

PHILOSOPHY, HUMANISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON HENRY ODERA ORUKA

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Abstract:

Since the wake of a postcolonial era in Africa, philosophers have unceasingly reflected on political ideas that can serve as harbingers for social transformation and development in Africa; from socialism, Marxism, welfarism, Pan-Africanism, and Ubuntuism, to humanism. Odera Oruka is one of the foremost African philosophers whose thoughts on humanism and philosophy, though less known and controverted, entail some strategic directions for addressing the challenges of development in Africa. This paper seeks to interrogate Oruka's understanding of humanism and philosophy in Africa to explore its functional relation to the question of development. Oruka conceives humanism as the ultimate moral standard, which involves the quality and security of human life. Bemoaning the obscene disregard for humanism in Africa, Oruka hypothesizes a critical and dialectical philosophy as an antidote to what he called ARID (African Republic of Inhumanity and Death). Notwithstanding the fertile points in Oruka's thought, arguments are raised in this paper that humanism is a concept with diverse interpretations, which do not fit into one formula as Oruka depicts. Beyond Oruka's discourse on philosophy and humanism in Africa (as opposed to African philosophy and African humanism), this paper discusses the view that sees African humanism as the defining element of the Africaness of African philosophy. It consequently defends the position that African humanism can serve as a positive ideological springboard for sustainable development in Africa.

Keywords: African humanism, Development, Humanism, Odera Oruka, Philosophy

Introduction

The question of the function of philosophy has continued to debate among philosophers. The future of philosophy depends, among other things, on the extent to which it is committed to its classical mission or the zeal to which it drives its newly created and self-imposed functions. Writing on the future of philosophy, Archie J. Bahm instructively holds that “philosophy has a future only if man has a future. Whether man has a future depends in part upon his philosophy.”(Archie, 1973:393). Odera Oruka identifies humanism as the philosophy of humans upon which the future of humans depends. While there is no consensus on what constitutes or should constitute the roles of philosophy, the primary function of philosophy to Oruka is to serve humanity. He is emphatic that the functions of philosophy would be incomplete without a consideration of how philosophy can reorganize and rationalize available knowledge to improve both the conditions of the world for human existence and the welfare of mankind.(Oruka1997). In Oruka’s framing, this is the moral mission of philosophy expressed in what he termed ‘humanism.’

This paper seeks to interrogate Oruka’s understanding of humanism and philosophy in Africa in order to explore its functional relation to the question of development. Since the wake of postcolonial era in Africa, philosophers have unceasingly reflected on political ideas that can serve as harbinger for social transformation and development in Africa. Many theories have been formulated as template for the African condition; from socialism, Marxism, welfarism, Pan-Africanism, Ubuntuism, to humanism. Odera Oruka is one of the foremost African philosophers whose thoughts on humanism, though less known and controverted, entail some strategic directions for addressing the challenges of development in Africa. This paper further reflects and interrogates Oruka’s understanding of humanism and philosophy. It explores the importance of Oruka’s idea in the renewed quest for panacea to the African dismal developmental conditions.

Notwithstanding the fertile points in Oruka’s thought, arguments are raised in this paper that humanism is a concept with diverse interpretations, which apparently do not fit into one formula as Oruka depicts. Beyond Oruka’s discourse on philosophy and humanism in Africa, this paper discusses African humanism and African philosophy. This paper examines the view that sees African humanism as the defining element of the Africaness of African philosophy, and consequently defends the position that African humanism can serve as

a positive ideological springboard for sustainable development in Africa.

