Humanism, Religion and National Development

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Abstract

There is a flow to history and culture. This flow is rooted and has its wellspring in the thoughts of people. People are unique in the inner life of the mind - what they are in their thought world determines how they act. This is true of their value systems and it is true of their creativity. Further, people have presuppositions, and they will live more consistently on the basis of their presuppositions than even they themselves may realize. By presuppositions we mean the basic way the individual looks at life, his basic world view. To understand our intellectual ideas, our Cultural and Political live-we must trace three lines in history, namely: The Philosophic (Humanity), Religious (faith) and the Scientific (National Development Strategies) to establish how a benevolent mixture of all three concepts can be beneficial to humanity. This is based on the framework that it is the right mélange of Humanism, and Religion that will enhance National Development. Using the desktop research model, the paper suggests a form of diluted religious

practice that pays greater attention to humanity, f our stay on planet earth will be worthwhile.

Key Words: Humanity, Development, Religion, Science, National.

Introduction

There is a flow to history and culture. This flow is rooted and has its wellspring in the thoughts of people. People are unique in the inner life of the mind - what they are in their thought world determines how they act. This is true of their value systems and it is true of their creativity. It is true of their corporate actions, such as political decisions, and it is true of their personal lives. The results of their thought world flow through their fingers or from their tongues into the external world. This is true of the Sculptor's chisel, and it is true of a dictator's decrees.

People have presupposition, and they will live more consistently on the basis of these presuppositions than even they themselves may realize. By *Presuppositions* we mean the basic way an individual looks at life, his basic world view, the grid through which he sees the world. Presuppositions rest upon that which a person considers to be the truth of what exist. People's presupposition lay a grid for all they bring forth into the external world. Their presuppositions also provide the basis for their values and therefore the basis for their decisions.

An individual is not just the product of the forces around him. He has a mind, an inner world. Then, having thought, a person can bring forth actions into the external world and thus influence it. People are apt to look at the outer theater of action, forgetting the actor who "lives in the mind" and who therefore is the true actor in the external world. The inner thought world determines the outward action.

Most people catch their presupposition from their family and surrounding society the way a child catches measles. But people with more understanding realize that their presuppositions should be chosen after a careful consideration of what world view is true.

To understand where we are in today's world — in our intellectual ideas and in our cultural and political lives — we must trace three lines in history, namely: the philosophic (Humanity), the scientific (National Development Strategies) and the Religious. The philosophic seeks intellectual answers to the basic questions of life. The scientific has two parts: first, the makeup of the physical universe and then the practical application of what it discovers in technology. The direction in which science will move is set by the philosophic world view of the scientist. People's religious view also determines the direction of their individual lives and of their society. Having said so, it may be necessary to begin with delineations.

Humanism in an unencumbered form could be described as MAN-centered movement, organization, association or even religion. It is the coming together of adherents, void of deity centered worship. However, the muddy conceptual waters of this complicated imprecise philosophical term gets even more confusing when slew qualifying adjectives are added to the term-humanism. Thus, one hears Religious Humanism, Christian Humanism, Unitarian Humanism, Humanistic Buddhism, Jewish humanism and so on. But for our purpose, Humanism refers to "Secular Humanism" which is a non - religious approach to life and living.

The concept "Humanism" is not new. When in the Holy Book the Master told His disciples "whatsoever you do to the least of these ones, that you do unto me" (Matthew 25:40). He was inadvertently speaking Humanism or when the master asks "How can you claim to love God whom you can't see, when you love not your neighbor who you see" (1 John 4:20). However, this is Christianity and it is different from Religious Humanism which is an integral part of humanists' ethical philosophy with congregational but, non-theistic rituals, and communal activity which centers on human needs, interest and abilities.

Earliest form of Humanism could be traced to the Middle Ages when the pristine Christianity set forth in the New Testament gradually became distorted in spite of the teachings of leaders like Ambrose of Milan (339 – 397) and Augustine (354 – 430). A humanistic element was added:

increasingly, the authority of the church took precedence over the teachings of the Bible. And there was an over-growing emphasis on salvation as resting on man's meriting the merit of Christ, instead of on Christ's work alone. While such humanistic elements were somewhat different from the humanistic elements of the Renaissance, and that of a more modern era, the concept was essentially the same, in that it was man taking to himself that which belong to God. Much of Christianity up until the sixtieth century was either reaction against or reaffirmation of these distortions of the original Christian, biblical teaching (Schaefter 1976).

