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The Humanist Rationality: A Possible Alternative for Curbing Conflicts and Violence in Contemporary Society¹Paulinus Chikwado Ejeh²Austin Chidi Igbokwe**Authors' Affiliation**

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ABSTRACT

Humanism is a philosophy or a system of thought that had come under heavy attacks and rejections from several quarters particularly because of its anti-theistic tendencies as well as its undue generalizations about human nature. For this reason, humanism has come to be seen as an impossible dream. But then, the goals of humanism are still as relevant today as they were in the 1940s and 1950s, as it continued to empower individuals, enhance well-being, improve community and interpersonal relationships all over the world, as well as lead people towards fulfilling their potentials in life. This paper is therefore an attempt to examine the humanist rationality with a view to harnessing its potentials for a better human living in the modern world. Using the historical and critical methods of analysis, the paper discovered and at the same time argues that when certain beliefs are bracketed off, the humanist rationality could indeed be a possible alternative for curbing conflicts and violence in our contemporary society.

Introduction

The problems and challenges confronting man in the 21st century include among other things the following: conflict, violence, war, identities and changing norms in society, living in a global society, lack of vision and foresight. Other issues that affect the 21st century man are the economic issues, environmental issues and of course moral and social issues. These problems, challenges and issues have been tackled in different ways without lasting solution in sight. This is because the ultimate aspirations of the human person as well as the concept of the common good have not been properly and adequately addressed till date. As a progressive philosophy of life, humanism offers man appealing epistemological solutions to myriads of problems bedeviling the modern man including conflicts and violence. These solutions can be found in what is known as the humanist rationality or the principles of humanism. Bearing in mind the fact that humanism is a philosophy devoid of theism and supernatural beliefs, how far can the humanist rationality go towards providing a better ground for living and developing more authentically in the 21st century? Also, in what ways or how can the humanist rationality be reconstructed to provide an alternative for a more ethical, conflict and violence free society and social harmony for man in the modern society?

To provide answers to the above questions, the paper focuses on a critical exposition of the humanist rationality. Hence, the paper critically analyzes the core principles of humanism as a philosophy, and in doing so taps into the mainstream of criticisms both negative and positive, already labeled against humanism as a way of life in order to ascertain whether the humanist rationality can be an alternative for curbing conflicts and violence in our society.

The scope of this paper is therefore limited to the discussions of the humanist rationality. Hence, discussions will be limited to the definition or meaning of humanism, the history of humanism, types of humanism and the possibility of offering humanism as an alternative way of living and curbing conflicts and violence in the contemporary society.

Brief History of Humanism

The history of humanism dates back to ancient China, Rome and Classical Greece through the Renaissance and the enlightenment, to the Scientific Revolution of the modern world. Historically, the golden age of humanism is the Enlightenment – a

period characterized by the emergence of liberal ideals when the new natural science revealed that nature was subject to reason. The project of the period became the laying of a foundation for morals, religion, politics and society in accordance with and directed by man's immutable reason (Gaarder, 1997). Thus the humanism that flourished with Enlightenment was really a spill-over of the humanism that made waves with the Renaissance.

By the 19th and 20th Centuries, various organizations sprang up in Europe to promote humanist principles, including the Humanistic Religious Association (formed in 1853), the British Humanist Association (1896), the American Humanist Association (1941) and the International Humanist and Ethical Union (1952). Since humanism is a broad category of ethical, metaphysical, epistemological and political philosophies in which human interests, values and dignity predominate, there emerged different types of humanism such as:

Renaissance Humanism which is actually the initial flowering of humanist thought in the 15th and 16th Centuries, which strongly opposed the dominant Scholastic philosophy of the day. It promoted human worth and individual dignity, and believed in the practice of the liberal arts for all classes without exceptions. The Renaissance humanism was characterized by a number of features, one of which was the determination to re-discover and re-enact the spirit of freedom which according to humanists was once possessed by man in the classical age but was lost in the Middle Ages, and which alone provides justifications for man's claim to rational autonomy (Edward, 1967). The re-enacted spirit of freedom enhanced the break from the lordship of feudalism and from the power of the church. The exaltation of freedom has remained one of the consistent goals of the humanists.

