

NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS, VALUE REORIENTATION AND IDENTITY: AN INTEGRATIVE HUMANIST APPROACH

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Introduction

This paper is written in response to the high pitch concern expressed by the conveners of this conference. Nigeria's image and reckoning seem to be nose diving in almost all facets of noble ratings whether from the perspective of its politics, economy, Ethics, security, education and so on. In the recent past the clamour for dismemberment of the federation has reached its highest crescendo. The call for national conference and reengineering of our polity have topped the national agenda and discourse.

There is the cry in some quarters that the economy is comatose and only propped up by empty propaganda and sloganeering econometrics that is at best hollow in its essence. The unremitting bombardments from the "Boko Haram" group have left our security in tatters, the intra party squabbles in the largest party PDP is signaling a combustible 2015. The incumbent President wants to run and there is the stiff opposition from a section of the party, now called the new PDP which have sworn that power must revert to the North. The above and many more portend ominous signs for Nigeria. Nigeria in some climes is regarded either as a failed state or a failing state.

Corruption indices have skyrocketed and there is virtually no sector of our national life (economy) that is not bedeviled by this sickening and dangerous virus. These, indeed, are not the best of times for Nigeria. These events are leading to crises in the polity. For instance, the public and state universities are on strike which strike has entered its fourth month, the Resident doctors are on strike nationwide, some National Union of Teachers branches are on strike in some states and other very destabilizing occurrences. Youth unemployment has reached alarming height. All these coalesce to the fact that all is not well. Our President's bending over backwards to inaugurate a committee on, national conference is a tacit acceptance to the fact that the crises is getting out-of-hand. It is in times like this that the need arises to seek in a serious and deep way to fathom the depth of the present malaise afflicting our society. This conference is put in place as part of the ways of unraveling the possible causes, solutions and forward looking prescriptions that will reposition our nation for future greatness.

It is in this bid that we are considering the issues of national consciousness, identity and need for value reorientation. As the Japanese model of national development holds "the search for identity comes when there is national crisis". Nigeria no doubt is in serious crisis and the time to seek honest solutions is now if we are not to have more intractable problems in our hands. This conference is not going to be a monologue but a dialogue between the speakers and the listeners because we are all stakeholders in the Nigeria project. We are to bring our sincere, well-thought out positions for consideration and possible adoption.

In this paper, I will consider hindrances to sustained progress in our national life, then, the imperative of national consciousness and identity, followed by flaws in our national

value-system and the need for reorientation. Finally, we shall use the integrative humanistic approach to chart a possible national trajectory for the future greatness of our nation.

Hindrances to National Greatness

There is the saying that he who fails to know where and when the rain started to beat him may be oblivious of where and when it stopped beating him. The common place first port of call in blaming our woes is on colonization, slave trade, amalgamation, and neo-capitalist subterfuges like multinational and transnational corporations and the manipulations of the politics and economies of colonies by erst-while colonial masters. No doubt these are possible remote causes of our backwardness, disarticulateness and underdevelopment. But in this paper I wish to say that the most effective and decisive immediate factors for our malaise are found in us. It is the leadership and followership of African nations that have left us where we are. That the very developed and the underdeveloped nations of the world had their fair share of facticities of life is only a palpable truism the full analysis we cannot indulge in this paper. The Americans fought several wars to overcome their facticities, so and Britain and Germany and other nations. They overcame their facticities or what I call natural encumbrances to development by sheer determination, doggedness and through a progressive spirit of positive dialectics. Life is about turning crises into capital for development.

Crises are not bad in themselves. Indeed they are harbingers of progress. Crises contain thesis and antithesis of progress, all we need to do is to sift the portentous dangers and harness the potential breakthroughs the same way a poor man (like our President once without shoes worked himself to overcome the facticities of poverty, backwardness, illiteracy to become rich and educated is what a nation is supposed to do) with inherited opposition to one's success are what I call facticities. Facticities are therefore common to men, nations, institutions and so on. Solution starts by sitting down to monologue or dialogue in line with the dream one has. We are to identify dream killers and deal with them decisively and identify dream enhancers and pursue them. Every progressive pursuit must include dream, decision, determination, doggedness, diligence, devotion and demonstrativeness.