Humanism in Oruka's Thought

Oruka's view on humanism is that of a moral commitment. Humanism, for him, is the ultimate moral standard of evaluating "the quality and security of human life,"(Oruka:138) in actual reaction to the categories of problem facing the African people. By moral commitment, Oruka makes moral philosophy "a platform on which to search for a guarantee,"(Oruka: 145) a solution to the problems facing the African peoples. The moral commitment issued by Oruka is one that makes Oruka: 139) humanism a moral good in contrast to other kinds of moral good, because it means the possibility of human development and promotion. On moral good, Oruka captures:

It is possible to take, and indeed some haven taken, the standard of moral good to be man's happiness, freedom, duty, perfection, power, economic welfare, self-realization, knowledge or faith in God, etc. But all such standards obviously point only to one ultimate or most basic standard-the priority of human existence measured in any one society, by the quality and security of the individual and collective well-being. This is, or ought to be, the first and most fundamental principle of any conception or meaning of humanism (Oruka1997: 138).

Oruka tells us that the kinds of problem faced by the African people is inhumanity parading itself as a precious heritage treasured by the African peoples as if it is an ancestral gift passed down from generation to the other. However, Oruka exposes that the problem is neither naturally nor ancestrally inherent in the social order of the African people, but that "the absence of a philosophy or humanism that would help point out the minimum requirement of moral or human good that cannot be contravened without making human life a mockery and a tragedy"(Oruka: 99).

He identifies the minimum requirements of life as practical necessities, which are: "necessities for (i) biological/physical human survival, (ii) freedom from abject ignorance and (iii) a certain minimum of dignity for persons and races"(Graness & Kresse ,1997). Oruka believes that the fulfillment of these necessities is a priority that precedes all thought and all philosophy.

In view of the above, Oruka observes that Africa, in her current state, is in inhumane living condition because humanism is debased and relegated below the minimum standard or moral good. The most basic standard of moral good is humanism, mainly because it guarantees quality and security of human life. Thus, humanism is to

be safeguarded by philosophy, and any reconstruction of humanism begins in philosophy. For Africa to develop, secure her dignity, she must adopt a philosophy of humanism.

Having identified the assumptions that make up Oruka's quest for humanism as a panacea for reconstructing human values, the paper turns its attention to the problems facing an African person as discussed by Oruka such as politics, judiciary, religion, magic, military, mass media within the context of the social system of ARID (African Republic of Inhumanity and Death).

The Contextual Problems of ARID

In a paper written in 1978, *On Philosophy and Humanism*, by Oruka, in reaction to violence as a tool of liberation and development, Oruka abbreviates the experience of an African person as ARID "African Republic of Inhumanity and Death", putting forward the claim that "ARID is completely arid when it comes to the search for human value, human worth, human security, human vision and human future"(Oruka 1997:142). Furthermore, since the hope for humanistic Africa becomes gloomier and gloomier owing to certain pervading contextual problems of ARID; hence, this paper turns its attention to these problems as discussed by Oruka.

Oruka examines the first contextual problem as the inhumane treatment of Africans, within the ambit of political authority, especially as it concerns the illegitimate use of power and law by superior political personalities. The use of these public principles reflects the barbaric ideal of *might is right*. While the government decides what is true, in disregard to the state of affair or event, using the mass media and its propaganda; its discreetly, consciously and deliberately misplaces the priority of African personhood facing a problem of inhumanity.

Oruka added that a political authority can either be a military set up or a civilian government, yet it does not miss the character peculiarly describe to them, that is, both military government and civilian government have the self-gratifying thirst to quench, only that difference draws upon them in manners of character display: while the former uses brute force to influence actions of the people, the latter constitutionally cheats the masses according to assumable rules of law.

Another contextual problem examined by Oruka is the judicial role in dehumanizing Africans in current lived experience. Oruka contends that the court that is supposed to serve justice independently and in accordance with the laws of the land, rather massages the impunity of the executives. Since political personalities use the courts

to oppress and bend people to their whims and caprices; hence Oruka confirms that the “courts have no significant judgment of their own that would or will contradict the recommendation of the police and security militia”(Oruka: 143) From the foregoing, the police had a way of being used to wreak havoc by political men of influence.