Humanists from the earliest days to the present have emphasized an ethic of freedom, though they may differ about the meaning of freedom. Nevertheless, they have invariably argued for liberation of individuals from the repressive social institutions. They equally defended the free mind and the right of individuals to live their life style as they see fit so long as they do not harm others or interfere with their rights (Kurtz, 1980). During the Renaissance, period, the study of classical Greek and Roman Literature was encouraged, and disciplines such as poetry, rhetoric, history, ethics and politics became very popular. And since it was believed that such disciplines actually formed or educated the human mind, they

were described as “humanities”, equipping the human mind with the capacity to exercise freedom which is what is required for effective integral development (Blackman, 1965). A renewed interest in classical literature, language, and philosophy fed the intellectual movement of the Renaissance. No doubt, the Renaissance constituted a major shift in focus from God to man.

Humanism in the age of Enlightenment

It is believed that the humanist movement that began in the Renaissance did not fully flower until the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The term Enlightenment is used to indicate the spread of the Age of Reason to relatively large public of the eighteenth century Europe. The Age of Reason frequently applies to the thoughts and writings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries taken together (Flew, 1948). In the first half of the eighteenth century, the educated public on the continent of Europe acquired certain attitude and ideas through the writings of a group of popular literary figures like Fontenele, Bayle, Montesquieu, Condillac etc. These men made conscious efforts to popularize the achievements recorded in the fields of knowledge, such as mathematics, astronomy, physics and other areas of natural philosophy. They had a common goal, which was to free the study of nature and of the socio-political life of man from theological and metaphysical presuppositions.

The Enlightenment period was characterized, in a general sense, by the appearance of certain ideals, which the age sought to define and realize, to replace the idea of “the absolute” in a purely metaphysical sense. In fact, the Enlightenment was a time of hope. The Enlightenment was a period at which human faith in science and rational thinking spread beyond the intellectual elite, who included most of those who espoused Humanism during the Renaissance. During this period, the intellectual thinkers and philosophers of the eighteenth century influenced their societies with their ideas that human reason was supreme and that religion based on superstition and meaningless ritual should not dictate human behavior. Immanuel Kant (1948) for instance, proposed that all moral actions be measured against a kind of golden rule that said that an action was moral if it could be applied categorically to all, which was another form of locating morality in the human mind rather than in divine revelation. Although some Enlightenment thinkers were atheists, many of them simply shunned formal religion in favor of the concept of a

supreme being whom man could not prove definitively.

Meanwhile, in regard to humanism, the role of the Enlightenment period centered around taking the humanist faith in humanity a step further. This was a grand project which was purely to question and even reject organized religion.

Humanism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Generally speaking, the social reformist thinking of the nineteenth century was rather an outgrowth of both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment Humanism. Hence, humanism didn't stop with the Renaissance or with the Enlightenment. It rather continued beyond the Enlightenment age into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries such that a number of thinkers of this period identified with the humanist tradition. One of the thinkers was William James (1842-1916), who sought to overcome the conflict between what he called the “thought-mind”, scientific, mechanistic view of the world, and the ‘tender-minded’, religious, metaphysical view.

In the history of humanism, the secular facet of it has never become so manifest like in the 20th century. The secular humanism maintained that traditional religions that place revelation, God, ritual or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. For them, the belief in the existence of a supernatural can only be supported by insufficient evidence. Such belief is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race. Humanist ideology evolved from a program that focused on social reform to one that embraced humanitarianism in general, and this form of Humanism dominated the late nineteenth century and twentieth century. During these centuries, several manifestos were composed and signed by leading scholars, scientists, and writers indicating their support of a form of Humanism that eschews organized religion and embraces human responsibility for realizing human potentials.

During these centuries, many notable people claimed Humanism or Secular Humanism as their personal doctrine. They include British biologist Julian Sorrell Huxley (1887-1975); English philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970); French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980); philosopher Corliss Lamont (1902-1995), the atheist American lawyer Clarence Darrow (1857-1938); the German-born American psychoanalyst Eric Fromm (1900-1980); and many others.

Meanwhile, since the word “humanism” has a number of meanings, and because there are so

many formulations of humanism in the contemporary world, it is quite necessary to briefly and clearly mention some of these kinds of humanism that may fall within the three periods of humanism discussed above. In other words, each of the different kinds or formulations of humanism generally falls into the Renaissance humanism, the enlightenment humanism or the nineteenth and twentieth century humanism. Thus, the varieties and emphasis of humanism include scientific humanism, democratic humanism, religious humanism, and Marxist humanism (*Humanist Manifesto II*). Sometimes there are other systems too that lay claim to be heir to the humanist tradition. They include free thought, atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, deism, rationalism, ethical culture and literal religion (*Humanist Manifesto II*). Literary humanism is perceived as the humanism associated with the European rediscovery of Greek and Latin literature at the renaissance. Those called humanists here are all those who devoted themselves to these studies. Scientific humanism is another form of humanism. Sometimes it is a term used, perhaps to distinguish modern humanism from literary humanism and from religious humanism. This may be likely due to the fact that the humanists who use it want to put the accent on their scientific attitude or disposition.

