

Relevance of philosophy to politics and leadership in Nigeria

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Abstract

The problem of governance is a perennial problem confronting humanity. Man has discovered that his fulfillment as a social and rational being can only be found in society and not in solitary or in the forest like the brute. It is within the civilized society that his hope to find peace, security, wellbeing, and to escape all the evils of the state of nature lies. But he cannot attain these goals in a non-functional state. A functional state is built around a division of labor. Politics is a science that should be left to the experts no less than with any craft, skill or science. When it comes to formulating the policies and laws that govern the state, the politically unskilled majority represents those least likely to make an informed decision. If we are concerned with the wellbeing of the State, we should similarly seek out those who have the necessary wisdom to govern. These experts must have the vision of the ‘Good’, for a better and stable governance and peaceful State. For as we know from the lessons of Thomas Hobbes, where there is not a stable government, there is chaos. Chaos is to be avoided at all costs, and the effort to do this will be one in futility if the government is not moral and knowledgeable. This paper therefore, intends to look into the relevance of philosophy to politics and leadership in Nigeria. The method of study employed is the critical method. Philosophy provides proper training for good leaders. Not one person would look at the situation in Nigeria and not finger bad leadership as a bane of its political life. There is, therefore, great need for good leaders. There is need to learn to give the mantle of leadership to who it fits – those who respect the rule of law, and who know what constitute true “governance”. Just as a navigator must understand the stars and be able to use them to guide a ship through the vast ocean, so our political rulers must be able to navigate the ship of State by means of a vision of the “Good”. Who should be the captain of a ship? Should it be most “popular” person, or the one who knows the art of navigation? These are the kind of questions we engaged in this study.

Keywords: Politics, Leadership, Philosophy, Nigeria, Knowledge, Society

Introduction

One of the difficult and perplexing questions in political philosophy is “who should rule?” Almost all the classical theories have dealt with it. For Plato, this is the crucial question that every society must face, and his entire political philosophy can be understood as an attempt to answer that question. Plato’s answer here is that, “A special trained people should rule” (Popkin &

Stroll, 1993, p.112). For Plato, the parallel between the just (or well-ordered) individual and the just (or well-ordered) society is important. He believes that the principles of moral theory and political theory are identical. Plato’s main recommendation, generally, is that a philosopher should be in charge of governments.

Philosophy has played a role in the development of leaders, their

education and subsequently, their rule. Philosophy influences the mind to thought. It does not merely influence the minds of individuals to accept the thoughts of others or their beliefs wholesale, but to think and respond for themselves. In this way, philosophy leads us all to improvement of ourselves as individuals, as a community and as a nation. It questions the basis of the ideas we live by as well as the very foundation of who we are in order to rule or be ruled. It asks of our leaders, As McDonald noted, to see the point of view of the governed in order to make a better society and nation (MacDonald, 2013, p.63). In order to stand as a nation for an enduring civilization and people, philosophy also needs to introduce the definition of its people.

The point at issue here is the usefulness of philosophy to politics and leadership which are basic ingredients of national development. It is therefore a reference to the question of whether philosophy could be at service to national development.

Thomas Flynn characterizes philosophy as the pursuit of basic truths about human nature and the universe (cited in MacDonald, 2013, p.63). These basic truths are wisdom. And so, from its Greek etymology *philos* (love) and *Sophia* (wisdom), philosophy is rendered simply as the love of wisdom. Hence, the philosopher is the lover of wisdom. Our reason for holding that philosophy can and does play a role in national development shall be largely, though not exclusively, built on the this concept of philosophy as love of

wisdom. We shall come to a profound understanding of that in the fourth section of our analysis.

The development of this paper has five sections. We shall inquire, firstly, into the concept of philosophy. Secondly, we survey the relationship between Philosophy, Wisdom, and the good life. The third section looks at the relevance of Plato to politics and leadership. The fourth section attempts to show how philosophy is, or is to be put at the service of societal development. This is followed by our recommendation and conclusion. Worthy of mention is the fact that our work carries both descriptive and normative tones. At this juncture, however, let us make a tour of the variegated moments that the attempts to conceptualize philosophy has produced.

Understanding the concept of Philosophy

One is usually confronted with the fact that the concept of philosophy resists any definitional attempt. The many conceptions of what philosophy is attest to this fact. Nevertheless, we can validly say, following Thomas Lynn, that philosophy is a universal human phenomenon (MacDonald, 2013, p.65). It is the fusion of the human presence to the world and the world's presence to the human person. Thus, philosophy is a fundamental human way of being in the world. It is, at basic, the foundational attitude of probing into facts and their relationships. Philosophy is the search for the unity of our perception of reality. Aristotle captures this fact with

his claim in the *Metaphysics* when he claims that all men by nature desire to know (MacDonald, 2013, p.59).

