, is not an *absolute*, a *given*, or something that has a separate existence outside the particular social structures and institutions of the society, rather, it is developed along these social structures (Gramsci, 1957, p. 172). The major points of Marx's view of classes and class-consciousness which are essentially relevant to this paper include: the Marxian formulation of the problem of classes as an "antithesis" constituting a single whole in a dialectical manner, with its positive and negative sides. None of the sides or elements of this single whole can be absolutized, since they stand and fall together. This indicates the equal significance of "self" and "other" in all social relationships both at the individual and group levels. The striking difference between Marx and his predecessor, Hegel, at this juncture is that Marx denies the possibility of bringing any or both sides of the contradiction to a rest or reconciliation.

The second point is the distinction between the two sides of this antagonism in terms of class-consciousness, which does not simply depend on subjective insight, but on objective factors. On the one side, the "unconscious" character of capital determined by a specific form of social development which compels it, against its will, to produce its opposite; on the other side, the *necessity*, through its manifestation in the form of practical need, which gives rise to self-consciousness. This point, made by Marx underpins the conscious and the unconscious situation of the "self" in creating its opposite in the "other". The inference we are able to draw from this point, which is instructive to our understanding of the problem of identity politics, is that the antagonism that exists between social groups indicates a tendency towards the destruction of these groups. By implication, the dichotomy between the individual and the group with their respective interest is antithetical to the good of both the individual and the society. However, the destructive outcome of these antagonisms and contradictions may not be fully envisaged at the initial stage.

Moreover, it is important to note Marx's emphasis on the "*spiritual*" or mental side of the misery of the subordinate class, for it is customary to misrepresent the Marxian view of the increasing misery as merely

a material consideration. However, in Marx's thought, from the early writings to *Capital*, the material and intellectual-spiritual aspects are always intertwined, hence, the worker's condition is described as growing worse irrespective of the material improvements, be his payment high or low, precisely because of the inseparability of the two aspects. The subordination of an individual or group is a process that starts at the realm of intellect. The mental or spiritual subjection sets the ball rolling for the subsequent material or physical marginalization.

Equally important is Marx's insistence that the self-abolition of the proletariat, which is the abolition of the conditions of dehumanization, cannot be achieved without the conscious action of the class that can and must free itself. Indeed, the programme of self-abolition becomes a contradiction in terms if things were left to the unconscious force of some mythical historical necessity (I Mészáros, 1986, p. 67). Marx believes in the active participation of humans as change agents who are responsible for their condition within the society. It is only the oppressed who can rise against the oppression by his oppressors. While the oppressed group or individual seeks to annihilate the oppression, he both negates the oppressor and also himself as being the oppressed, hence, he takes on a new identity for he ceases to be the "oppressed". In Marx's view, there can be no self-abolition without the maturation of its objective conditions. More importantly, the objective conditions themselves cannot reach their maturity without the development of self-consciousness as consciousness of the need for de-alienation. This implies that a group does not only move to protest its oppression by the mere reality of its oppression, but by its recognition of its oppression.

Marx accounts for the antagonism between groups in terms of economic structures that is operational within the society. He shows that capital and labour constitute a structural antagonism, which necessarily excludes the possibility of a structural integration of the proletariat. In this structural antagonism, labour is subordinated to capital. Therefore, the concept of the necessary structural subordination of labour to capital in commodity society becomes the core of Marx's theory of classes and class-consciousness because he considers this to be an appropriate interpretation of the dynamics of all societies. Social mobility is tied to the structural antagonism between capital and labour, and where there is subordination of labour to capital, as it is in most cases, social mobility is bound to remain marginal. Only particular individuals, not classes can be integrated into an established structure of society, which is constituted by the classes themselves.

Given the structural antagonism between capital and labour, any talk about the "integration" or "embourgeoisement" of the proletariat in a society whose productive relations remain essentially the same is a contradiction in terms, no matter what kind of political intent may lie behind it (Mészáros, 1986, p. 72).

As long as the social structure that exploits the differences of the various groups remains, there will be a mechanism of selection, and absorption of certain individuals to join the dominant group, while the entire subordinate group remains excluded from the scheme of things. Not even the material uplift of the

marginalized group can equalize it with the dominant group. Anyway, we know that even the material uplift is at the discretion of the dominant group, the custodians of the material resources. Hence, increase in the wages of the proletariat, Marx suggests, will not improve their condition.

The class interest of the proletariat should be defined in terms of changing this structural subordination, but not in Gramsci's idea, which consists in the transformation of the *subordinate* into the ruling group (Gramsci, 1957, p. 154). Therefore, Marx argues that what is at stake is not the issue of how to obtain a better wage for the proletariat, nor a new management of the oppressive structure, but a radical restructuring of the established order of society. The proletarian revolution (a sort of what is required at this time in the history of many nations) consists primarily in adjusting both political and economic institutions to a changed technology (Moore, 1975, p. 170). The point that requires emphasis is that it is important to jettison the illusion that re-allocation of material resources will ultimately help annihilate the problem of social identity. Rather, such material restructuring must be pursued alongside the spiritual or intellectual restructuring, which suggests the role of values and ideals in addressing the conflicts generated from the problem of social identity. However, we are not jettisoning the significance of material restructuring in our bid to realize a new social order in which subordination and marginalization are curtailed.

Class interest does not end with the oppressed "other"; the dominant "self" also has its class interest. But there are qualitative differences between the interests of the dominant group and those of the subordinate group. The most obvious of these differences is that the dominant group is interested in change only to the extent to which reforms and concessions can be integrated or institutionalized, whereas changes of this kind are opposed to the interests of the subordinate group in as much as they prolong its subordination. Another fundamental difference is that the individual self-interest of the particular members of the ruling group is directly related to the general objective of retaining the structurally dominant and privileged position the group as a whole enjoys in the society. Therefore, the transcendence of individual self-interest in the direction of the group interest amounts to nothing in reality other than perpetuating the crude self-interest. However, this is not the case with the subordinate group. Here, the short-term interests of particular individuals, and even of the class as a whole at a given time, can stand in radical opposition to the long-term interest of structural change.