By the seventieth century, Secular Humanism has surfaced in France with the French Revolution which gave birth to ***cult de la Raison*** (the cult of Reason) and became the precursor of the Atheist Movement. It was at this period the ***'Notre Dame de Paris'*** *(our lady of Paris) was turned into a "Temple of Reason"* and for a time "Lady Liberty" replaced the "Virgin Mary' on several altars (Harrick, 2004).

From hence there was breath taking developments with the concepts of Positivism (the religion of humanity) founded in the 1850s, and the Humanistic Religious Associations in 1853 which served as a propelling force for the spread of Secular Humanism. By the dawn of the eighteenth century, Humanism Movement has arrived the United States, United Kingdom, Scandinavia and Belgium; with the Ethical Culture Movement in 1876 whose main objective was to rid traditional religious belief of unscientific dogmas while retaining and elevating the ethical message at the heart of all religions, since in the true sense of it, religion is not compactable with science, therefore care should be taken while preserving religions dogmas, to be free enough to pursue and explore the physical world. Secular Humanism beliefs that religion teaches important lessons about the world, but these lessons are expressed through metaphors that do not suit modern learning and understanding of the world.

Take for instance, while democratic relationships were now understood to be the ideal; monotheistic religions were based on a metaphor of an authoritarian monarchy. Ethical Culture was a religion by addressing

issues of ultimate concern. To this role however, some elements of ritual were introduced by way of marking special times and providing a tangible reminder of the humanistic ideals.

In sum, it could be said that humanists are not strictly Atheists. But, in the main, they constitute about 90% percent adherents who believe that 'Man' should be the central focus in devotions, instead of all efforts geared toward the worship of an unseen, or some abstract deity which could best be interpreted as superstition

Several attempts have been made at defining Religion. However, of all the definitions available in literature, the one that suits our purpose most; is religion as a particular system of belief that elicits a form of worship and behavior among its adherents (Eboh 1997). In this sense, all religions are 'received forms' in that; we grow to accept same as truths that lead to some 'good' in the future. Suffice it to state here, that Religion is of antique origin but, influences man in contemporary society. Consequently, as there are several belief systems, some of very old origin and others comparatively recent, so are there adherents. But, it should be noted that, the religiosity of an individual adherent to any religion is born out of self interest in the first place, a personal persuasion. We shall look at this claim more closely, and in a greater detail in later paragraph, but for now, it suffices to say that religion is Man-made, often in quest for some favor from 'higher' authority.

Conversely, National Development entails more mundane, worldly matters. National Development is the aggregate increase; growth in human capital, and material resources of a land space, referred to as a nation over time. This runs in a continuum of the standard of living of the citizenry to infrastructural correctness (adequacy) (Asimiea 2018, Arinze 2009). However, Adeyemi (2019) has opined that to the above, must be included institutions at the various levels of government of nations. We shall therefore attempt a working definition of the concept as a group of people who inhabits a space with an independent government, and their experience in the area of growth in all aspects- people, institutions and

infrastructure. We shall not present a discourse on all three concepts and make our thesis.

Humanism

As we have hinted earlier, humanism became an influential part of religion in the early twentieth 20th century and remains strong to this day; moving from liberal Christian view about Jesus and human nature to a rich pluralism that includes theist and atheist, agnostic and humanist, pagan, Christian, Jew and Buddhist. We shall therefore dwell on the Unitarian Universalism Humanists which is the largest in the U.S. as a case study that will give a glimpse into Humanism's key principles- their mission statements, core values and aspirations, among others. Consequently, our research resulted in collecting and analyzing, key statements by Humanists of different societies randomly, as a précis of what Humanism is all about, because of time and space. To begin with, in addressing the question: what does Humanism Means? We shall be looking at Helen Bennett's (Director of Adult Education in the UU Friendship Fellowship in Rockledge, Florida) view on humanism in her well publicized poem "What Humanism Means to Me" which is reproduced below:

"What Humanism mean to me"

Humanism means to me
A chance to feet I'm really free
To take responsibility
For all I choose to do and be
I don't demand a deity
To dominate my destiny,
But I decide the ends 1 deem
Most worthy of my self— esteem.
Creating purposes and goals
Nourishes all human souls
Our ethics we ourselves have wrought
From social need and human though

Words like prayer and soul grace
For me, will always have a place
As metaphors for what we'd teach
Beyond the realm of concrete speech
Mythology mid metaphor
Can help us penetrate the core
Of mystery, that source of art
That may reveal the human heart

Unlimited capacity
For good or ill, tenacity
And products of the human mind
Promote my faith in humankind
We have the power to postulate
A world that's free of fear and hate,
Where love and tolerance hold sway,
And no one is compelled to pray.
The best ideals, the thought of God
Emanate from humble sod,
For men and women have created
Every concept we've debates
From Shakespeare's art to Hitler's pain,
We take the sunshine with the rain
With humanism as our guide
Faith and reason coincide,
And in our hands lies Nature's fate,
To nurture or to desecrate
Evil can cause us to fail,
But I think goodness will prevail,
Though orthodoxies throw a rope
Humanism is our hope.

The above captures the spirit and letter of Humanism. There are also a number of statements that enunciated the principles of humanism that cover a wide range of humanist concerns. Essentially, one veritable source is the different HUMANISTS Manifestos and other documents that summarize the key principles of Humanism and what they stand for. Take for instance: in the Humanist Manifesto 1 of 1973, it is clearly stated that in place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer, The Humanist finds religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a co-operative effort to promote social well-being. That, "The goal of Humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently co-operate for the common good" (http:Ilamericanhumanist.org/ Humanism Humanist Manifesto 1) 1973.
Further, in the Humanist Manifesto II (1973). The preface states that" Humanism is an ethical process through which we all can move above and beyond the divisive particulars, heroic personalities, dogmatic creeds, and ritual customs of past religions or their mere negation," and from the closing sentence, 'we will survive and prosper only in a world of shared humane values... At the present picture of history, commitment to all humankind is the highest commitment of which we are capable" (http://amereianhumanist.orgj'Humanism/Humanist Manifesto II) 1973.
Where as in Humanist Manifesto III: Humanism and its Aspirations (2003) A phrase reads "Thus engaged in the flow of life, we aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress towards its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and our alone."
(http://americanhumanist.org/HumanismJHumanist Manifesto III) 2003.
The document "Amsterdam Declaration 2002 (international Humanist and Ethical Union) states "Humanism is a life stance aiming at the maximum possible fulfillment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living and offers an ethical and rational means of addressing the challenges of our times". Humanism can be a way of life for everyone, everywhere. (http:Ilihetr.orWhumanism/the -Amsterdam - declaration) 2002.

A close study of the poem "What Humanism Means to Me" quoted above, and summation of the phrases culled from the Humanist Manifestos and other documents indicate that Humanism is not a particularly complicated idea. It is not a set of beliefs so much as it is set of commitments. Humanism means holding concern for" THIS "- Worldly matters rather than other — worldly matters and being committed to that which improves, the human condition in 'THIS' World..."(Paradise is 'Excellent' but for now, we are here on earth let's make our stay what while!)".

In sum, Humanism is non- dogmatic and open-ended. It is the belief that human beings are the source of meaning and values. It is a scientific search; self - correcting and open to change with new knowledge and new insights. Humanism is deeply concerned with ethics and values, but rather than telling people what they should or should not do, Humanism insists on their search for values and attempts to help them achieve their full positive potential as human beings. Humanist see humanity as having the capacity for continued growth and development, and they accept responsibility for encouraging that growth. Humanist are naturalists, they support 'facts' not 'faith', by being committed to pursuing fact- based initiatives that will help sustain the planet, the environment and humanity itself for the greatest number of future generations. In a nutshell Humanism is all about humankind and his environment, and how to make the best out of live and living. Let's now look at Religion, the origin, aims, objective, key principle and core values etc.