Oruka introduces the third contextual problem within the guise of faith and sanctity. He adheres his discussion of using religion as a tool to silence the Africans in their suffering, by way of promising them heaven, once they commit their worries to the Heaven Father. Oruka captures that “the followers are poor, but this reverberates in them as a blessing; poverty is a license for entering the kingdom of God.”(Oruka:143). The church has witnessed a large turn in of political aspirants selectively running to clergy men for election success, especially clergy men of big church and mosque, with millennial number of members. This pounces on two basic facts: one, the fact a respected man of God lays his hand on them, relays their relationship with God to the masses, hence the people will be deceived to believing that the aspirant is God fearing. Two, once the man is not just being blessed by the man of God and hence, he donates a huge amount of money to the development of the church, but also promises to include Christendom or Islamic community at large in his plans, he effortlessly wins the support and votes of these peoples.

Oruka examines the fourth contextual problem, which bothers on the Africans’ interest in magic and fortune telling. The situation on the continent, rather than encourage a philosophy of pragmatism, has instead turned a typical African man into a bundle of swipe possibilities. An African man begins to expect from where he has not labored and hence turn them to resorting to magical means of gaining political and social recognition. From the foregoing, it is clear that society and use of power became assumedly deified for political authorities “used in a secret way to impress on their followers and admirers the magical and supernatural powers of those in political power,”(Graness & Kresse,1997) in order to instill physical, moral and psychological fear in the people. Conclusively, life is below the minimum standard in ARID, but then Oruka suggests that a way out is in sizing up humanism with in humanism, by free-thinking philosophy as platform whereupon, rigorous, critical and system disquisition engages the African situation squarely and fittingly.

Achieving Development through Humanistic Philosophy: Beyond Oruka

The world has gone beyond the dictates of reason. It used to continually evolve as science and technology advance day by day, but as it stands now, the world is moving faster than the earth rotates around the sun. This speed reveals that one measure is insufficient to achieve development, not technology, ideology or politics alone can lead develop the world, instead they create more problems to grapple with, mainly because faithful of these measures be they the scientists, technologists, ideologies, politicians have all attempted to jostle for dominance over one another by misusing and maneuvering natural, social and humane resources to the inventions of naturally, environmentally hazardous machines, which in the short run may be helpful and stress-free in carrying out a task, yet detrimental to the development and social transformation of humanity in the long.

The above points out another vital angle to the discussion of development in the light of violent insurgency. Following the struggle for decolonization in the history of colonized African states, African scholars grew in commitment to the discussion of African states, its underdevelopment and the cause. While some draw their inferences from the doings of native political authorities, others draw theirs from the surreptitious return of the West, who claimed to have granted independence to their colonies after consensual negotiations. The latter category champions the view that the means through which independence is achieved, determines whether a nation develops or not. They offered violent insurgency as a means of development. Franz Fanon is commonly said to be a major exponent of this view, especially because he fought in the guerilla war between Algeria and France, which later resulted to the independence of Algeria.

Oruka, on his own account, contends that violence is violent to development mainly because it defeats the purpose of his philosophical insight. Oruka's philosophical insight is a moral one, not purely metaphysical or epistemological, but anchors on the ideal of humanism. Since humanism is the quality and security of human lives, of both friends and foes, it follows that violence is culturally destructive and nationally disruptive. Oruka argues that there is callousness in violence, while the strength in non-violence is humanism. How? Oruka relays the after-effect non-violence brings, when one does not resort to violence: by this, Oruka drives home the point that humanism is rehabilitating in that "by forgiving an enemy in the very face of his/her physical aggressiveness towards one, one psychologically and morally disarms this enemy; that is of course

assuming... that every person has some truth or humanity in him”(Oruka, 1994)

Issues in Contemporary Africa Against Achieving Development

Africa, like other continents of the world is ravaged by virtually environmental degradation and manipulative uses of nature by science and technology, due to the loss of human and natural resources control. Human and natural resources control is not an effort to be exerted by one individual or individuals, but by all, in the spirit of collectivity and reciprocity. Oruka captures thus:

humanity's attitude towards nature should not be that of dominating and possessing nature, but rather that of being in 'exchange' with it, an exchange, which obviously does not exclude the use of nature, the adaptation of nature to the needs of humanity, but at the same time does not reduce humanity's relation to nature to evil, and recognizes in nature the possession of an intrinsic value which as such deserves respect(Oruka 1994: IX).