Having devoted much of his work to the group identity and interactions, Marx presented the development of class-consciousness in terms of the relationship between the individual and his or her class:

The class in its turn achieves an independent existence over against the individuals, so that the latter find their conditions of existence predestined, and hence have their position of life and their personal development assigned to them by their class, become subsumed under it. This is the same phenomenon as the subjection of the separate individuals to the division of labour and can only be

removed by the abolition of private property and of labour itself

(Marx & Engels, 1965, pp. 69-70).

This extreme collectivism spells a double tragedy for the individual within the society. On the one hand, he/she suffers alienation as his or her group comes under the oppressive force of another dominant group. On the other hand, the individual suffers the alienation of his autonomy and freedom. Thus, the issue at stake for the individual is just as much the emancipation of the particular individuals from their own class as that of the emancipation of the subordinate class from the ruling class. The “other” to which the individual is subjected in an alienated society is not simply the “other class” but also his own class (Mészáros, 1986, p. 80). A fundamental problem with his doctrine is that while Marx faulted and rejected the oppression of the marginalized group by the dominant group as a given, he seems to affirm that the subordination and oppression of the individual by his or her group as natural and unchangeable.

Moreover, the meaning, which Marx ascribes to the scientific status of his doctrines, leaves the relevance and the inner logic of his doctrines less creditable. Marx believes that the content of his socialism has won it a scientific status. Also, from the methodological point of view, Marx claims scientific status for his doctrines in the sense that they are empirical rather than speculative, descriptive rather than prescriptive (Moore, 1975, p. 170). Marxian socialism has been called scientific only by contrast with utopian socialism, which seeks to impose upon the people new illusions instead of investigating the social movement created by the people themselves (Moore, 1975, p. 170). Marx stresses the contrast between describing and prescribing. He writes:

Communism is not for us a state of affairs which ought to be established, an ideal in accordance with which reality should be transformed. For us, communism is the real movement abolishing the present state of affairs, a movement whose necessary conditions exist as part of that same state of affairs (Moore, 1975, p. 172).

But just as nature does not permit vacuum, so, there is no movement without its values and ideals on the basis of which it attempts to abolish the *status quo*. Hence, the revolutionary activities of the proletariat would be predicated on the absence of the conceived social order, which it hoped to establish by overturning the oppressive capitalist regime. Moreso, Marx’s side of the “great divide” conflicts with his suggestion that the philosopher should seek to change the world rather than mere interpreting it. How could anyone hope to change his condition without conceiving of a set of values, which he hopes to prescribe?

Thus, Stanley Moore argues that Marx’s version of historical materialism is an unstable combination of two conflicting approaches to history-dialectic of liberation and sociology of change. He further argues that the conflict between utopian and scientific, as Marx defines it, is an internal conflict of Marxian socialism. Today, what cure does Marxian theory prescribe for the incessant conflicts of identity between individuals and groups? For the critics who approach the problem in terms of Marxist dialectic of liberation, the solution is to realize the ideal of communism. Marx will frown at this because, for him, it is

a utopian programme: mobilizing for a great leap forward, to attempt the creation of communist man. But for the critics who approach the problem in terms of Marx's sociology of change, part of the solution is to reject the ideal of communism. If we reject communism as an ideal, it implies that Marx's historical materialism has left us with no significance for the problem of social identity. Consequently, Moore suggests an alternative to address the inconsistency of Marx's theory. He advocates a revisionist programme: taking men as they are and making laws what they might be, to resume the long ascent toward social justice and individual freedom (Ibid.).

Finally, the problem which this paper seeks to address arising from the conflicts of interests that often characterize the individual-community relationship cannot be simply reduced to class struggle or mere conflicts between forces and relations of production. Beyond class struggle, there are fundamental epistemological and ontological perspectives to the problem (Adekeye, 2018, p. 159). Therefore, Marx's doctrines of historical materialism remain insufficient as a framework for the understanding and resolution of the problem under focus. Moreover, Marx's assertion that the history of all past society is the history of class-conflicts has come under serious attacks, recognized even by his friend-Engels.

3. Liberalism and the Modern Democratic Ideals

The rise of liberalism, as a philosophical orientation of the modern era with its subsequent adoption as a political and economic ideology, provides materials for the study of a very general and very important question, namely: What has been the influence of political and social circumstances upon the thoughts of eminent and original thinkers, and conversely, what has been the influence of these men upon subsequent political and social development (Russell, 1947, p. 620)? It indicates on the one hand, the concretization of abstract philosophical ideas and on the other hand, the abstraction of practical human circumstances in formulating theoretical ideas. According to Russell, early liberalism was a product of England and Holland. It was famous for its characteristics which included: religious tolerance, high regard for commerce and industry, respect for the rights of property accumulated by the labour of the individual possessor, support for the rising middle class against monarchy and aristocracy. In its political expression, it vehemently rejected the divine rights of kings and posited the view that every society has a right to determine its own form of government.

In its early formation, liberalism represented growing intellectual and political forces in its opposition to all social institutions and political systems that impeded the release of human energies and passions of the individuals thereby constraining the rise of science and growth of commerce. It is worthy of note that, against the backdrop of the theories of the early Greek philosophers including Aristotle in which man (the individual) was essentially conceived as a member of a community, a philosophical orientation (relativism) had arisen with a posture of aggressive individualism. According to this orientation, determining the truth or holding beliefs were not social but individualistic enterprise. However, the unfolding moral, political, religious and social consequences of individualism which was at the time pushed to its logical conclusion made it evident that a method must be found for reconciling intellectual

and ethical individualism within the context of social order. Therefore, early liberalism envisioned a human condition where the individual is at liberty to fully explore the innate capacities and passions for his development and fulfillment without necessarily resulting in anarchy or deprivation of the liberty of others. In line with this position, early liberalism was individualistic in intellectual matters, and also in economics, but was not emotionally or ethically self-assertive (Russell, 1947, p. 623). This version of liberalism was prevalent in the English eighteenth century, dominated the founders of American Constitution, and the French encyclopedists. Although it suffered some setbacks in England and France, liberalism was most successful in America.