Religion

Like most terms in the Humanities, an attempt at a universally acceptable description of the term Religion has not been successful. We acknowledge the various definitions, and our take in this present paper includes all; and even more of the definitions, in so far as they shed light in one way or other in our understanding of the concept and will in any way help to clarify our understanding of the term.

Historically, the earliest evidence of religion dates back several hundred thousand years to the middle and lower Paleolithic periods. Archaeologists refer to apparent intentional burials of early Homo sapiens from as early as 300,000 years ago as evidence of religious idea (Grave 1955). Other evidence of religious idea includes symbolic artifacts from Middle Stone Age sites in Africa. However, decoding and interpretation of early Paleolithic artifact, with regards to how they relate to religious ideas, remain controversial. Archaeological evidence from more recent periods is less controversial. Radiocarbon scientists generally interpret a number of artifacts from the upper Paleolithic (50,000-13,000 BCE) as representing religious ideas. The lions Man, the Venus figurines, cave paintings from Chauret cave and the elaborate ritual burial from Sungir are the examples of Upper Paleolithic remains associated with religious beliefs. Researchers in the ninetieth century proposed various theories regarding the origin of religion, challenging earlier claims of Christianity- as unreligious. Early theorists Edward Burnett Tylor (1 832-1917) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) proposed the concept of animism, while archaeologist John Lubbock (1834-1913) used the term "fetishism'' Meanwhile, religious scholar Max Miller(1823-1900) theorized that religion began in hedonism and folklorist Wilhelm Manhardi (1831-1880) suggested that religion began is "naturalism" by which he meant mythological explanation of natural events (EUIEA 1930), suffice it say that all these theories have since been widely criticized, there is no broad based consensus regarding the Origin of religion.

According to the 'World's First Temple" in Archaeology Magazine (2008) Pre- Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA) Gobekil Tepe, the oldest religious site yet discovered anywhere includes circles of erected massive T- shaped stone pillars, the world's oldest known megalithic Sagona (2016), decorated with abstract, enigmatic pictograms and carved animal relics. The site, near the home place of original wild wheat, was built before the so —called Neolithic Revolution, i.e the beginning of agriculture and animal husbandry around 9000 BCE. The search is currently continuing. The site,

abandoned around the time the first agricultural societies started, is still being excavated and analyze and thus might shed light to the significance it had for the region's older, foraging communities, as well as for the general history of religions. Away from the antique origin of religion, Nongbri (2013), Harrison (1999) have noted that what we conceive as organized religion today was formed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, despite the fact that ancient sacred texts like the Quran, the Bible, and others did not have the term religion mentioned in the original languages, neither did the people or the culture in which these sacred texts were written had equivalent for the concept — (Morreal, John, Sonn, Tamara 2013).

The establishment of present day world religions throughout Euroasia during the Middle Age by:

- Christianity of the Western World,
- Buddhist mission to East Asia,
- The decline of Buddhism in the Indian Subcontinent,
- The spread of Islam throughout the Middle East, Central Asia, North Africa and Parts of Europe and India are all by anthropogenic forces.

Advantages of Religion

Organized religion emerges as a means of providing social and economic stability to large population by way of: organized religions serving to justify a central authority, which in turn possessed the right to collect taxes in return for providing social and security service to the state. The empires of India, and Mesopotamia were theocracies, with chiefs, kings and emperors performing dual function of political and Spiritual leader (Sharmer 2014), virtually in all state structures where political authority is justified by divine Sanction. Organized religions emerged as a means of maintaining peace between unrelated individuals, and states and nations include thousands or millions of unrelated individuals. Further, these unrelated individual are bonded by religion, who would have been otherwise more prone to enmity.

Karl Marx on Religion

Marx (1844) Sees society as being made up of two classes: the" have" and the" have not' (the rich and the poor). In Marx's view the social structure of society was such that the wealthy controls all elements of production and to become wealthier off the labour of the working class. This structure, Marx believed was the capitalist system that created a feeling of alienation and powerlessness for the workers to accept their plight in this 'life', since in a future life to come, things will be better. To Marx, religion is also a tool used by the wealthy to unconsciously control the masses, or the ordinary people.