The hindrances to Nigeria's progress can be listed below:

1. Lack of National consciousness and identity
2. Tribalism
3. Inequality through the attitude of birthrightism to rulership
4. Wide spread poverty engendered through corruption and self-centeredness
5. Bad leadership
6. Precept rather than example
7. Disoriented value-system

Lack of National Consciousness and Identity

All successful nations from Britain, America, Germany, France to Israel arrived where they are by forging a resilient, patriotic national consciousness that gave them identity to work with one mind towards the achievement of their present greatness, Nigeria like Italy of Machiavelli's time is hopelessly divided and lacking in National consciousness and identity.

Tribalism

Citizens and succeeding leaders have never displayed a hundred percent nationalistic and patriotic spirit from Ahmadu Bello, Azikwe, Awolowo down to Goodluck. I tend to think that if a typical Nigerian becomes by any chance the President of America, he will either be interested in himself alone or divert American resources to develop his region in Nigeria

because of our pathological inclination to one's tribe. This is a major reason why Nigeria cannot get off the ground in terms of development.

Rulership Birthright

As long as one section of the country sees rulership as her birthright, there will never be peace in Nigeria and where there is no peace there cannot be progress.

Corruption

As long as corruption remains endemic in our national life we cannot make it because chronic poverty leads to debilitating corruption. A nation where leaders become mindless, heartless, so self-centered, as to steal the country to the point of comma is demonic and pathological. Primitive accumulation and wicked embezzlement have become the norm.

Bad Leadership

Leadership makes the difference. We have not been blessed with overly patriotic, detribalized, national and committed leaders who are out only to serve and to bequeath worthy legacies. All we have had from the third Republic are, Kleptomaniacs masquerading as leaders. A true leader is a gift from God and we are yet to receive one.

Example not precept

The exemplary leadership of Murtala and Idiagbon Junta give us a ray of hope that if we have exemplary leaders who will live by example and not by empty sloganeering, Nigerians will follow. Nigerians are docile and all they need is an exemplary leader.

Anti-progressive value system

A society that has decidedly inverted its value system to call good evil and evil good is nothing better than a satanic world. What has great moral premium and value quality are

- (1) Wealth at all cost
- (2) End justifies the means
- (3) Steal and don't be caught
- (4) Plea-bargaining
- (5) Oppress the poor
- (6) Utilize your position to steal
- (7) Immorality, nudity, lying, cheating, killing, violence are the cherished norms.
Our value system has plummeted dangerously. Only loyal party men are good but objective, audacious party men are to be hunted down.
- (8) Craze for power, "third termism" and craze for power social, moral, religious, political vices have been enthroned at the expense of their corresponding virtues.

Imperative of National Consciousness and Identity

Consciousness can be defined as the intangible metaphysical awareness of one's being and necessary belongingness to the world of existence. A dead person has no consciousness. According to Robert Allen consciousness is the state of being conscious, that is, the physical and mental state of being awake and fully aware of one's environment, thoughts and feelings (288). National consciousness for me will mean the state of being awake and aware spiritually, physically and mentally of one's environment and the necessary feeling of bonding that goes with such awareness. To be nationally conscious is to identify with the spirit and aspirations of the nation as one soul in possession of one destiny and one identity.

The important concepts here are awakensness, awareness, bonding, identity and destiny. A nation is supposed to have one soul, one driving spirit headed towards one destiny through the same identity. It is the consciousness that forges the identity which in

turn drives the spirit of the nation to national greatness. Consciousness binds us, welds us to the metaphysical and physical life of the nation and urges us to identify with the nation in all its travails because it is in its survival that we gain our survival.

In Nigeria there is no such consciousness that identifies us with Nigeria as a nation. For many, Nigeria is nothing but a mere geographical expression, for others, it is the orphaned cow that must be milked to death, for others, it is a no-mans-land where ethnic nationalities merely subsist in a marriage of convenience.