The first comprehensive articulation of liberal philosophy is found in the political philosophy of John Locke. But it will be misleading to restrict or simply reduce liberalism to Lockean ideas. There is more to liberalism as a philosophical orientation than what the teachings and theories of Locke could adequately offer. However, we consider the relevance of his ideas in the theoretical unfolding of liberalism as a scholarly tradition very critical to this work. Therefore, it is pertinent to briefly highlight some of his ideas without engaging in detailed examinations.

Locke's ideas were completely accepted by the intellectual community of England of his time. In other words, Locke's theoretical philosophy was more or less a theoretical clarification and systematization of prevalent socio-political experience of England at the time. On the other hand, the same Lockean political philosophy represented a new body of knowledge which refuted the ideals of existing political regime and the prevailing theoretical Cartesianism in France. Simply put, while the prevalent socio-political practice in England formed and inspired Locke's theory, converse was the case in France, where it was his theory that inspired an actual revolution. This may partly explain why imported economic, social and political theories may not be effective and successful as much as they did in their original social and cultural contexts. Such is the case for many imported development ideas in Africa.

The bulk of Locke's political philosophy is contained in his two *Treatises on Government*. In his first treatise on Government, Locke debunked the idea of anchoring the authority of Government on hereditary principle. He criticized the doctrine of hereditary power as posited by Sir Robert Filmer in *Patriarcha: or The Natural Power of Kings* (1680). Filmer had held that the king is completely immune from all human control and therefore can neither be bound by the acts of his predecessors nor by his own. He assumed that nature does not permit a man to give a law unto himself. He subscribed to the most extreme version of Divine Right theory. This theory made issues of responsibility, accountability and discipline or decorum of little or no importance to kings in their political operations. Filmer's hereditary principle derived from his opinion that God originally bestowed the kingly power upon Adam, the power which later descended to his heirs and subsequently reached the various monarchs of modern times. According to him, kings are reputed as heirs to those first progenitors who were initially the natural parents of entire mankind. For various reasons, Locke rejected heredity as the basis of legitimate power. Hence, he sought to provide a more defensible and rational basis for political legitimacy in his second *Treatise on Government*. In his conception of what he regarded as the true origin of legitimate

government, Locke referred to “the state of nature” which was governed by a natural law. The state of nature preceded all human governments and the natural law consisted of divine commands. The state of nature according to Locke is a state where men live together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, with authority to judge between them. According to him, the political power right originally derived when men were in a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the natural law without depending on the will of any other man. “A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident, than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the sense faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection...” (Locke, quoted in Russell, 1947, p. 650). This position contrasts with the Hobbesian theory who regarded the natural state of man as a state of war of all against all; an enclosure of nasty, brutish and short life.

In the state of nature, a state characterised by peace, goodwill, mutual assistance and preservation, men are equally subject to reason which is the natural law. “The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one; and reason which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty and possessions” (Russell, 650). He cautioned that the liberty of every man in this state is not a licence to unleash one’s passion or appetite without consideration for the other individuals. Therefore, the law of nature or reason provides to an extent that every man can defend himself and his possessions. However, Locke observed what he called an evil in the state of nature. According to him, while the state of nature persists, every man is the judge in his own cause for he must rely upon himself for the defense of his rights. When man lacked the strength to resist attacks on his person and property, he became vulnerable without any form of redress. This evil according to him was evaded by a compact (social contract) to create a government. “The chief end of men uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property; to which in the state of nature there are many things wanting” (Locke, quoted in Russell, 1947, p. 651).

By his allusion to the state of nature, Locke had established certain salient features of man, namely; that man is rational and that man is essentially an independent and free moral individual. This presupposes that every society should be naturally and ideally egalitarian in its formation. This assertion reveals the liberal tendency in Locke’s philosophy. In his social contract theory where he maintained that civil government is the result of a contract among free and rational individuals, Locke insisted that the government is a party to the contract and can be justly resisted by individuals if it fails to fulfil its part of the contract. This is to avoid any form of totalitarianism or tyrannical regime which is always attended by loss of liberty and other basic human rights of the individual. Although Locke’s doctrine had some of its limitations, it was more or less democratic. Another democratic principle which his version of liberalism subscribed to is that civil society involves the rule of the majority, meaning that, government is about the people. The individuals presumably, are not only in the best position to determine the form and content of

their government but also to assess and sanction its performance on the basis of “protection of individual rights, security and humanity” (Kalu, 2005, p. 184). Contrary to the power which Marx assigned to the State, Lockean liberalism suggests a limited participation and involvement of the government or the State in the affairs of the citizens.

4. Neo-Liberalization, Globalization and the African Experience

Today, liberalism has evolved as a prominent ideology which determines and influences the contemporary global politics and economy. For instance, key to understanding the prominent economic features of the current global arrangement is the policy of neo-liberalization, which became prominent in the 1980s during the Reagan administration in the United States and the Thatcher government in the United Kingdom (Ajayi, 2005, p. 204). Neo-liberal economics mandate massive reduction in social spending and investment by the state, streamlining of government duties through job cuts, divestitures in public enterprises and the promotion of the private sector. The neo-liberal economic policy compels the state to divest public investment and participation in commerce. States’ regulatory functions are often considered as “interference”, thereby subjecting citizens to the unbridled power of the so called free and fair market. Multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been saddled with the responsibility of ensuring the implementation of the neo-liberal economic policy across the globe. To ascertain the influence of liberalism as an ideology and America as major economic actor on the global economic order, globalization has been described in some quarters as “liberalization” and “westernization”.

