

PHILOSOPHICAL PERUSE OF INTELLECTUALS AND THE BUILDING OF A NATION

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Abstract

In order to build a nation, it is important to realize that not all ideas are of priority. Academic life requires researches and interactions of ideas. However, in the context of building of a nation to ensure satisfactory and comfortable living of the human person, it is imperative that it be understood that the needs generated by the building of the nation should be what dictates the intellectual pursuit of the scholar. Therefore, the whole idea of merely studying ideas that have been generated by the academic community without the scholar interrogating his national environment with regards to interpreting it and envisioning a best possible scenario that ensures the satisfactory and comfortable existence of the human person in it, will not lead to true nation building. Nation building that will sustain the human person in a good life as opposed to the miserable life requires interrogation of immediate environment and *ideatic* projection that engenders the good life capable of guaranteeing satisfactory and comfortable life.

Key words: *Human person, nation building, intellectuals, immediate environment, satisfactory and comfortable living.*

Introduction

It is not new that our society is in need of transformation that will guarantee better sustenance of the human person. We see this need in the areas of social infrastructure such as roads, educational and medical facilities, provision of gainful employment, cultivation of dignifying environment for the human person and indeed an installation of a general system of living that nourishes and sustains the human person decently.¹ What makes this situation even more urgent for attention is the fact of our nation Nigeria being almost confused in her efforts to overcome these challenges and gain the status of being an ideal nation that is able to provide reasonable sustenance for her populace.

¹ Nigeria Overview- World Bank Group, <http://www.worldbank.org>country>, retrieved on 11/10/2019

Intellectuals

Intellectuals within this discourse refer to the group of people devoted to researches, generations and transmissions of ideas in a society.² By this definition of intellectuals, it is to be understood that it is not enough for intellectuals to research and gain ideas; it is imperative that they are able to ruminate about the ideas that they have gained and on the basis of this rumination be able to generate new ideas. They should not only be able to generate new ideas from ideas gained, they should also be able to transmit these ideas to others.

However, it is important to note that the human nature that intellectuals share in come with some sort of programming of the mind that influences the thinking of the human person. For instance, all humans were born into a specific society with already existing ways of doing things. The human person in such a society is socialized according to the already existing ways of doing things in that society. And this is how it happens for every human person who comes into this world. He comes into a specific group of a people with already established approach to living. Within this setting therefore, we have the first influence and structure of the human mind and future thinking of the human person as the human person usually views the world through the windows of his cultural background and influences.³

Developing further, should this human person become an intellectual, having at the background his cultural influences he also enters into the academic community. Indeed, it thus happens such a person encounters the ideas of the academic community where he is influenced by the ideas of this community which ultimately has its nature and goal and also by this, setting the limit to the thinking of the scholar because of the possibility and limitations that the ideas of the academic community come with. Within such a context, it is not difficult to see a scholar whose mind is caught in activities dictated by ideas from cultural background and academic community. So much so that researches, generation and transmission of ideas are limited to the scope and direction dictated by already existing body of knowledge in the academic community.

It does also happen that the scholar is influenced by ideas in the academic community from other environment different from his. This will mean in the fashion explained above, that his researches, generation and transmission of ideas are supplied and directed by ideas from other

² Roles and Functions of Academics, <https://www.nst.com.my>>roles, retrieved on 11/10/19 and What is the Role of the Intellectuals in Society? <https://www.weforum.org>>2013/03, Retrieved 11/10/19

³ Ortega Y. Gasset, *Man and Crisis* (New York: Norton and Company, 1958), P. 26

environments different from one's own. It is within this context that Ortega Y Gasset talks about the cultural socialization of the human person who by lot belongs to a society and receives cultural heritage from his society and whose thinking and perception of the world is influenced by this same.⁴

This discourse it should be noted does not maintain that the scholar who is influenced by his immediate environment and internal and external academic environments does not analyze these influences and take his/her position. In essence, he is not a mere inheritor of these ideas. He certainly ruminates on the ideas of these influences. The point is that, however the scholar may interrogate ideas from these influences, the agenda for his intellectual activities has been set by these influences. Therefore, beyond the agenda that these environments set for him/her the scholar should see in addition, the environment that impacts on the quality of life in the society that he lives in. The environment should be intellectualized and this intellectualization should seek the best possible human existence that can be. Being merely confined to inherited ideas, internal and external academic ideas may exclude real crucial existential challenges that can exterminate even the scholar. One has to be alive to do other things. Hence paying attention to these real life threatening challenges is crucial.

In Truth: Where do Ideas Come From?

No idea emerged from vacuum. Ideas are usually generated from the needs of environments. Very much like the Ionians who were motivated to philosophize based on the needs to understand their environments leading to postulation of air, water and fire as the basic constituent of the earth according to the ancient Ionian Philosophers.⁵ Therefore just going after ideas for the sake of it; Knowing the ideas of others and even being able to analyze the ideas of others with exceptional quotes from their writings will not do justice in entirety to the terrain of intellectualism. There is the need for intellectualism to pay attention to humankind. Indeed, not only paying attention to human kind but to also intellectualize on the actualization of a society that eliminates misery, poverty, undignified environment for the human person and indeed ensuring the installation of a system that guarantees decent and dignified environment that befits the human person.

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⁴ Gasset, Man and Crisis, P.26

⁵ Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol.1 Greece and Rome, (Kent: Burns and Oates, 1946), Pp. 22-28

Like the Ionians and countless philosophers who birthed their ideas from the needs of their environments, the nation seeking building cannot do otherwise. The intellectual's ideas should be generated by the challenges of building a nation. The yearning of our environment for cultivation in a pattern that sustains our people should stimulate the ideas we research, the ideas we generate and the ideas that we disseminate. It is only in this way, shall intellectuals be truly intellectuals in intelligently sensing a problem at the root of our very existence as human beings, because a bad state of a nation can kill and indeed it does kill.