There is even evolutionary humanism championed by Julian Huxley. Huxley argued that the broad outlines of the new evolutionary picture of ultimate are beginning to be clearly visible. Men's destiny is to be the sole agent for the future evolution of this planet. Man is the dominant type to be produced over two and a half billion years of the slow biological improvement affected by the blind optimistic workings of natural selection, if he does not destroy himself, he has at least an equal stretch of evolutionary time before him to exercise his agency (*Humanist Manifesto II*).

Furthermore, socio-political philosophers approach the issue of humanism from their perceived world-view. Hence they talked of "inclusive humanism". Here the opinion is that "the theory of inclusive humanism asserts that no one or group in a society should be treated in any way that would constitute any real threat to their security and survival unless such an individual or group want to deny others such similar security or survival (Uwalaka, 1998). Political inclusiveness, social inclusiveness and economic inclusiveness are what inclusive humanism advocates. The humanism here is built on the idea that every man is focused on development. The project of the defense of the dignity of the human person and the promotion of

human rights, and the recognition of the fact that humanism implies a high esteem for the human person as having intrinsic value by John Paul II has led to referring to the project as 'prophetic humanism' (Avery, 1993). Hence, we can talk of prophetic humanism too, as part of the family of humanism.

Lastly, there is secular humanism. Paul Kurtz (1980), one of the leading figures of secular humanism argued that "humanists by and large are secularists." This means that every humanist is a secular humanist or that humanism by and large is secular humanism. The idea behind this conclusion stems from the fact that for Kurtz, humanists are fundamentally committed to free thought and to the view that ethical values are relative to human experience and needs (Kurtz, 1980). However, Kurtz's claim that all humanists are secular humanists is debatable but beyond the scope of this paper.

Meaning of Humanism

The term "humanism" is said to have been coined in 1808, based on the 15th Century Italian term "umanista", which was initially used to designate a teacher of classic literature. Humanism as a concept means different thing to different people. In other words, humanism does not enjoy a single, generally accepted definition because as David Ehrenfeld (1978) noted, most of the devout followers of humanism do not seem to be aware that they are humanists. Hence, different supporters and followers of humanism define humanism based on their personal affiliations, beliefs and what they feel humanism should be. For instance, the American humanist Association (1973), defines humanism as a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism or other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good. Equally, humanism is said to be a broad category of ethical, metaphysical, epistemological and political philosophies in which human interests, values and dignity predominate. It has an ultimate faith in humankind, believes that human beings possess the power or potentiality of solving their own problems, through reliance primarily upon reason and scientific method applied with courage and vision (Philosophy basics, 2022).

As an ethical doctrine, humanism affirms the dignity and worth of all people and their ability to determine right and wrong purely by appeal to universal human qualities, especially rationality. It searches for truth and morality through human means in support of human interests, and focuses on

the human capacity for self-determination. It endorses universal morality (Moral Universalism) based on the commonality of the human condition.

As a metaphysical doctrine, Humanism believes in a naturalistic metaphysics or attitude toward the universe that considers all forms of the supernatural as myth, and regards Nature as the totality of being, and as a constantly changing system of matter and energy which exists independently of any mind or consciousness. It rejects the validity of transcendental justifications, such as a dependence on belief without reason, the supernatural, or texts of allegedly divine origin. It considers faith an unacceptable basis for action, and holds that it is up to humans to find the truth, as opposed to seeking it through revelation, mysticism, tradition or anything else that is incompatible with the application of logic to the observable evidence. It is therefore generally compatible with Atheism and Agnosticism, but does not require these, and can be compatible with some religions. It is an ethical process, not a dogma about the existence or otherwise of gods. To some extent, it supplements or supplants the role of religions, and can be considered in some ways as "equivalent" to a religion.

As an epistemological doctrine, it supports scientific skepticism (i.e. it questions the veracity of claims lacking empirical evidence) and the scientific method (the collection of data through observation and experimentation, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses). And as a political philosophy, humanism emphasizes individual freedom and responsibility, human values and compassion, and the need for tolerance and cooperation, and it rejects authoritarian beliefs. It affirms that we must take responsibility for our own lives and the communities and world in which we live.