In what is described as the paradigm of globalization by Jean Kachiga (2005, p. 136), the present global market is dictated by liberal economic principles, monitored by international regimes where the ubiquitous presence of resources, labour, capital and entrepreneurs optimize the synergy. Globalization is perceived as a universal project aimed at homogenizing governance on the basis of liberal democracy (Kalu, p. 174). For the purposes of this paper, “globalization is defined as the processes leading to the growing interdependence of nation-states across political, economic and social spheres. This interrelationship is characterized by massive daily commercial transactions, the homogenization of cultures worldwide concurrently with the resurgence of an emphasis on ethnic communal identity, some erosion of the political clout of many states and, finally, the increasing reliance on communications technology to perform more tasks” (Ajayi, 2005, p. 204). Although the contemporary global configuration as captured by the term “globalization” is all encompassing, implying a new perception on humanity and inferring new ideals of human relationships, this work focuses on two cardinal aspects namely: politics and economy. Hence, globalization is understood here as a universal process characterized by liberal democratic (political) and capitalistic (economic) values.

Globalization could be described as a process by which different regions of the world are pulled together through an expanding network of exchanges of peoples and ideas and cultures as well as goods and services across vast distances (Mazrui quoted by Iwara, 2004, p. 20). It implies an “increasing

cross-border flows of goods, services, money, people, information and culture” (Held et al., 1999, p. 16). But this pulling together has been more beneficial for some countries than the others. Thus, it should be understood as a process or a set of processes that do not follow linear logic or have equal impact on societies across the world (Ariely, 2012, p. 462). According to Molyneux (2001, p. 11), globalization has developed assymetrically and proven to be a new form of domination over less developed nations and also the underprivileged in wealthy nations. The current stage of the process of globalization has been characterized by the success of a few states and the marginalization of many (Kachiga, p. 137).

In line with the current situation, many scholars have registered their concerns for the unpleasant situation of most African countries in the trending global liberal economy. Oladipo observed that so far, Africa’s encounter with other cultures is one of unequal exchange rather than mutual enrichment; one of dependence and exploitation rather than partnership (2007, p. 102). In the last four decades of the making of globalization, many African countries have found themselves increasingly in acute need of capital. This unfortunate condition has led to unsustainable debts and adjustment measures with agonizing consequences on the people of the continent. One could affirm that the integration of many African countries into the world economy has led them caught up in a debt trap. The dynamics and the politics of globalization—the details of which may not be provided in this paper—as driven by neo-liberal principles, have frustrated human capacity development goals on the continent. African states, in their struggle to access loans have succumbed to the strict conditionalities of the multinational lenders. Also, in their effort to service loans, African nations have very little left to cater for meaningful developmental initiatives. The debt scenario in Africa is devastating to such extent that governments borrow to service local and foreign debts. The huge amount of money remitted to the lending institutions by African states have been equated with lost opportunities because it drastically minimizes resources for development in the areas of education, health and other social programmes.

It is worthy of note as it was mentioned in the introduction to this paper that part of the development challenges confronting the continent is blamed on endogenous factors (Ifeka, 2000; Ujomu, 2002; Oladipo, 2000) such as bad and incompetent governments, financial impropriety, grafts, weak and corrupt institutions, moral decadence among others. However, the neo-liberal economic agenda being pursued via globalization has not been fair to Africa and her people in its entirety. The liberalistic principle of “free” and “fair” market has been fraught with internal contradictions. As a principle, it promises to protect the individual from the oppressive interference of the public, but in retrospect provides opportunity for the “strong” individual or group to oppress the vulnerable public through the dynamics and operations of the capitalist market. The most significant concern of this paper as earlier noted is the direct implication of the socio-economic quagmire on the overall development of the individuals in Africa and other underdeveloped nations. In a nutshell, the individual in most African states is typically hopeless under the excruciating impact of political and economic maneuverings of national and international oppressive collaborators. These unbearable economic conditions experienced

by many Africans will continue unabated under the current neo-liberal economic and liberal democratic regimes.

The argument from the aforementioned is that in order to achieve the much desired sustainable development, it is fundamental to rethink the present principles which have dominated the African political and economic spheres. The need to redefine national development goals and strategies with priority for human development cannot be over emphasized. This is not an effort to demonize or castigate liberal democracy and neo-liberal capitalism as political and economic principles absolutely. These principles have delivered political stability and economic growth in some parts of the world, especially the industrialized America and the Western Europe. The position however, is that not only have they been practically unsuccessful in Africa, these principles are inconsistent with some fundamental African ideals about human person, society and the social order. One major problem with liberalism as an ethical framework for socio-economic and political order in Africa is its conception of man and his position in the scheme of things. It posits an idea of man which is extremely individualistic; suggesting that the individual is free to pursue his ambitions without any form of interference. Liberalism provides a justification for excessive accumulation of resources and wealth by the few exploitative individuals and groups under the guise of business or free market.

5. Existentialist Democracy: Balancing the Extremes of Collectivism and Individualism in Africa

The term existentialism is sometimes reserved to the work of Jean-Paul Sartre who used it to refer to his philosophy in the 1940s. But it is more often used as a general name for a number of thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that made the concrete individual central in their thought (Craig, 1998, p. 493). Kurt Reinhardt opines that the major theme of existentialism as the term indicates, “existence” can only be understood when conveyed by the German word “existenz” as an *ek-stasis*, a “standing out” from the mere biological vitality by which all subhuman forms of existence are characterized and circumscribed (1952, p. 15). The existent called “man” stands out from all other modes of existence in that it is not simply and statistically like plants and animals, or like inanimate tools, but has constantly and dynamically to affirm and to actualize his existence in self-knowledge and self-actualization.

Existentialism has a long history, having its ancestry in the works of the Sophists who claim that “Man is the measure of all things” and Socrates who asserted that “Man know thyself”. The Sophists’ inspiration on existentialism is significant because they took a relativist approach to ethics and social phenomena. However, modern existentialist doctrines are better appreciated in the works of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Jaspers, Merleau-Ponty, Buber, Marcel, Dostoevsky, among others. The central thesis of existentialism as a philosophical orientation is that “*existence precedes essence*”. But the exact meaning of this statement is as diverse as the various moods and emphases of different existentialist philosophers. However, all existentialist discourses have some elementary assumptions, which unite them despite their unique concerns. To this effect, Oyeshile describes the major tenets that characterize existentialism in the following remark:

Existentialism is concerned with man and his existence. It is a philosophy that takes off from the individual's standpoint and it is opposed to any objective, rationalistic and system building approach in providing solutions to the problems of the absurdities of life in which man is enmeshed. To many existentialists the individual is supposed to live an authentic life by playing the role of an actor rather than that of a spectator in the issues of life and existence (Oyeshile, 2005, p. 25).