Identity is the state or quality of being a specified person or being which embodies the individual characteristics by which a person or thing can be identified (Allen 623). National identity is the characteristics that identify citizens of a country or nation state with the aspirations of their nation. This identity is seen in our actions, thoughts, aspirations behaviours and speeches. All must depict not only a spiritual alignment with, but physical destiny of the Nation. It is the consciousness that engenders the identity and the identity in turn reinforces the consciousness.

The truth that has to be known is that one nation means one destiny, we either stand or fall with it. We have only one natural nation of birth where we are entitled to all the rights and privileges. Our survival, our identity, our pride, our confidence, our prosperity, independence, etc, are derivable from that nation. When a person identifies with another person in all his travails, their souls are knit together and if it continues for a long time they build a common bond of unity. This is what happens in a properly integrated marital union.

Nigerians need to begin to see Nigeria as their only nation, we should identify with the developmental travails and aspirations of our nation. This will make us to be ready to swim or sink with our nation, to work for its holistic survival and its continuous progress. It is this that will make us to see every component unit of our nation as inalienable, and integral to our holistic well being. This means that there will be a conscious effort to see every Nigerian as your kith and kin. The Americans are fast submerging the racial demarcation by voting Obama into the presidency. It is a process of assimilation, integration, bonding and coalescing which reduces the differences among tribes to the barest minimum and they all now share more things in common and show same readiness to defend the nation from political, cultural, political, economic, social or psychological invasion. This is a point where we all in sincerity see ourselves as stakeholders in the Nigerian project. In the words of Obama, we need the audacity of hope which will engender the type of politics that brings us together rather than politics that breaks us apart (Shaffer 1).

National Value-Reorientation

The question of national value-reorientation is the crux of the matter. We are talking about re-orientation because we have it and need to go through what Ivan illich in his *Deschooling Society* calls miseducation. Having been miseducated through covert and overt influences, willing and unwilling assimilation of western values (especially the negative ones) we have developed a monstrosity of weird value system that is already combating for the soul of our nation to destroy it. We have to embark on deschooling, that is, consciously jettisoning and resisting all counter-productive values that have held us to the jugular and then positively applying ourselves to a new education that will make our soul to repel all insipid and negative values. There is so much rot that our ethical psychosis needs a clinical revolutionary extirpation. The deschooling must affect the consumption pattern of our leaders. If they buy exorbitant houses abroad, it means they are not patriotic and Nigerian in their disposition.

Our immediate problem is how to root out the cancer of corruption which has made the fair redistribution of natural resources a will-o-the-wisp. How do we dislodge the mafia that have entrenched themselves so firmly on our humongous patrimony? How do we re-orientate our civilians, politicians on the virtue of moderation and equity? The truth is that man is by nature capitalistic, acquisitive, selfish and inequitable. This means that two elements are critical in any effort at ethical re-orientation. One is leadership and two, is enforceable laws. It is only a good leader who is God sent and imbued with the mission of sanitizing and building worthy legacies that can initiate this type of reorientation we are talking about. God told Jeremiah that because the iniquity of Israel is deep-seated, he must start by “rooting out, throwing down, pulling down and destroying before he can build and plant” (Jeremiah 1:10). Nothing short of this method can salvage Nigeria. The second is that laws must be put in place and made enforceable by this leader without fear, favour or discrimination before the populace can be whipped into proper value reorientation.

If the above two conditions are not met, I am sorry we will continue to row against the storm in vain. It took a Rawlings to do the above in Ghana, a Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Nigeria needs even more draconian measures to achieve the sanity we envisage. This conference is a prayer for providence to throw up our messiah to mount the stage and initiate the cleansing. It is when this is done that the following recommendations will have the bootstrapping necessary for a new national conscientization and psychologization.