To be sure, Marx did not object to a spiritual life; rather, he thought it was necessary. In the "Wages of Labour" (1844), Marx explained "to develop in greater Spiritual freedom, a people must break their bondage to their bodily needs - they must cease to be the slaves of the body. They must, above all, have time at their disposal for spiritual creative activities and spiritual enjoyment.

Marx insists that whereas religion served a purpose in society, he did not agree as to the basis of the function. In the first place, religion entails faith or teachings that are held to be true without any empirical investigation. Religion teaches morality, values, and beliefs that a society will hold it evaluation of behavior against. However, Marx had a hard time believing in intangible truths. The basis of his argument is that human should be led by reason and that religion was masking the truth, and misguiding followers. Marx believed that when one views society and life through the lens of religion; they are blinded to the realities of their life. Religion, then, was a false hope and comfort to the poor. He saw that the poor used their religions as a means to find comfort in their circumstance thus aiding in the process of alienation. Therefore Religion is the Opium of the people; as a form of a sanctuary for the poor, from their immediate suffering. According to Zinn (2012), Marx "Saw religion, not just negatively as the opium of the people but positively as a sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the

heartless world, the soul of the soulless conditions". Let us now turn briefly to what National Development portends.

National Developments

It would appear that, nearly every writer has a different definition for the concept National development. This, to a large extent is because of the very comprehensive nature of the term National Development. National Development includes all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation. It is holistic in approach. It is a process of continuous reconstruction and development in various sectors of a nation, and the development of individuals. It includes full-growth and expansion of a nation's industries, agriculture, social, Cultural, religious and educational institutions. Further, national development implies development of a nation as a whole. In fact, national development can best be defined as the all- round and balanced development of different facets and aspects of the nation via: political, social, economic, scientific, cultural and material. Todaro (2019) is of the opinion that "national development is not purely an economic phenomenon, but rather a multidimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system brought about by humans". (Emphasis added). Pressing further, Todaro (2019) holds that national development is the process of improving the quality of all human lives from three equally important ends:

(i) Creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institution which promote human dignity and respect.

(ii) Raising people's living levels, that is incomes and consumption levels of food, medical services, education through relevant growth processes and (iii) Increasing people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables; for instance varieties of goods and service.

In the interim, it should be noted that to Todaro (2019) all three string objective of national development seems to center on the human person.
On his part Vaizey (2014), a noted economist, defines National Development as the total effect of all citizen forces and addition to the stock of physical, human resources, Knowledge and Skill. The United Nations Decade Report described 'National development as 'growth plus change. Change in turn, is social and cultural as well as economic and qualitative as well as qualitative" Broadly speaking, development of a nation encapsulates such indices as:

(i) Development through a planned national economy
(ii) Increase in agricultural production through application of modern technical know how
(iii) Development of Human resource
(iv) Harnessing industrial production
(v) Application of science and technology in the production in the production sub sector
(vi) Provision of Mass education and
(vii) Provision of various facilities to meet the aspiration and needs of disadvantaged, deprived and poorest of the poor segments of populations.

However, alternative interpretation of national development exist which focus on Economic Growth. Here, commodity output as opposed to people is emphasized — measures of growth in GNP. What should be noted here is the persistence of a dual economy when the export sector contains small number of workers but draws technology as opposed to traditional sector where most people work, and is dominated by inefficient technology. Another alternative focuses on national development as modernization. This emphasizes the process of social change which is required to produce economic advancement, examine changes in social, psychological and political processes. It also entails how to develop wealth oriented behavior and values in individuals, profit seeking rather that subsistence and self

sufficiency, and a conscious shift from commodity to human approach with investment in education and skill training. Further interpretation of National development has paid attention to distributive justice, where national development is viewed as improving basic needs in the justice delivery system. Indices of nations that are under developed is usually characterized by low per capita incomes (PCI), Low literacy and educational attainment, lack of basic service. This may include water and power among others. Though, earlier Scholars have hinged the absence of national development on the physical environment, particularly certain cultural traditions and values systems-environmental and cultural determinism. True, lack of national resources certainly impede national development but, national development, is possible without national resource looking at the example of Japan, Israel, Singapore, Malaysia etc. What then are some of the Problems of national development?