Development is race against inhumane conditions, meanwhile, Oruka's conscious effort to truly strike a blow on underdevelopment gained intellectual attention at the 1991 conference, *The Nairobi World Philosophy Conference*. A range of issues that were discussed, especially at the four plenary sessions cut across “philosophy and human environment today, science, technology and natural environment, peace and boundaries and philosophical aspects of the interplay between natural and artificial environment of humanity,” reveal the commonness of these pan-global issues (Oruka: XV). Although the discussants agree on issues initiated, however, the fact recommendations may not materialize simply because they all dovetail to uniting the African original experience with the Western and Eastern original experience, forgetting to identify areas of fixed incompatibility; and hence, makes the resolution of the conference impossible owing to distinctive peculiar worldviews and know-how of operation of relational mechanics (by this, we mean that language is not the only mode of relation, but also, the understanding attitude behind the way one thinks, acts or talks in different situations of life, which is solely dependent on one's worldview). In addition, since most of the issues take their root in environmental hazard, they recommend that “an international center for environment philosophy be established in convenient parts of the world” (Oruka: XV). The question is, how would they resolve environmental issues? In reaction to this question, they reacted that the center shall “hold seminars in all matters pertaining to environment and philosophy (Oruka, 1997). This may not have aptly answered the question in a fashionable

manner. However, Oruka systematically describes three steps to achieving development through philosophy and humanism, which are referred to as three significant stages.

Three Significant Stages of Achieving Development

One of the yardsticks for determining the security of human life and existence is the outcome from an evaluative study of the positives, consequent upon a number of developmental projects; that is, development is the actual reflection of security and quality life living. This paper turns its attention to the discussion of the three significant stages.

First, Oruka tell us that humanistic philosophy “can apply critical analytical reason to the prevailing social and moral order and place this order in a historical context”(Oruka:140). Oruka tells us that this stage is one wherein humanizing principles are separated from dehumanizing principles. When this is done, the result will open a wide channel for symbiosis and reciprocity and ultimately, development will take place, not because of the separation of principles only, but also because the separation of these principles is a conditional beginning of rehabilitating the people physical, socially, relationally and psychologically.

Second, Oruka tells us that humanistic philosophy “can synthesize the humanizing ethics with the ideals of humanism”(Oruka:140). Oruka may have understood that humanism is a pragmatic body of rules, which offers a basis for humanistic tenets. The price for such synthesis must be paid in respect to finding the harbinger of social transformation, for the synthesis will require rigour and quality showing of character and monitoring. Hence when humanizing ethics offers validation for humanism, people will no longer use one another as means to an end, rather they will interpret the existence of one another from inter-personalist stance.

Third, Oruka tells us that humanistic philosophy “can (and should) subject the resultant synthesis to the test and analysis of dialectical reason”(Oruka:140). Oruka communicates thereof that result of a synthesis may not be the final blueprint for developmental process to begin, for there may still be some unnoticed areas that problematically elusive. Therefore, he counsels that the result should be tested in different situations, in attempt to test the shortcomings, pitfalls and strength of the blueprint in its entirety. Oruka captures thus:

The synthesis is treated as a provisional principle of moral good but further objections are brought to it and various alternatives are contrasted with it. These will prune and purify it until it becomes

much more positives, beneficial, objective and workable than it could have earlier been. The end product can then be utilized as a basis for a humanist moral or social order. In this process, philosophy serves the course of humanism and helps to explain the basic requirement of humanity and the possible levels to which it can be advance or abused (Oruka, 1999:246).