While the above passage points to the nature of existentialism as a philosophical tradition that focuses on man as individual, MacIntyre enumerates some of the problems that this philosophical orientation addresses. These include the individual and his systems, intentionality, being and absurdity, the nature and significance of choice, the role of extreme experiences, and nature of communication (1967, p. 14). It is important to submit from the foregoing that existentialism deals with the problem of how man is to live in the world.

Giving an insight into the meaning of the "*individual*", Soren Kierkegaard, a notable figure in the existentialist orientation, contrasts the concept of the individual both with the concepts of the stereotype and the mass. In the same vein, all other existentialists reject any conceptual system that attempts to reduce all facts about man to a set of rationalist system about man. Dostoevsky emphasizes the unpredictable character of the universe and sees the individual appearing face to face with contingency. According to him, the individual responds naturally and spontaneously to every situation as it comes contingently within space and time. Existentialists hold that truth must start from subjectivity, that reality is in being acted, and that only by acting can man confer meaning into his existence. Truth, the existentialists say, is revealed in the subjective experience of the living human person. The truth about the nature of humans and their destiny is not grasped and stated adequately in abstract concepts or in propositions. A purely rationalistic approach may deal with universal principles that absorb the person into some all-embracing unity or system.

Existentialism emphasizes the uniqueness and primacy of existence-the inner, immediate experience of self-awareness. In existentialism, the fundamental drive is to exist and to be recognized as an individual. The most concrete and most meaningful point of reference for any individual remains his or her immediate consciousness, which cannot subsist in systems or abstractions. Abstract thinking in the existentialist view tends to be impersonal and lead away from the concrete human being and human situation. Hence, a person's inner life, with its moods, anxieties and decisions becomes the center of attention (Stumpf, 1975, p. 483). The uniqueness of every individual confers on him freedom and choice which constitute central concepts in existentialism. Choice is fundamental to human nature. Human beings are constantly confronted with choice making. Decision is a practical expression of the human nature as a choice making individual. Sartre maintains that men are condemned to freedom to choose; not to choose at all is a choice to be indifferent. For the existentialists, humans do not have any fixed nature

that determines or restricts their choices. As a summary, MacIntyre presents the three contentions of the existentialist thesis of freedom in the following words:

The first is that choice is ubiquitous. All my actions imply choices. Even when I do not choose explicitly, as I may do in majority of cases, my action bears witness to an implicit choice. The second contention is that although in many of my actions, my choices are governed by criteria, the criteria which I employ are themselves chosen and there are no rational grounds for such choices. The third is that no causal explanation of my actions can be given (Stumpf, 1975, p. 149).

This assertion exemplifies a theory pushed to its logical conclusion. In most cases, such theories often suffer internal inconsistencies. For instance, the Sartre's position on freedom and choice portends that man is naturally fixed or determined to act in a particular manner (to choose), contrary to which he cannot act. If man cannot decide not to choose, therefore, there is a foundation upon which a rational system could be erected about facts of man. Moreover, it follows that the individual is not to be conceived as appearing face to face with pure contingency, rather, he is faced with the necessity of choice, just as he cannot decide not to be free in the existentialist sense.

The notion of intersubjectivity is another basic feature that characterizes the existentialist philosophy. This notion is very germane to the understanding of the existentialist perspective of the problem that we are addressing in this paper, namely: the challenge of reconciling the autonomy of the individual and his responsibility to prioritize the community interests over his personal liberty. Many scholars have attempted to use the notion of intersubjectivity entrenched in existentialist ethics to provide a framework for resolving certain problems of social identity and the conflicts that are associated with it, a problem, which Oyeshile perceives as "the I's lack of consideration for the other" (Oyeshile, 2005, p. 30). For Jim Unah, the existentialist notion of intersubjectivity is a viable approach to resolving ethnic conflict or crisis because: We do not speak of conflict or crisis merely in the abstract, conflict, crises and turbulence are the products of concrete human situations (Unah, 2000, p. 237). Unah notes further that:

Generally, conflicts do not occur in a Robinson Crusoe situation. They occur fundamentally from social relatedness. Consequently, insofar as we are human beings living in a society, conflicts cannot but occur (Ibid.).

However, existentialism and the existentialist notion of intersubjectivity shall be explored here to address the critical human development issues in Africa. The questions as earlier stated in the introduction to the paper include: the extent at which the individual interests are considered in the formulation of development policies. What does sustainable development mean to the individual? What is the real measure of human development? What are the conditions for ensuring sustainable human development? What is the nature of interdependence (if any) between personal and national sustainable development?

This is against the backdrop of the apparent failure occasioned by the extremes of Marxist collectivism as typified by the Soviet Communism on the one hand and the liberal individualism typified by the Western Capitalism on the other hand. In the words of Robert Heilbroner, quoted by Robert Bellah, “Less than seventy-five years after it officially began, the contest between capitalism and socialism is over. The Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe have given us the clearest possible proof that capitalism organizes the material affairs of humankind more satisfactorily than socialism: that however inequitably or irresponsibly the marketplace may distribute goods, it does so better than the queues of a planned economy; however mindless the culture of commercialism, it is more attractive than state moralism; and however deceptive the ideology of business civilization, it is more believable than that of a socialist one...” (1992, p. 156).

Although the above passage underscores the “Triumph of capitalism” over socialism, it does not necessarily make liberalism the best available ideological or ethical framework for perceiving, understanding, analyzing and proffering solutions to human socio-economic and political challenges in all social contexts. Moreover, the passage quoted above reveals some fundamental shortcomings of liberal capitalism on the grounds of which it must be reviewed and possibly rejected as a development paradigm in Africa. It exposes the injustice that is prevalent in distribution and acquisition of privileges, goods and other material resources in the capitalist economy. The mindless nature of the capitalist culture suggests the fact that it is not human friendly. The capitalist economy is such that evaluates commercial activities from purely financial or monetary profit perspective. No wonder, despite the seeming success it has achieved in its degree of impact on the global economic landscape, the classical question “Can capitalism work?” has metamorphosed into “Can capitalism work well enough?”