The foregoing therefore informs us that the business of value reorientation can only be possible through divine and committed human agencies. Ours is not poverty of governmental structures, legal structures but poverty of quality humans to drive our national cause. Already, we have (i) The Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences commission (ICPC) (2) Economic and Financial crimes commission (EFCC) (3) National Orientation Agency (NOA) (4) Federal Executive Council (FEC) (5) Federal Judicial Service Commission (6) Federal Civil Service Commission (7) Independent National Electoral Commission (8) National Defence Council (9) Nigeria Police Council (10) Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (11) National Assembly (12) State Houses of Assembly and above all (13) a Constitution. But in spite of all the above structures evil still persists. It shows that leadership as the critical catalyst is yet to emerge. For instance, we have freedom of information Bill, we have the ICPC Act 2000 and many edicts, Acts, laws, even decrees. Why have they not worked? Achebe was right when he said that leadership is the bane of Nigeria.

To heighten the moral soul of Nigeria therefore, we need to pray for a providential leader (the sent one) after that, we need massive education of our people (1) this, is why the present toying with education must cease forth with (2) we need robust freedom of speech which will ensue in meaningful dialogues (3) whistle-blowing tradition which should be protected by the law (4) effective corruption combating agency (5) reparation/restitution and legal recrimination committee (6) vibrant ethical value reorientation vanguard (7) property delimitation agency – No individual should have more than one property when your brother does not have even one (8) Agriculture should constitute a national project to employ our teeming graduates. A hungry man will never be subservient to any preachment on value reorientation (9) our legislative business should be on part-time whether at the national or state levels (10) Rotational presidency on a single term basis and on zonal basis (11) Genuine fiscal Monitoring Agency at all levels of governance. Federal, State and Local Governments (12) The church and religious organization to embark on value reorientation crusades and campaigns to redirect the minds

of their members and the general public (13) An integrative humanist ideology for Nigerian. As I have stated else where “This is the era of reconstruction through eclecticism, assimilation, sifting and welding, integration and agglutination of the best in the old and the new. The failure of human effort requires partnership with the divine as this will inspire good values, sincerity, truth, rationality, earnestness, true cooperation as well as equity and justice (Bassey and Ozumba 103).

A robust value reorientation campaign should be anchored on patriotism which should extend to a form of protectionism that will protect and promote made in Nigeria goods and concepts. We must so restructure Nigeria that Nigerians spontaneously, intuitively and naturally identify with the Nigerian project. Psychological glamorization of Nigeria in the hearts of Nigerians can only be a consequence of hardwork by our leaders through visible dividends of democracy.

This conference is only to provide the necessary spark in the souls of participants who should after now rise up to the occasion to begin to impact positively on the psyche of Nigerians for the actualization of this moral campaign in value reorientation.

Integrative Humanistic Approach to our National Malaise

The philosophy of integrative humanism is the brain child of the author. It is derived from the mathematical word ‘integer’ which means whole number. The adjective “integrative” means bringing the scattered members or parts of a particular thing (being) into a harmonious whole. Human integer simply means human wholeness. Man is a tripartite being namely soul, spirit and body and for man to be said to enjoy wholeness means that he has his three parts working harmoniously together. According to Aristotle everything functions teleologically to fulfil its purpose of existence. The body is for the satisfaction of sensual passion and for doing physical work. The soul is the seat of intellectual activity while the spirit being the breathe of God in man is concerned with spiritual awakensness in righteousness. The spirit when alive to its responsibility controls the activities of the body and the soul to ensure that they do not go into excess. When each part of the person is doing its work in harmony with other parts, the individual is said to experience wholeness (i.e. integrated human). Integrative humanism is therefore the philosophy that vigorously pursues the achievement of this harmonious wholeness whether in the individual, community, nation, continent or on global basis. At the level of the nation, if we apply it to Nigeria, we shall first, apply it to individual Nigerians before we apply it to Nigeria as a nation.

The Nigerian citizen: For any man to be whole, he must not be a victim of scattered personality. To be a scattered personality is to have the three components of one’s being working in disarray, that is, when the flesh is controlling the soul and spirit, when what concerns a man is how to accumulate wealth and live a sensual and carnal existence without minding how others are badly affected by it. It means living our lives in complete disregard of the creator’s moral, spiritual and natural injunctions and obligations.

