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What is the most important factor in a society for it to work correctly?

¿Cuál es el factor más importante para que una sociedad funcione correctamente?

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Abstract

A civilization is the highest status we can achieve in a society. However, without education, people will become populace; without language, the most intelligent and communicative beings will become parrots; without religion, all behaving and superior animals will turn into evil chimpanzees; without sanity, we will clash and create backwardness. But we still have hope and have a chance to overcome these issues; yet, without awareness, we will all be doomed. My main concern in this composition is to find out which one of the previous aspects is the most important.

Key words: Civilization, society, religion, education, sanity, language, awareness.

Resumen

La civilización es el nivel más alto al que podemos llegar en una sociedad. Sin educación, las personas se convertirán en masas; sin una lengua, los seres con mayor inteligencia y capacidad comunicativa se convertirán en cotorras; sin religión, todos aquellos animales superiores con noción de comportamiento se convertirán en malvados chimpancés; sin cordura, tendremos altercados y crearemos retroceso. Pero aún hay chance de superar estos inconvenientes; sin embargo estaremos perdidos si no hacemos uso de la conciencia. Saber cuál de los aspectos anteriores es el más importante es mi mayor enfoque en este escrito.

Palabras clave: Civilización, sociedad, religión, educación, cordura, idioma, conciencia.

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I. Introduction

The following essay will address 5 important factors that suggest different ways to improve a society like ours. It will include some very informal sentences that reflect nothing but my very personal way of judging what I disagree with in our civilisation. My main purpose is to provide comparisons between some of the different stages we studied in class from history and the present one (ours) to get to a conclusion which will indicate what the most important factor in any society is (or might be).

II. Presentation

It is generally said that every ancient/old age was a better time. It is also believed that the longer we live the better our civilisations get. Humanly speaking, this SHOULD be correct for we learn from our history. But, **what is the most important factor in a society for it to work correctly?** The five aspects to be treated in this essay will be: religion, education, sanity, language, and awareness, and are introduced so:

III. Religion

[I need to clarify that by religion I strictly mean the belief in a unique and superior Being, not a group of people with a set of rules. Also, and for the reader's comfort, you can read *morality* instead of the word I will use next and that I consider one of the most important factors:]

Edward the Confessor is one of the men I liked the most from the discussed classes. He made a remarkable change in Britain during his kingship (1042-66) by applying the help of Christianity and its laws so that regular peasants could, for the first time, be literate. This harshly contrasts the effects that the attempt to privatise education in our country has had with the so mentioned Law 30 by our major head, Santos and, ironically, the Minister of Education.

Although it is very remarkable, religion is not the most important factor and it has been demonstrated by many people who have influenced different societies without even acknowledging God in their actions. Another one of those men I feel most admiration for is the ex-president José Mujica from Uruguay. This respectable and dedicated man is a declared atheist. He got to boost a huge development in this country thanks to his philosophy of adapting his own life style to the ones of the people by aiming their life improvement and carrying out admirable deeds like, reported by the BBC News, giving away 90% of his salary to charity.

The reason why I present this ex-president as an example of progress is precisely because of him being an atheist, which makes a perfect antithesis to Edward the Confessor.

Notwithstanding, I am pretty sure that any influence expressed by means of religious views is stronger than any other lacking it. Professor Michael J. Sandel (an important contemporary US

political philosopher) states that: “Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, William Jennings Bryan, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King—indeed, the majority of great reformers in American history—were not only motivated by faith but repeatedly used religious language to argue for their cause.” Notice how important, for instance (and coming back to St. Edward), an initially simple abbey in Britain (Westminster) became one of the most renowned and representative icons around the world. Certainly, in times like the ones we are witnessing, it is necessary to act the way Elizabeth I of England did at the very beginning of her reign: being neutral on religions so no disputes are created amongst ourselves. In the end, she once expressed my very own views on religion by stating that, as indicated by the British Monarchy webpage, “there is only one Jesus Christ and all the rest is a dispute over trifles”.

IV. Education

No academic aspect has been mentioned during the classes but this does not mean that it does not have a paramount role in every single society. How do you build a skyscraper? By means of engineering; how do you heal people’s wounds and maladies? By means of medicine; how do you bring people out of poverty? By means of labour; so, how do you construct a society? By means of glorious education in special places where all of these subjects are taught.

In the Article N° 2 of the Law 30 (1992), our Government indicates that “Higher Education is a cultural public service, which is inherent to the social purpose of the State.”²⁷ This means that ANYONE should be able to access education, regardless their social status. Yet, they contradict themselves when they clearly state in Article the N° 5 that “Higher education will be available to those who demonstrate to have the skills and meet the required academic conditions in each case.”²⁸ This is evidence of an awful system that excludes students who, either for economic or intellectual reasons, cannot access higher education in Colombia.