In general, humanism can be seen as a philosophy that stresses the importance of human factors rather than looking at religious, divine, or spiritual matters. Hence, humanism is particularly rooted in the idea that people have an ethical personality to lead lives that are personally fulfilling while at the same time contributing to the greater good for all people (Kendra, 2020). Although the main goal of humanism is to guide people to a more enlightened way of life and create a better world for future generations, it was however seen as a dangerous trend away from core religious values. In fact, many outspoken religious conservatives blame humanists for modern consumerist culture because they see humanists as people who are quick to sacrifice nature for the sake of human gain. Hence,

humanism was seen as a religion without a god and without a moral framework.

Humanism and Rationality

In discussing humanism and rationality, the aim is to recognize a set of conditions indicating how humanism identifies with rationality, from the varieties and emphasis of humanism. These are conditions responsible for and which inform the character, nature and scope of the humanistic account of rationality. It is tied to the enhancement of genuine humanistic dispositions. These dispositions according to some scholars are quite central. Thus, there are three discernible genuine humanistic dispositions that form the core humanist rationality. They include: 1. the ultimate aspiration of the human person; 2. the common good or the sum total of social conditions required for realizing man's ultimate aspiration; and 3. the quest for free inquiry.

The ultimate aspiration of the human person

The proper study of mankind is man himself. The human person is a complex being that craves for a life that is full and autonomous; a life that enables him assert and develop himself. Thus, he strives to acquire and to strengthen mastery of his environment, harnessing the resources of his world. It is particularly to this end that all relevant justification of his beliefs and actions, the desirability of his policies, and the value of available resources means and methods or procedural patterns must rest on how far they promote man's ultimate aspiration, or realizing full humanity (Blackwell, 1968).

Strictly speaking, the idea and nature of full humanity may never be exhaustively understood or realized. But then, there is a cumulative sense of human accomplishment. For instance, all human face together the classical evils of ignorance, poverty and disease, the case of insecurity and violence as is prevalent in our contemporary society, the characteristic weakness of human beings, the population nightmare and other common problems of mankind. Humans have on their side, the arts, sciences, and the vast resources of social cooperation. The situation demands attempt at resolving these problems with the faith of available resources. Also the situation demands that this has urgency and priority over the many and important differences which parcel out mankind into races, nations, classes, creeds and other portions of total humanity (Blackham). Of course, man's responses to these problems may be several and varied according to his sense of task, his capacities and

opportunities, and his hopes or fears for mankind. But in all, there must always be, the aspirations for a life worthy to be called human and this consists in enhancing the conditions that help to resolve these common problems. In other words, the creation of the conditions that help life remains the ultimate goal of whatever is rational. In recognition of this responsibility, man has always pursued the project of identifying, developing and employing relevant resources and possibilities. In this project, man's uniqueness is shared by a common consciousness and the quest for the common good. In order to enhance the realization of man's ultimate aspiration, the humanistic account of rationality demands that a belief, action or policy must enhance that which is good for all – the common good.

The Common Good

Generally speaking, man is endowed with the conscience to love the good, reason to know it and reason to choose it. With the growth of sensibility, reason and imagination, the human person embarks on a way of living, which involves relations with his fellow human being. In this social contact with others, man's innate goodness leads to growing awareness of the common good and the need of others. And so, goodness subordinates itself to the growing demands of human conscience, social morality and natural virtues. Social living then confers on man a rational unity – 'general weal'. In participating willingly and freely in formulating those conditions and institutions which enhance the general weal, man promotes the common good. The virtuous man, the rational man becomes the one who promotes the common good. Every social unit must be seen as part of the 'great city of the word' whose common good is always the good of nature or of humanity. On the platform as a condition in the humanistic account of rationality, it is defined in reference to the human person, particularly the good of the human individual and is constituted of the whole networks of social conditions which enable persons and groups to flourish, living a fully and genuinely human life, otherwise described as integral human development. This is represented in the basic presupposition of the common good. One of such presuppositions is, respect for the human person.