Integrative humanism holds that “man is a being unto eternity”. This means that man is only in the world for probationary purposes the outcome of which determines his eternal wellbeing. Man is expected to live his life (on earth) bearing in mind that every freedom goes with responsibility and every action goes with accountability. If we understand and imbibe this philosophy, it will bring to a halt the many actions of impunity, injustice and autocracy that is turning humans into mere animals.

Integrative Humanism Applied in a Nation like Nigeria

The Holy writ says “that righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). When the body-politic of any nation is in disarray, that is an indication that the component parts of that nation is not purposively fulfilling the divine raison d’être of its existence. When the majority of Nigerian citizens are not enjoying “integrative harmony” within themselves, the same scenario will play out in the life of the nation. For Aristotle, the family exists for the good of the individual members and so do the society, nation exist for the good of the family and individual citizens that make it up. And the ultimate purpose is to achieve self-sufficing happiness through harmony. This happiness he calls the *Somum Bonum* – this is the highest good. Have we achieved this *Somum Bonum*? Far from it. Why? Because, since the individuals (citizens) that make up Nigeria have not attained their integrative wholeness, it is difficult to achieve it in the nation.

Since the leaders and the citizens that make up Nigeria are concerned more about personal aggrandizement, tribal affiliations, corrupt enrichment, nepotism, rulership – birth right, unethical politics, primitive (wicked) accumulation, embezzlement, godless desires, sycophancy, cultism, god fatherism, thuggery, etc, the centre of our body-politic cannot hold.

Integrative humanist approach insists that we begin by rebuilding the individual through education, preachments, laws and inculcation of noble value system and national consciousness which gave our primordial traditional society its bite. Our traditional society was communal; people respected the customs, traditions, totems, taboos, religious rites of the society. No individual was an Island. The integrating phrase was “I am because we are” what happened to one happened to all, the sin of one man affected the whole community. One act of sin like incest, adultery, robbery, shedding of innocent blood, etc; defiled the land and incurred the wrath of either Amadioha, the Earth goddess or Ogun. Law should be with sanction. Today, there is neither divine nor legal sanction. The bigger, the richer, the more popular you are the more freedom the person has to commit acts of impunity. The law is no longer an ass neither is it any longer blind. It is no longer a respecter of no persons. As soon as humans lose the moral twinge of conscience, the respect for the law of the land and the fear of God the creator, the nation state becomes a conglomeration of scattered souls who can give us nothing but a topsy-turvy leadership. And when the blind leads the blind, they will undoubtedly end up in the ditch.

Conclusion

At times, one feels a sense of frustration and forlornness in engaging in any national discourse because of the deep octopal hold of the vices we have discussed about. It is almost like trying to melt the shell of tortoise by pouring water on it. There is virtually nothing I have said here that have not been said many times over. The only difference maybe that this lecture has been prepared with agonizing prayer, faith and tears that the Almighty God will at least give us a leader who knows these ills, detests them and ready to pay the ultimate price to ensure that national consciousness, identity, unity and right set of values are not only known but entrenched in the fabric of our national life.

We have for the umpteenth time rehearsed all these before us as stakeholders, peradventure God will find in any of us what it takes for this ideals we have enumerated to be achieved. It is also to put them in our minds to serve as constant gadfly that will continue to trouble us until we all decide not only to turning new spiritual leaf but to join in the vanguard of national resurgence and rebirth. God is looking for men and women who will be ready from the point of personal rebirth key into this very urgent cry for a new Nigeria. The

proposed national conference may serve as the nearest national opportunity to put into practice all we have discussed here.

To achieve this, individuals must be ready to tame their appetite and moderate their consumption pattern. Nigeria's consumption pattern has become so dangerously bloated and must be trimmed down.

May we not be hearers only deceiving our own selves. In the words of David Imbua may our lot not be that of "failed expectations". We thank the organizers of this campaign for their foresightedness, thoughtfulness, vision and courage. We pray God that their dream of a blossoming Nigeria will be a reality in our life time.

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