Humanistic philosophy may have been theoretically sound and pragmatically workable, yet it does not state the beginning of its developmental process. It only introduces a concept sufficient and necessary to tackle the problem underdevelopment caused by in humanism.

Humanism and African Development

Humanism, by its very nature, is a term with trans cultural and even universal appeal, as it invokes the inherent qualities supposedly possessed by all members of the human species(Gruchy, 2011). Humanism is a term befuddled with different meanings. Humanism, it was recognized, has evolved over the centuries within different historical contexts, driven by various philosophical perspectives, political agendas and religious traditions, is described in varied terms (Egbunu, 2014). The concern for humanism is not a new pre-occupation in human existence, although the level of concern differs in different epoch, and the aspect of human existence to which it directs its attention to also differs. This is shown in the forms of humanism discussed by Egbunu, namely “Renaissance Humanism, Enlightenment Humanism, Romantic Humanism, Religious Humanism, Secular Humanism, Literary Humanism, Modern Humanism, and Cultural Humanism” (Azenabor, 2010).

Humanism is a stage of development where man and his ideas becomes the centre of active intellectual, religious, philosophical, historical, ideological, and artistic concern (Kresse, 1997). At the core of humanistic goal is the idea of the respect for dignity of human nature, which rejects the commodization of the human person. Humanism opposes the control of the human person by supernatural being or any entity outside his being, but it embraces the sovereignty of the human person. It places value on human essence and believes that human have the capacity to confront and solve their problems.

We turn here to African Humanism because “what qualifies human beings generally as ‘human’ or even ‘humane’ may differ from one society or cultural framework to another”(Oruka 1994:X). It is said that the traditional African value-system is humanistic, that is, it is devoted to a holistic human development. The value-system has the capability of defining and mapping out the basic standard of moral

good on which the character building in traditional society rests on, which in turn guarantees quality and security of human life. With regard to the collective-humanistic nature of typical African peoples, common livelihood is anchored on the fact that “such collective ownership meant that land and its resources had to be harnessed for the dead, the living and those yet to be,”(Mbiti 1969:108) and not any form of social existence unfamiliar to the original position of a people. The Africans, in their original position to live for one another, are acculturated by the understanding to depend on the strength of one another towards a well meaningful life and social transformation, conditioned by wholistic development.

Odera Oruka may have dissociated himself with every indication pointing to a return to African communal past primarily because it has the potential to lead him to ethnophilosophy, yet he considers as very important the need to import the ideal of humanism from the communal past, in reconstructing the African person in his continental experience, which is devoid of human quality and security.

The issue that baffles the mind is the decadence of the moral system in the contemporary society. Africans no longer concerns themselves with the well-being of the community and others, rather they only focus on themselves and personal goals. What ensues is inhumanity parading itself in the daily activities of the African persons. This account for what Martin Buber termed as ‘I and It’ communication in the human society which is characterized by subject-object relation where someone sees the other person as object which can be used as a means to an end, a material entity. The resultant situation is the dehumanization and commoditization of the human person, which removes totally the dignity of the human person.

The challenges faced on the African continent such as violence, injustice, war, poverty, corruption, poor leadership and governance, oppression, and environmental degradation, have been part of human experiences and existence for centuries, but they have become much more complex and severe in our time. These challenges have impaired development in every sphere of Africa, from political, to cultural, economic, intellectual, religious, and social sphere of the African continent. To deal with the problems facing us, there is a need to adopt an ideology that is relevance and have as its nucleus human development and societal growth.