In the name of the common good all are bound to respect the fundamental rights of all human persons. Every human is to see the other as another self; bearing in mind his life, and the means necessary for living it in a dignified manner. This is in recognition in each person, of a basic dignity, not conferred on him by race, gender, age or economic

status (Catholic Conference, 1969). In addition to human respect, the common good also presupposes the freedom of the individual persons. As a matter of fact, the common good begins with the concept of freedom, which is the power of the person to act and do according to his or her own purpose with or without others. It is then to that extent that the common good resides in the condition in which it is possible to act according to social norm of conscience. This condition is indeed indispensable in the development of the human person.

In sum the content of the common good has to do with the totality of conditions that provide: (1). Considerable access to the acquisition of food, clothing and housing, (2). Freedom to choose a state of life and to set up a family, (3). The right to education, work and one's good name, (4). Right to respect, to prosper knowledge and to act according to the dictates of one's conscience, (5). The right to safeguard one's privacy and rightful freedom in matters of religion.

Free Inquiry

Blackham (1965) is of the opinion that the humanistic account of rationality identifies as one central criterion of a rational belief, policy, or institution, the notion of free inquiry. Such a belief, policy, action or institution must emerge from a free inquiry. The notion of a free inquiry denies that any tradition, axiom, or authority is exempt from inquiry. Since to inquire is human, humanism insists that, within the context of free inquiry, every idea, policy, institution are all of the same consideration or of such affinity is subject to human reason: there is nothing outside of human experience which can be the standard of interpretation, justification or evaluation. There is only experience to be interpreted or evaluated in the light of reason (Blackham, 1965). This particularly makes the human condition the sole source of all standards of thought and values forever open to question. This is faith in the power of human reason that can be identified in the humanism of the ambiguity, in the skeptics, tolerance of Renaissance and in the idea of the Enlightenment. Notably, in the eighteenth century, confidence in human reason found expression either in the appeal to 'common sense' or in their appeal to 'what is evident to human experience' (Gaarder, 1997). In the contemporary times, the image of science that members of the scientific community project, is that of rationality par excellence. This is characterized by the cliché – science is the paradigm of rationality, the model of knowledge and truth (Harbemas, 1981). Underlying this image is the appropriation of

a number of principles, including that of being a free inquiry. They advance the argument that the validity of science remains always open to question, and that its results are always subject to falsification in the light of further experience. Hence going by the secular humanist account of rationality, in so far as an inquiry is a free inquiry it is a rational quest.

Some opinions have been expressed with regards to the fore-going analysis of the notion of free inquiry. The argument being proposed is that, free inquiry, so presented is crucially dangerous and would seem to threaten man. If not institution or idea, nothing however is sacred, not even God can stand against it, then it would produce nothing but anarchy and disorder. But then, the humanist's proposed account of rationality however, incorporates conditions that can help to meet these fears and the real dangers envisaged. Such conditions underlie the discipline of free inquiry and link the quest for free inquiry with a related quest for social agreement (Blackham, 1965).

Having examined the humanist rationality above, let us critically look at some loopholes that otherwise puts a keg in the wheel of the humanist's account of rationality. First, the greatest problem faced by humanism generally, is its elimination in its entirety of the need and value of the supernatural in man's realization of all the beautiful goals the doctrine set forth. Also, the continued quest by humanism to find root of the problem, explanation of all events and solution to everything about human reality is quite faulty. Humanists have placed over confidence on the power of human reason and intelligence. They negatively limit man such that the implication for man is that any phenomenon that defeats the power of reason in the court of explanation is not explainable. Restricting man to here and now does man the disfavor of not longing for the ultimate reality, which can only give answers to that question which has always been asked but put more popularly by Heidegger "why are there essence; why there is anything at all, rather than nothing?" (Heidegger, 1961).

The humanists made man a sort of mere signpost which does the duty of directing all others but not moving. There is no question of man about his essence; he is left with inquiry and concern about his essence or being. Humanists places undue trust in science which consequently has over secularized human being to the point that the humanness has been drowned in the secularized ocean of over-emphasized rationality; an enterprise that has reduced man to the level of any other animal. For if man's essence or being which unites him with the supernatural is lost or not recognized,

what is left of him would be as good as what belongs to another brute. Because man's emotion, intelligence, will and reason are harmonized and properly humanized in the sense and connection with the ultimate reality which is not just man's matrix but his *terminus ad quem*.

Because of the shortfalls, lopsided consideration and consigning man only to physical world, some thinkers out rightly dismiss the entire humanistic enterprise. The greatest problem here is that humanism remains in its partial consideration of man. The holistic nature of man with his total essence is not taken into account. Hence humanism does man the over-favour of making him 'absolute' in the sense of his being all in all or the measure of all things.