Conclusion

No intellectuals can build their nations except they allow the challenges of development of their nation to generate their intellectualization. Thus their ideas are both analysis and ideas towards resolution of the challenges of development in their environment. In this way too the ideas of intellectuals truly also become original to them.

The implication of our conclusion is that scholars in different fields are to attend to concerns of nation building in their domains. In the field of philosophy for instance, we can begin to attend to the issue of the ideal direction for a nation; where are we as a nation? What are the obstacles on our way to where we should be? How can these obstacles be effectively removed that we may be where we should be? Can leaders alone have the knowledge required for the building of a nation and succeed in transforming the nation into the ideal without the led having the same knowledge?

In Engineering, that is technology, we can begin to ask about the devices needed for nation building? What are the implements to be made to bring about surplus of goods and services? What implements should be designed to transport ideas into reality in such a manner as to bring about the best possible form of life on earth? Our environment could be studied to see the raw materials that are readily available to be used in the designing of tools for ease of life. As technology is about the inventions of different ways of doing things, researches could explore new ways of doing things that could make life much easier instead of pre-occupying ourselves with inventions that do not significantly turn living around in our nation. Education should never lead into productions of things that are not relevant in impacting on lives of people and society! Engineering should begin to think of saying good-bye to productions of devices abandoned in departments in our universities without any atom of relevance in our immediate society. Our society yearns for ideas

and devices that will serve the needs of the human person especially lifting him/her from infra life to a standard life that is globally acceptable.⁶

In the field of economics, our society cries for a better economic system. Do we continue with the capitalist system or we adopt the social system? What are the justifications for any of the systems that we choose to adopt? Do we adopt systems in our society without a consideration of the larger picture of the society, the poor and the rich taken into consideration? Our society longs for a system that will deliver the good life to the human person.⁷ Scholars in economics owe a nation in need of building, sound ideas and policies as far as the economy of the nation is concerned. It will be of no good to be smart in ideas yet the society we belong and live in does not reflect that.

Scholars in psychology can devote themselves to the psyche of the people in our society. What kind of psyche have they? Is it one that promotes the building of a nation? Does the psyche support the principles of the building of a nation or it is a psyche tilted in the direction that impoverishes a nation? The state of mind of the human person is very crucial in determining the state of affairs in a society. Psychology is able to provide insights for the reorienting of a wrongly oriented life.

Above therefore, it should be noted, are only a few examples of how academic disciplines and intellectuals could go about making their contributions to the task of building a nation in a manner that effectively sustains the lives of those within her space.

It is to be appreciated that education go abstract not with the intention of it remaining abstract. It goes abstract to discover the best and the ideal that is to be used for impacting the world at the practical level. It is disheartening to see the fantastic brains that we have with smart ideas, yet our lives and societies are sluggish. Often times it is argued, "They have not given me the chance to put into practice the stuff that I have!" This discourse acknowledges this old aged argument! However, it opines that it is part of the intellectual's mission to figure out how to tackle this problem that have been inhibiting the building of our nation. After all, it is an idea that runs in the life of the one that does not give chance for superior idea to take rein. Here therefore, we have the challenge of the intellect that scholars who are interested in nation building must surmount with their advantage of being custodians of superior ideas. Indeed, if the task of nation building is dead in the minds of scholars, then it

⁶ Olusegun Oladipo, *Philosophy and the African Experience: the contributions of Kwasi Wiredu* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1996) P. 79

⁷ Kolawole Owolabi, "African Philosophy and the African crisis" *Quest*, ix/2. X/1. 34

is truly dead beyond redemption. Scholars must not allow this to happen as they are the hope of humanity through the ideas they possess and generate.

The whole argument of this discourse, as Ortega acknowledges, is that in human life a whole lot of things compete for our attention to know them. However, it is not possible for one to know everything. Consequently, there has to be what is known as economy of knowledge by which Ortega advises that we concern ourselves with knowing what will enable us live and live well.⁸ In essence, it makes no sense to know so much in life but lack the knowledge that should give one the good life. Therefore, intellectuals are urged that, in their pursuit of research, generation and dissemination of ideas, to concern themselves in a qualitative way, with ideas that bring about quality existence for the human person.

It should be said that scholars could have the luxury of paying attention to other concerns in their researches. However, it makes sense to have this luxury only after concerns of quality existence and living have been taken care of by intellectuals. It is not smart for scholars to be busy with luxurious concerns when the concerns of survival and indeed quality survival have not been secured. Concerns of nation building amount to concerns of survival and indeed quality survival.

Recommendation

There should be the awareness of the inherited idea from our immediate environment. Besides this inherited idea, there is also the idea that is internal to our academic communities which can be distinguished from ideas from external academic communities of other climes. All these usually influence the scholar and even set agenda for his pursuit. The influences from these environments notwithstanding, the scholar must not lose sight of the immediate environment that determines the quality of life that is lived in the community. This should be intellectualized and the best possible human existence pointed out for our society. This is because as shown above, it can happen that the scholar is entrapped within the influences of the other mentioned environments demonstrated above to the exclusion of the real environment that determines the quality of life that one lives. As this quality of life that is lived in the society also automatically affects the quality of life of the scholar who must exist first before he can pursue his research, generation and transmission of ideas, the intellect requires that the intellectual give priority place to ideas of nation building to ensure the good life for all, including the intellectual.

⁸ Ortega Y. Gasset, *Mission of the University* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992) P. 43