In addressing the factors and issues impairing underdevelopment in Africa, we need to revive and reposition humanism in Africa, and thus, the focus on African humanism. At the heart of the communalist way of living of the African society is humanism, that is, a concern for

the welfare and existence of others. This way of living lead to transcending from the status of the 'I' ('Me', 'You'), to that of the 'We'. Mbiti opines that:

Individual owes his or her existence to other people. He is simply part of the whole...whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: "I am because we are; and since we are there I am (Mbiti, 1969:108)

This repudiates the dictum of Rene Descartes "Cogito ergo sum" which see the individual an as entity who does not need co-existence with other, a view which result in solipsism. From the nature of "vital forces" which Placide Tempel holds permeates the life and relationship of the African person, co-existence and co-relation characterizes the ontological framework of the Africans person.

Adopting this humanistic orientation help bring everyone to the common pool of being concerned about the issues and problems facing the African continent irrespective of difference in culture, language, and value-system of different countries in the continent. Africans see and understand themselves as part of the community and not an isolated being.

Philosophy, Humanism and Development in Africa: A Critique of Oruka's Template

Beyond Oruka's discourse on philosophy and humanism in Africa (as opposed to African philosophy and African humanism), this paper discusses the view that sees African humanism as the defining element of the Africaness of African philosophy. "The African pursuit of humanism as a concern for human behavior and existence is its greatest cultural heritage to the whole world." (Oluwole, 1992:122). In the view of Oluwole, humanism, which defines the Africaness of African philosophy, is expressed thus:

The Africaness I here identify as humanism is therefore not a philosophy. It is neither a worldview nor a philosophical stance on the level of metaphysics or epistemology. It is the definition of a literary mission, the common (unwritten) ambition of literary men and women within specific African societies. Humanism identifies the goal which such a group wishes to attain through thought. It sets their patterns and defines their style, methodology, and terms of expression. It is neither fictitious, mysterious, nor necessarily religious. It is a legitimate choice of a literary mission. It forges a specific literary tradition which does not coincide with the scientific option... It is neither inferior nor primitive, nor unique to Africans alone (Oluwole, :122)

The conclusion of Oluwole's excerpt above seems to nullify the whole idea of Africaness of African philosophy since given its central element of humanism; one cannot see any sense of distinctiveness from other regional-cultural philosophies. One may ask, why this call for Africaness when the literary goal identified is not even unique to Africans. Historically, there is abundant evidence that there were, and still are Western thinkers (such as the existentialists) whose philosophical goals consist of understanding human nature for the improvement of human existence. Oluwole seems to recognize this difficulty, when she defended further, humanism as the basic goal of African literary tradition:

[Humanism] Africaness lies solely in the fact that it was distinctively the vogue that predominated the literary endeavours of Africans as it never did in the history of Western thought. It is this common goal rather than the communalism of beliefs or the identity of ideas in all literary pieces from Africa that makes them particularly African. Literary works as oral traditions, proverbs, folklore and other tales all bear its trademarks, even though these do not express identical beliefs about every aspect of human life and experience (Oluwole,: 120)

Indeed for Oluwole, the fact that the goal of humanism in African literary scheme is also found in other literary tradition, (the Western, for instance) is not a problem because "it is possible for different cultures to make different choices within a wide range of alternative goals of thought" (Oluwole,:120). If this is so, then the issue of Africaness of a philosophy is best understood not as a distinctive mark of difference of a kind or substance between African philosophy and Western philosophy, but only a matter of difference in degree of emphasis.

One may ask further, what (better still, when) exactly is the origin of humanism of African literary goal? A clue to this question could be helpful in actually distilling whether the humanistic goal of African literary culture predated that of the West or vice versa. But, Oluwole seems not to have provided answer to this important question in her initial paper, "The Africaness of a philosophy." Nor does she explore the nexus between humanism and development in Africa. This paper defends the position that African humanism can serve as a positive ideological springboard for sustainable development in Africa. Humanism is a literary orientation that gives primacy to the improvement of human conditions.