THE TIMES (2014), a British journal, cited Dorothee Stapelfeldt arguing that “tuition fees are socially unjust”. It seems utopian but it is not impossible to wish for a government that offers free education and this is exactly what Stapelfeldt was referring to once Germany got tuition-free universities in all its national territory.

I want to leave an open question for the reader (a question which may be addressed in a different composition): Why is there so much corruption amongst our political leaders if they supposedly receive the best education in our country?

27La Educación Superior es un servicio público cultural, inherente a la finalidad social del Estado.

28La Educación Superior será accesible a quienes demuestren poseer las capacidades requeridas y cumplan con las condiciones académicas exigidas en cada caso.

V. Sanity

A report made by the BBC talks about a psychiatric phenomenon named “glass delusion” in which people believe they are made of glass. French king, Charles VI, is reported to have suffered from this delusion in such a degree that he would even wrap up in blankets “to prevent his buttocks from breaking”. By this time, he was in charge of defending his territory when Henry V of England laid claim to the French throne. His mental condition definitely did not help him defend his lands from the English.

As a similar and current case, I can present our so *beloved* ex-president Álvaro Uribe who probably felt he was made of steel for he thought no-one would ever put him aside from the Nation’s strongest position. Arms are made mostly of steel as well, and this is what he fought the Guerrillas with during his 8 years of presidency. Unfortunately, paraphrasing José Miguel Vivanco (2014) from EL TIEMPO, more than 3.000 innocent peasants perished during this futile 60-year ongoing altercate. They would be known afterwards as *falsos positivos* (extrajudicial executions).

Nowadays, Uribe whinges at any situation he finds inconvenient for himself. Fortunately, this has not happened to our current president, Juan Manuel Santos, and (for God’s sake!) we do not want or need this to happen again. All of these issues could and can be avoided, perhaps not easily but yes successfully, by having a tiny lump of sense of control and common sense.

VI. Language

Because of history, we know that English was made out of different civilisations such as Saxon, Latin, Danish, German, French, and surely Celtic ones like Welsh, and Gaelic Scottish and Irish along with their own languages. In the end, English remained as the national language in the British Isles and thus helped maintain its relevant culture. What if by creating a language made out of Spanish and a native indigenous one we could improve the chances of having a better life in Colombia?

From my own perspective, this would not be a bad idea. After all, if we take into account a culture like the Nasa Yuwe in Cauca where people are extremely nice, give everything without expecting anything back, and toil their lands to construct a better horizon, we could have an encouraging model of what our society should be like. My point is that this is nothing but a sense of identity, a sense that we terribly lack in this country.

VII. Awareness

Last but not the least, this is a supremely important aspect and is permanently to be taken into account. Once more, history lets us know how populace has stood up to government systems that do not meet their expectations in terms of life quality. Cases showing the opposite are not an issue recently arisen. In his book *Utopia*, More (1516) put in evidence that some people insinuate that their ancestors would like to see things as they currently are. Evidently, this is a lame excuse to avoid hard work and provokes backwardness in what is permanently presented as the best chance to improve circumstances.

In 2011 (coming back to the example of the Law 30), we witnessed a huge manifestation of thousands of students from different universities throughout Colombia against this law so that education would not be privatised. Similarly, Chile manifested against their government due to the unfair rules concerning, likewise, education. The core idea of this aspect is to realise that, as a vast majority, we are the ones who rule the places where we live, not the truncated group we wrongly “choose” to *rule* us.

VIII. Considerations

- Having thought of these aspects, I think it is implicitly demonstrated that it might not be the most important, but religion still has had the greatest influence upon the other aspects rather than the way around. We can still evidence this “issue” in political parties mingled with a certain religion. MIRA, for instance.
- Implicitly demanded too, I was trying to make the reader realise that, although we live in an “advanced era”, a very ancient time run by illiterate peasants could sustain better conditions than the ones we currently have.
- Evidently, the more aspects a society is composed by the more complex it gets. Culturally speaking, no factor could work without the presence of the others. It would probably work for individuals with different perspectives but not for a whole community.
- Indeed, education could have been my top factor for a change in society. If required, this shall be my next main topic in an essay.

IX. Conclusion

My intention here was to indicate that religion has had and will always have the greatest possible influence in all cultures and societies. However, we evidently see that without education our cultures will always tumble down. I will keep this firm position but I give you (the reader) the chance of deciding which of the previous two the most important factor is.

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