However, although humanism has serious shortfalls, yet, this author believes that rather than dismiss humanism out rightly, there is a greater need to bracket-off some of the obnoxious claims of humanism and focus on the positive and grand postulations of humanism. For this reason, a look at the possibility of humanist rationality becoming a possible alternative for curbing conflict and violence in our contemporary society would substantiate our earlier claim that the humanist rationality can indeed be a possible alternative for contemporary society in solving most of the societal problems.

Humanist Rationality: A Possible Alternative

Humanism can indeed be a possible alternative for curbing conflicts and violence in our society because it stresses the importance of self-actualization and reaching one's potential. Besides, humanism can be used as a tool for self-discovery and personal development. When individuals are made to focus on self-actualization, self-discovery and personal development, conflicts and violence will be reduced as one who has reached the level of self-actualization and development would hardly condescend into violence or engage in unnecessary conflicts.

Also, humanism can be a possible alternative for curbing conflicts and violence in our society because it advocates for the betterment of communities and societies. A healthy individual is one who lives in a developed society that fosters personal well-being and social support. In our societies today, particularly the Nigerian society, political leaders as well as religious leaders are so selfish and so pre-occupied that they hardly ever advocate for or seek for the betterment of communities. When the humanist rationality is adopted and applied in our social lives, community

life would improve and personal well-being would be greatly enhanced. When this happens, conflicts and violence would be reduced or seriously check-mated. Other reasons why the humanist rationality can be a possible alternative for curbing conflicts and violence in our society are because humanism encourages individuals to: (1) pursue experiences that would bring him joy and develop his skills, (2), learn to accept himself and others, (3) focus on enjoying experiences rather than just achieving goals, (4) keep learning new things, (5) pursue things that he is passionate about, and (6) maintain an optimistic outlook.

A look at the general conditions of our contemporary society in every nation would reveal that all is not well. Conflicts and violence abound making it hard for humans to live comfortably and meaningfully. True indeed, every society has tried without success to manage and or curb the ever increasing conflicts and violence yet daily, the story is the same. The implication is that the traditional methods and styles of conflict management such as compromise, competition, forcing, withdrawal, conflict transformation etc have so far not been able to curb conflict and violence in the society. This could be because these methods and styles of conflict management were not fundamentally built on a sound rationality. Hence, the humanist rationality which is purely based on and centered on man seems to offer a better alternative for a possible conflict and violence free society.

If for instance, man is encouraged as the humanists do, to pursue experiences that would bring him joy and develop his skills, he would be less violent and conflict free. Because lack of happiness or joy as well as dissatisfaction arising from inability to reach full potentials through the development of one's skill account for most of the conflicts arising in the society which most often result into violence. Equally, when man learns to accept himself and others, he does so in the name of the common good, hence he is bound to respect the fundamental rights of all human persons. Equally, he sees the other as another self; bearing in mind his life, and the means necessary for living it in a dignified manner. This would bring peace; conflicts would be greatly managed and violence would be controlled.

Also, since the Humanist rationality takes into consideration and at the same time upholds the ultimate aspiration of the human person, each individual in the society is encouraged to assert and develop himself. He strives to acquire and to strengthen mastery of his environment, harnessing the resources of his world. In this way man's

environment and society are made less violent and conflict infested since individuals are not only allowed to pursue their ultimate aspirations, but are also encouraged, supported and protected. Therefore, the humanist rationality can indeed be a possible alternative for curbing conflict and violence in the contemporary society.

Conclusion

This paper tried to present a critical analysis of humanism as a philosophy or a system of thought. As noted, there are several kinds of humanism but they all share the same sentiments. In other words, the main goal of all kinds of humanism is to guide people to a more enlightened way of life and create a better world for future generations. It's for this reason that humanism was taken and studied as one in this paper since no matter the type or kind any one ascribes to, the fact still remains that humanism in general is a philosophy that stresses the importance of human factors rather than looking at religious, divine, or spiritual matters.

In studying the humanist rationality, the shortfalls of humanism were highlighted and finally bracketed off in order to appreciate its positive and grand contribution to humanity. Hence, the paper submits that the Humanist rationality can indeed be a possible alternative for curbing conflicts and violence in our contemporary society. Therefore, the paper recommends that rather than out rightly dismissing humanism as harmful to humanity because of its anti-theistic principles, the fine and grand principles of humanism as discussed in this paper should be harnessed since they offer a better option for dealing with problems in this 21st century.

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