The nucleus of philosophy becomes humanistic, “when philosophical concept and principles are not discussed just for their own theoretical interest, but are discussed and applied to the understanding and improvement of the conditions of human life” (Oladipo, 1992). This takes philosophy from the level of abstract thinking to attend to human hypothetical and concrete problems. In Oladipo’s view, Africa philosophy today is characterized by the crisis of relevance. It holds no existential import in the intellectual development and problem solving in Africa. The solution to this crisis for Oladipo is to change the method of African philosophy by making “a conscious attempt by African philosophers to demonstrate a concern for human interest in Africa” (Oladipo: 74). its motive force. Philosophy in Africa must move beyond professionalism an speculation to contributing to progress and development in Africa. In Masolo’s thought, philosophy must be practical to the point of being able to transform society (Masolo, 1994) and have as its focal point problem solving and concern for the welfare of the Africans.

To achieve sustainable development in Africa, four social structures namely, intellectual structures, cultural and religious structures, economic structures, and political structures (judicial and decision-making structures), must be given adequate and keen attention. Attention towards these structures is geared towards addressing the issues in contemporary Africa stated by Oruka which are against achieving development. As against the social climate of the traditional society, the modern African society is a new universe and environment based on scientific observation and the rule of technology. If we are to achieve development in Africa, especially a sustainable one, there is a need to take into consideration the impact of science, technology, and globalization in our quest for a humanistic development. The humanistic philosophy of Africa must entail an understanding of the workings of scientific technology, technological society, and the global world. The environment in which we live in as against that of traditional African society, is rooted in the ideology of contest and conquest, not an harmonious co-existence of human person.

In the intellectual structure, we will recourse to the view of Olusegun Oladipo in his method of relevance. To Oladipo, “the intellectual programme of philosophy, should enable us cope with human problems, it should be problem solving rather myth-making” (Oladipo, 1992:78). The orientation which informs the ideological framework of Africans must be entrenched in humanism. This results to the mentality of self-reliance, which characterizes a

truly humanist development. The quest for self-reliance Ogundowole define as, a feeling and need generated by the instinct of self-preservation in the human person in conjunction with interaction of the human person with the environment in which the person lies and acts (Ogundowole, 1986). The humanist mentality should prepare the individual and the society as a whole to adjust and find define themselves in the rapidly changing environment and high-speed technological evolution. Our philosophical knowledge should have the capacity to response to new knowledge, new economic patterns, and new socio-political activities that shapes the African experiences and societies. This reinforces Oruka's theoretical assumption that humanism is to be safeguarded by philosophy, and any reconstruction of humanism begins in philosophy.

Traditional African societies thrived on self-sufficiency in their economic structure. Although, like contemporary society they relate and form ties with other societies, yet "members of a traditional community do not depend for their needs on some outside agency or on people who they do not know personally" (Azenabor,2010). In the production of food and other resources, local craftsmen take care of the need of the community. Moreover, the economic market in traditional African societies differs from the contemporary one, where economic power is tied to a world and global market in which poor and developing countries are the weak link in the system of international trade. Africa and other non-Western countries have become the dumping ground of the Western world where substandard product which Western people could not use is being exported. This have led to consumerism on the Africa continent, and thereby impaired our self-sufficiency and sovereignty since the products come in cheaper and easily available, and we also boast of using the same kind of product (albeit substandard) with other countries of the world. To save African from this situation, it is imperative that we hearken to the cry of humanism rooted in moral development by Oruka. Looking at the current situation in Nigeria where there is a clamour to 'think, buy, and use Nigerian products', this is rooted in the humanistic thought of self-sufficiency and promotion of our indigenous creations. This is a welcoming concern for the effort of individuals and welfare of the society through the promotion of product and services that are indigenous.