Neither socialism nor liberal capitalism is an ideal ethical framework for real and meaningful human sustainable development. This assertion enjoys the validation of history and reason. The coercive power of the state in the socialist bloc and the consequent collapse of the Soviet Union is an actual historical experience that confronted humanity just after the World War II. In Africa, liberal democracy has not translated to good governance in most African democracies. In the same vein, neo-liberal capitalism does not only pose fundamental problems in Africa and other developing nations, Americans have woken to the reality of its devastating tendencies. Robert Bella captures this in the following statements:

Indeed I will argue that the greatest threat to our [American] genuine human happiness, to real community and to the creation of a good society comes not only from a state whose power becomes too coercive ... but from an economy that becomes too coercive, that invades our private and group lives and tempts us to a shallow competitive individualism that undermines all our connections to other people (1992, p. 157).

Having exposed the failure of both socialism and liberalism and their devastating historical experiments, one becomes eager to know the rational alternative for the African context in the pursuit of her

development goals within the global scope. In the build-up to the statement on the alternative ethics for human development in Africa, this paper insists that the realization of the desired human development requires a good government and a good economy which are complementary social and public institutions whose fundamental roles are the creation, protection and enhancement of a good society where the private wellbeing of the individual is qualitatively ensured. The quality of life of the individual is here emphasized as against the pure quantitative and statistical misrepresentations of neo-liberal “growth” or “progress”. For example employment data may reveal increase in the number of employed persons, but this may not necessarily imply an increase in the number of persons who are happy with their present employment. The increase in the number of employed citizens might correlate with the number of people who are alienated from their families. In the same way, growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the nation may not translate to reduction in the poverty level of the citizens. The state, embodied in government and the economy, embodied in commerce are essential aspects of human existence. They constitute part of the contingencies which confront man and within which the individual authenticity is concretized. Therefore, any attempt to eradicate either of these will amount to assault and violation of the individual authenticity. The paper also assumes that the realization of the desirable socio-political and economic order necessarily involves partnership between and synergy of the private (individual) and public (community) realms of existence.

There is need for Africans to reinvigorate those institutions that can provide real socially situated freedom and protect people from coercive state that Marx did not envisage and economic totalitarianism that Locke did not foresee. Development policies should be construed in such manner that recognizes the unique circumstance of every individual within the society on the one hand and the unique situation of every nation within the global community. Doing away with the political systems that constrain the participation of all rational individuals within the polity through various forms of barriers becomes necessary for the realization of real political freedom of the individual. Despite the several years of liberal democratic experiments in Africa, vast majority of Africans are alienated from political decisions and their outcomes in their respective countries. This possibly explains why electoral processes and activities in major parts of Africa have always been marred by violence and political apathy. Freedom is essential in the definition of a good society or polity. However, it is important that the individual understands what freedom really means. In the context of this paper, freedom does not mean to be left alone or disconnected from other people or getting away with all of one’s desires and appetites without any form of control. Rather, freedom of the individual derives from his ability to consciously relate with contingency that confronts him with full responsibility and accountability to his conscience and the community. Freedom should exist within and be guaranteed by institutions such as the right to participate in the decisions that affect one’s live. The kind of freedom that consistently sets the individual private interests against the collective aspirations of the community is self-destructive on the long run. This understanding of the notion of freedom provides an incentive for a new democratic experiment in Africa.

Really, there is urgent need for new democratic experiments in Africa; not in the pattern of liberal democracy but such that reconciles the political interests of the individuals within the communal political landscape of the society. The new experiments in democracy involve a newly extended and enhanced set of democratic institutions within which citizens can learn to discern better what they really want and what they ought to want if they are to live good and sustainable lives. This new experiment requires a new understanding of the interdependence between the individual and the community which is embodied in public institutions. Unlike the classical liberals which radically dichotomized the “private” individual and the “public” institutions as separate autonomous realms, the new pattern of democracy construes institutions as outcomes of continual individual interactions and participation in public domain. This form of democracy is such that is governed by intelligent public opinion and participation (Bella, 1992, p. 161). Institutions are not objective mechanisms that are essentially separate from the lives of the individuals that inhabit them. In other words, the community is not essentially separate from the individuals within the community. To imagine a world in which the individual can be autonomous from institutions and from other people is not only misleading but also unrealistic. In a nutshell, the position here is that the liberal pattern of democracy be jettisoned because it dictates a problematic attitude towards social institutions; the consequence of which has been devastating to African traditional institutions and peoples.

One of the features of democracy is that it cannot be comfortably restricted to a single set of features. As a concept, it cannot be reduced to the assembly of all the citizens in the polity. It does not mean simply the regime of individual rights and representative government established since the eighteenth century in America. Democracy is not just about elections and majority rule which has been the case in many African democracies. Therefore, the very essence of democracy which includes the participation, dignity and equality of all becomes the primary basis of assessment of all democratic dispensations. The assessment of current democratic dispensations in Africa judging on the basis of the real essence of democracy reveals an unpleasant scenario, hence, the insistence on new democratic experiments suited for specific national social contexts.