Impediments to National Development:

- Tardy economic growth in term of G.N.P and standard of living,
- Large scale unemployment and under-employment,
- Large pool of illiteracy,
- Rapid growth of population
- Challenges of national and emotional integration
- Inertia to change process,
- Slow process of modernization
- Problem of evolving a democratic, socialistic and secular order
- Incidence of poverty and poor standard of living
- Phenomenon of urbanization and its allied malaise
- Lethargic attitude of people to the core value of work and unwillingness to take responsibility
- Mismatch between moral and scientific values.

Conversely, any nation in which the above phenomena are largely absent or are at best, very minimal is said to be developed. One important observation in our discussion of National Development so far, is that the

human being is central to National Development, and what amounts to National Development efforts or the lack of it, outside National Resources hinges on anthropogenic forces. Further, it should be noted that elements of National Development are both tangible, scientifically observable and not 'faith' based. We shall now turn to presenting a discourse on all three concepts - Humanism, Religion and National Development with the aim of trying to see their inter-relatedness or otherwise. Our thesis will try to answer the question: How should we then live? (Schaeffer 1976).

On a thorough analysis of all three concepts, the points of salience that emerge for consideration are: that religion is both important and beneficial to humankind to the extent that religion teaches important lessons on morality and conduct. It serves as a standard by which a given society judges conducts of people. Religion serves as a sanctuary to the oppressed and down trodden in this world, with the hope of better life to come. It serves as an escape route for the masses (as opium of the people). Religion stresses 'faith' that is beyond the physical and hinges on some future occurrence. It is not scientifically amenable to any form of empirical studies "Just belief and you shall see".

On the other hand, while Humanism like religion stresses love for humankind, it also stresses the need to search for the truth (scientific exploration of the environment and the world); facts- based living. Humanism stresses further, that what matters is to explore what the physical world can offer for the good, and well being of human beings.

National development is anchored on what science and technology can offer to humanity for the wellbeing of humankind in this world, some of which are hydro-carbon, electricity, fossil fuel, space science, digitalization processes and more. Humanism's central theme is freedom, backed by facts to tinker with our environment and world; while religion is bounded by creeds and faith in the hereafter-the world to come. But, Alder (2015) has noted that these phenomena run contrary to religion; which must be devoid of any form of inquisition. Since Religion occupies the emotions and sensibilities of adherents, and spirituality holds sway in place of the

tangible and physical, National Development, Humanism and Religion are not mutually compactable in a strict sense (Marx 1844) (Emphasis added). This is because whereas Humanism understands National Development for the benefit of humanity; Religion hinges on the spiritual, and the 'souls of 'Men' in a world to come'.

How Should We Then Live?

From time immemorial humankind has been concerned with the future. In fact, man has been so obsessed with what happens in the hereafter that he hardly lives to his full potentials. In the process, humankind has also failed to explore to the fullest his environment because of the limitations created by creeds and belief. However, what is more important in living according to Humanism is unconditional love for humanity amidst freedom to explore the physical world. Our Lord and Master- Jesus underscores the importance of unconditional love when He declared "…you must love those who hate you" (Matthew 5:43-44)'. This only goes to accentuate the place of love, as the whole duty of man (Daminabo, 2014). Religiosity has limited humankind in so many ways. Whereas humanity has failed in several ways this duty of love towards humankind, we have at the same time expended so much emotion, time and energy trying to please some unseen deity. To be sure religion is a dogma, but the practice of this dogma should be peppered with elements of Humanism. This is because the more Religion is tempered with Humanism, the better it will be for National Development, and the more National Development we experience in the globe, the better the world will be for humanity. "Yesterday is gone, forget it". Today is here, lets live! Tomorrow may not come, don't think of it".

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