In modifying the cultural and religious structures, the philosophy of humanism must address the inhumane religious and cultural orientation of contemporary African society. African have been labelled as notoriously religious, and seen as continent who seeks

explanation to reality in supernatural and mystical term. However, when traditional religion in Africa is examined, we would see that it is entrenched in humanism. At the centre of the relationship with God and the world is 'man'. God relates with the world through the human person, and the human person is very vital in the activities of God. According to the existentialist Karl Jasper, God only operates through the exercise of the freedom of humans, and not their subjugation to any supernatural entity. As against the contemporary religion of Christianity, Islam, etc, which uses religion as a tool to silence the Africans in their suffering, by way of promising them heaven, once they commit their worries to the Heaven Father, traditional African religion preserves the essence and freedom of the African (Ogundowole, 1986). They are stakeholders not subject in their relationship with God. This humanistic orientation Oruka opines should inform our religious institution in Africa. On the cultural plain, a humanist standpoint recognises the essence of the culture of a people and how it shapes their reality. Humanism is captured and wrapped in "the...oral traditions, guarded intact and transmitted from generation to generation" (Dorr, 1990:150). To achieve sustainable development in Africa, it has to be culture-bound, and this is due to the fact that:

...cultural aspect of development is the primary one, since it determines the success or failure of any technical changes. Consequently, planners must look very hard at the cultural effects of the technical changes are to be introduced (N'Diaye, 1981:10)

Africa must nurture the communal trust which is the bond of their living and encourage the act of taking and sharing responsibility in the use of resources both human, material, and natural resources. In Dorr's opinion, "real development must give priority to helping people to understand and appreciate their own cultural heritage and tradition"(Dorr, 1990:150).

On the political terrain of Africa, humanistic ideology developed as a reaction against the inhumane treatment, suppression, oppression, and subjugation faced by African during the slave trade and colonial era. To combat the effects and materialistic orientation propagated by the colonial masters, socio-political theories fashion by African scholars and leaders advocated a return by the communalistic orientation of traditional African societies which is rooted in humanism. However, looking at the political climate in Africa, we see that we are now become our personal oppressors, Africans leaders are now colonizing Africa and subjecting them to oppression and hardship through their bad governance and corrupt act of keeping the nation's treasury for their personal enrichment. People aspire for political

position in the hope of profiting themselves and not concerned about the welfare of the people. The result of these is nothing other than underdevelopment and low standard of living. This predicament calls for the resurgent of the philosophy of humanism in addressing them.

The World Bank defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development (N'Diaye, 1981). On the other hand, UNDP defines it as the "complex mechanism, process, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences"(UNDP, 1999:2). These definitions show that the management of any society must have at its objective the concern for the interest of its people. According to Oruka, political authority must use power and the law legitimately in their control and use of economic and social resources of African continent. We must have as the background of our political organization and activities concern for human welfare and promotion of development in the continent. Addressing this, Egbunu pose the question, "and since African Humanism is principally about seeking human welfare, would it not be proper that all well-meaning individuals and the leadership of our nations develop policies that are capable of addressing the plight of indigent students, the unemployed lot in the society, the poor, the sick, the less privilege and marginalized, and especially widows and orphans?(Egbunu, : 307)

Conclusion

African humanism charts the rightful direction towards which political activities must be geared. The political structure must have institutions through which it combats efficiently, violence, war, oppression, tribalism, nepotism, unemployment, corruption, etc, which are dangerous to human life and under develops Africa. Effective and quality leadership must be nourished in order to have sustainable development in Africa. In consonance with Egbunu:

We are persuaded by our African Humanism cultural heritage that the imperative of a social, political, spiritual, economic and other forms of challenges presented in our context would receive adequate and appropriate attention if only we, as Africans, could become more conscious of our natural endowments or heritage. It is only then our common African predicaments would be frontally resolved. Then and only then shall we be motivated to move a step further in 'exporting' and sharing the spirit behind our African communalistic Humanist culture with other continents(Egbunu:307)

Conclusively, African humanism can serve as a positive ideological springboard for sustainable development in Africa, if taken seriously in twenty-first century Africa.

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