Against the backdrop of earlier discussion, this paper proposes “existentialist democracy” as an alternative ethical framework for the new democratic experiments in Africa and other developing parts of the world. Possibly in future publications, I will be able to argue and prove that existentialist democracy is not only the hope for the entire humanity but an inevitable political path. Drawing from the existentialist philosophical traditions briefly highlighted above, existentialist democracy is premised on the principle of the authenticity of the individual which reflects within the dynamics of intersection of personal autonomy and responsibility to public institutions which he jointly created with others or consented to in principle. Every individual in an existentialist democratic arrangement takes ownership of the public institutions that in turn influence his socio-economic existence including the democratic process. The existentialist position according to Unah is that the *Dasein* (man) is not only a being-in-the-world; he is also a being-with-others (Unah, 1996, p. 60). The authenticity (dignity) of the

individual necessarily requires his participation in the “phenomenal field” (community) (Low, 1996, p. 382). Heidegger reiterates this point when he claims that when a man appears on the scene of existence, he is immediately aware not only of objects, but of other human beings as well. In other words, individual existence is inevitably knitted with the existence of others. To survive therefore, the individual must pursue his goals and projects such as will make possible the survival of goals of others. Oyeshile further comments on this as follows: “As *Daseins*, both at the individual and ethnic group levels, survival is only possible if and only if we recognize the importance of others not as mere objects standing in the way of achieving our goal of survival, but as ends in themselves who are not only important but also inevitable and inescapable in the realization of our goal of survival and freedom” (Oyeshile, 2005, p. 33). The much taunted freedom that classical liberalism promised is paradoxically unrealizable under the liberal socio-political paradigm. The idea of the freedom of the individual outside the limits of the society or social institutions is an impracticable and abstract ideology.

Some of the basic constituting elements of existentialist democracy include: democratic dialogue, equality before the law (the rule of law) and very importantly, internal capacity to respond to political contingencies. Democracy requires a consistent belief in the possibility of resolving disputes and managing differences through rational deliberation. Undistorted communication is vital in a democratic setting in which there is a cooperative undertaking (Irele, 1998, p. 15), instead of having a dominant group suppress the other through either subtle or evident violence or through intimidation. In the absence of such a cooperative undertaking, the dialogic communicative democracy becomes impossible. Democracy becomes very expedient in multicultural societies such as many countries in Africa, because it caters for diversity and difference of opinions. Democracy relies on the dialogical process as the source of authority and the means of choosing among competing alternatives. What emerges from the above conception of democracy is that existentialist democracy entails a socio-political space where there is an unconstrained participation of all citizens in a free and rational public debate which could only take place in the public sphere. Moreover, the social world is to a large extent unpredictable, thereby leaving the individual appearing face to face with contingency. The individual and every group of individuals (society) are expected to respond naturally and spontaneously to every situation as it comes contingently within space and time. Therefore, any form of system that locks up the individual within a theoretical enclosure or rigid thought pattern denies the authentic existence of the individual and by extension, that of the society. The new democratic experiment in Africa, in the form of existentialist democracy is therefore equipped with the internal capacity to constantly respond and adjust to political contingencies as they unfold.

With the elements mentioned above, redeeming the hope of participation, dignity and equality in Africa is possible by adopting and entrenching existentialist democracy as the political and economic paradigm on the continent. This new democratic experiment aims to address the fundamentals of current social, political and economic challenges in Africa which include among others; growing inequality of income and property distribution, exploitation and marginalization of (marginalized) communities, alien political

institutions and hostile economic policies. Finally in this section, the spirit of existentialist democracy which inspired this article is captured below:

If we can, and I deeply believe we can, recreate a genuinely democratic institutional structure in the heart of the economy and the state, then we will realize ourselves as ethical individuals, able to combine autonomy and responsibility, because we have created the institutions that both express and enable that kind of democratic personhood to appear (Bella, 1992, p. 163).

6. Human Freedoms and Sustainable Development in Africa

It has earlier been mentioned in this paper that the very essence of democracy is the participation, dignity and equality of human persons within the society. This assertion has dual but related meanings. On the one hand, democracy provides opportunity for individual participation in public life; promotes dignity of individuals and advocates equality of human persons. On the other hand, unhindered participation of the individual in public affairs, dignity of the individual and adherence to the principle of equality of persons are necessary conditions for successful democratic experience. This feature of democracy confers on it something more than being a political ideology but a worldview through which individual and group lives are organized. Democracy becomes a continuous process for the realization of the real freedoms of the individual. In the democratic disposition that this work proposes, political and economic institutions and policies are formulated or adopted by the people in order to ensure their real freedoms. The goodness, prosperity and peace of the society, is in relation to the extent at which the freedoms of the citizen are guaranteed. The concept of freedom employed here is inclusive in the sense that it accommodates both the positive and negative conceptions of the term. In its positive conception, freedom involves the ability of the individual to express his authenticity such as participation in the decisions that affect his life, the dignity expressed in being recognized and respected by other people, and a fair system that ensures equity. In its negative conception, freedom involves escaping those hurdles or barriers against the realization of personal happiness. All of these constitute what is referred to as real or substantive human freedoms. It makes more meaning then when development, and indeed civilization is described as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.

The focus on freedom contrasts development paradigm based on existentialist democracy with the narrower liberal development regime. The latter identifies development with the growth in gross national products, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with industrialization, or with technological advances, or with social modernization. These are indeed very important as means to expanding the freedoms that the individuals in the society enjoy. However, it is not proper to consider any or all of them as sufficient requirements or as ends. Besides the GNP/GDP, personal incomes, industrialization, technology and modernization, freedoms depend on other determinants and influences such as economic and social arrangements as well as political and civil rights. If freedom is what development advances, then

development agenda in Africa should focus on this overarching objective. Concerted efforts should be made at appropriating all resources for the expansion of substantive freedoms of the individuals on the continent.

While development requires the removal of major sources of “unfreedom” such as poverty, tyranny, systematic social deprivation, economic injustice, neglect of public facilities, intolerance, excesses of repressive governments, sustainable development requires the creation and recreation of opportunities and institutions that promote the substantive freedoms of individuals such as education, health care, security, rule of law, family values, social justice and democratic dialogue. The issue of human freedoms is critical in the African development discourse because it provides an ethical justification for the new experiments in the African democratic and development projects in the first place. It is observed that despite the unprecedented increase in the overall opulence, the contemporary world denies elementary freedoms to the majority of people. The lack of substantive freedoms could be as a result of economic poverty, which denies people their freedom to satisfy hunger, to purchase sufficient nutrition, to obtain remedies for treatable illnesses, to access decent shelter and clothing, to enjoy clean water and sanitary facilities. In some cases, the lack of substantive freedom relates to the lack of public facilities and social care such as the absence of epidemiological programs, absence of organized arrangements for health care or educational facilities, absence of effective institutions for the maintenance of local peace and order. In other cases, human freedoms are violated as a result of denial of political and civil liberties by authoritarian regimes and from imposed restrictions on the freedom to participate in the social, political and economic life of the community. Looking at all these cases, one could easily argue that there is hardly any part of the world where substantive freedoms of the individuals are fully guaranteed or expressed. There is strong argument arising from this that there is no part of the world that is fully developed and there cannot be any of such because development is a process, an unending pathway toward a better livelihood and greater freedoms. Development “is not a goal or state to which one can drive in a definite way, but it is the continuous ‘march forward’ of the human family towards perfect fulfilment” (Ehusani, 1991, p. 244). Ehusani argues for the progressive conception of development and submits that no society has been able to provide for its citizens all that is necessary for perfect human fulfilment:

Not the countries of Africa[,] where poverty and diseases are a daily scourge, and certainly not the United States of America[,] which now groans under the violent reign of narcotics. The truth is that no land and no people are ever fully developed, but are expected to be always advancing towards new frontiers[,] which are to be discovered along the way (1991, p. 244).

Freedom is central to the process of development for “evaluative” and “effectiveness” purposes. On the one hand, assessment of development has to be done primarily in terms of enhancing the freedoms that people enjoy. On the other hand, the achievement of development is heavily dependent on the free

agency of people. The substantive freedoms that the individual enjoys such as the liberty of political participation, opportunities to receive basic education and healthcare are very effective in contributing to economic progress and overall development. When national development is pursued in line with the narrow neo-liberal mindset which tends to reduce development to economic progress, the realization of sustainable development of the individual and the society becomes impossible. The antithesis that this kind of reasoning poses against human freedoms is aptly captured below:

In pursuit of economic development, human beings have abused the biosphere in their way to economic ascendancy; they have violated the peaceful cohabitation of their fellows, as in slavery and the slave trade. The blind pursuit of economic growth has brought the current calamitous conditions upon them. Environmental degradation, social breakdown, moral decadence, psychological turmoil, cultural dislocation, insecurity, and economic depression are some of the problems that threaten their [human] very existence (Adekeye, 2014, p. 110).

Under the neo-liberal paradigm of development, human freedoms are directly and indirectly withdrawn and vast majority of the populations in Africa is enslaved and alienated. In some communities in Africa, due to the operations of some multinational organizations, even the freedoms of the future generations has been extremely constrained. Globally, not only are individuals enslaved and alienated by the dominant economic and political systems, many have lost hope and have resigned to fate. As a show of despair, there have been reported cases of suicide and suicidal tendencies even among the seemingly affluent populations. The high rate of criminality and insecurity in Africa such as human trafficking, drug peddling, kidnapping and morally questionable trades such as prostitution and ritual killings have been blamed on excessive crave for material acquisition which is the trade mark of neo-liberal economic system. The current situation in Africa as it is described is reinforced by cultural dislocation. The present generation of Africans is grossly disconnected with the traditional value systems that have sustained a prosperous and peaceful socio-economic order.

In a bid to realize and enhance human freedoms in Africa, there is urgent need for the idea of sustainable development which provides a framework under which communities in Africa can use resources efficiently, create efficient infrastructures and relationships, protect and enhance the quality of lives, and create new businesses to strengthen their economies. Sustainable development helps create healthy societies, which can sustain the present generation as well as those that follow via the judicious use of economic, environmental, and cultural resources. Sustainable development for Africa and her people requires real incomes to rise, educational standards to increase, the health of the nation to improve, and the general quality of life to be advanced (Pearce, 1989, p. 2). The quality of life therefore is measured according to the level of human freedoms that the individual can legitimately enjoy. This paper subscribes to a view of development as an integrated process of expanding substantive freedoms that

connect with one another. Freedoms from hunger, diseases, ignorance, insecurity, and homelessness, freedom from excessive state totalitarianism and freedom from market exploitations are the direct deliverables of the new existentialist democratic system that this paper argues in favour.

7. Conclusion

The development of the human person, that is, human development is not just a necessity for the realization of sustainable national development; it also serves as a basis for assessing and evaluating national development strides. National development should be pursued with the aim of meeting the individual's material, psychological and spiritual wellbeing. Contrary to what currently obtains, an appropriate development ethics for Africa is such that promotes a well-reasoned balance of all the dimension of the human person. Such ethical framework for human development depends on an adequate understanding of the individual as a person and his/her relationship with his socio-political environment. Having reviewed the socialist collectivism and liberal individualism as theories for the understanding of the "group" and "individual" relationship, the paper submits that none of the theories is adequate in its reasoning as either of them pursues its conclusions in a manner that leads to internal contradictions. Moreover, an historical assessment of the two theories as practical socio-economic paradigms as exposed in this paper suggests the immediate need for an alternative theory leading to new paradigm for African development. Drawing from the existentialist tradition and ideas, this paper proposes an alternative ethics to socialism and liberalism as a framework for understanding the individual, the society, the interdependence and the consequent realization of human development goals in Africa. Existentialist democracy is unique and desirable in the sense that it is reconciliatory in principle and practice. That is, it positions, preserves and promotes the authenticity, happiness and freedoms of the individual and the collective good of the community as mutually inclusive ends.

The paper has been able to conceptualize an alternative understanding of human freedom which is defined within and in relation to the structures, limits and aspirations of the society. It argues that the freedom that the individual enjoys determines the quality of his/her contribution to the growth and development of the society. The freedom of the individual is also determined radically by the structures, institutions and processes which the individual in conjunction with others has established. One the one hand, this form of mutual interdependence demands that the individual be equipped with the right atmosphere for maximization of his/her freedom and minimization or eradication of conditions of "unfreedom". On the other hand, the individual should be committed to the public process through direct participation at all levels of public discourse. Simply, the main argument of this paper is that human development, which is integral to sustainable national development, is measured by the degree of freedoms that the individual legitimately enjoys as provided by the canons, structures and institutions of the society. Existentialist democracy is identified as the appropriate socio-political ethics for Africa in her quest for sustainable development in which capacities for human freedoms are enhanced.

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