It is this desire for knowledge that fuels our desire to know all that can be known. In this connection, we can hold on to William Lawhead's definition of philosophy as the human attempt to systematically study the most fundamental structures of our entire experience in order to arrive at beliefs that are as conceptually clear, experientially confirmed and rationally coherent as possible (Lawhead, 2002, cited in MacDonald, 2013, p.66). Put simply, philosophy is the attempt to make sense of reality. More so, philosophy, from antiquity has been seen as more of an attitude, an activity, and a way of life. This is why one can agree with Bertrand Russell that philosophy, from the earliest times, has been not merely an affair of the schools, or of disputation between a 'handful' of learned men (Akam, 1991, p.144; MacDonald, 2013, p.66). It has been an integral part of the life of the community.

Nevertheless, through human history, philosophy has condensed into some forms of theories and schools. It is for this reason that today we can speak of philosophy as an academic discipline. In this sense philosophy can justifiably be described as an academic discipline that exercises reason and logic in an attempt to understand reality and answer fundamental questions about reality including knowledge, life, politics, morality and human nature. This does

not detract from the fact that it is essentially an attitude, an activity, a way of life.

From the forgoing, we can adduce two broad senses of philosophy, namely common or universal philosophy and systematic or academic philosophy (MacDonald, 2013, p.70). Let universal or common philosophy be a reference to the philosophical attitude present in the human person, whatsoever the culture or milieu and let the academic or systematic philosophy be a reference to the philosophy that has condensed into systems that are now taught in formal institutions of learning (MacDonald, 2013, p.63). We reiterate the fact that philosophy is the love of wisdom. It is the rational search for the ultimate unity of all reality. Philosophy, in both senses, is useful for socio-political development.

Philosophy, wisdom, and the good life

We have come thus far to the point that philosophy is love of wisdom in its literal sense. On this note, Johnson (2012, p.17) noted that philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom, and wisdom is necessary for good life and for success in every reality of life, including politics. Wisdom, one may say, is unconditionally good. You can never be too wise. All the other goods we pursue, however, are good for us only on the condition that they are used wisely. Thus, Akam remarks that one needs to pursue wisdom in order to

achieve a good life, which is what everyone ultimately wants (Akam, 1991, p.145).

It is important to know that human beings pursue the good life, as we see it. When people are given choices, they choose the option that seems better to them at the time. Even if they have to choose between evils, they choose what appears at the time to be the lesser of two evils. This preference for the apparent good through the course of one's life is what we mean by 'pursuing the good life as we see it.' The phrase 'as we see it' is, thus, deliberate and important. It indicates that first and foremost the claim that "all human beings pursue the good life, as they see it," is a psychological claim about the choice of apparent goods. We choose what seems best to us at the time even though we may later learn that we were calamitously mistaken.

The use of the phrase 'as we see it' does not, however, imply that all goods are subjective, which is to say that there are no objective goods. A subjective good is something that is good because we want it. An objective good is something that is good in itself. It is something that is good and something we should want, whether we want it or not. Zuckerman presents a simple argument for the existence of objective goods, hence the falsehood of complete subjectivism: all human beings are pursuing the good life as we see it; yet most people are not happy with their lives (Zuckerman, 2006, p.2). It is difficult for moral subjectivism or relativism to explain

this fact, granted that each person or people find(s) what is being sought.

The moral relativist basically claims that the good life is whatever we define it to be (Zuckerman, 2006, p.31). But if you get to define the good life for yourself, you have no excuse for not having a good life. Moral relativism is basically the view that, in the game of life, we get to make up the rules as we go along. But if you get to make up the rules, you have no excuses if you do not win. Even if you suffer terrible misfortune, the relativists would claim that it is within your power simply to define it as good. *So, why if we are all pursuing the good life as we see it, are so many of us unhappy with our lives? The best explanation is that there are objective conditions for a good life, and many of us do not meet them.* There are objective conditions for achieving the good life in Nigeria, but many of our leaders do not meet them.

There are two basic ways that we can fail to meet these conditions. First, there are factors that are outside our control, which we will call *fortune*, good or ill. Second, there are factors that are in our control, such as our thoughts, some choices and our actions. A Johnson rightly observed, "even the most intrepid pursuit of the good life will fail if we lack good fortune or if we think, choose, or act wrongly" (Johnson, 2012, p.18). To enjoy a good life, we must gain and keep those particular goods that are components of a good life. The good life, in short, can also include a good death. As a people, we must have good leaders that can guarantee our wellbeing and justify our

social contract with the nation – leaders who are willing to give up their lives for the good of their subjects (the wise and philosophical leaders) and not the contrary – those who are ready to kill their subjects for their own good (the foolish and unphilosophical leaders).

Good leaders are ready to work and ready to make work available for others. In fact, fortune and work are two important components of a good life. Fortune is capricious and unfair. Some people are born healthy, beautiful, intelligent, and talented. Some have happy, loving families. Some are born in civilized, peaceful, prosperous societies; some in societies blessed with natural resources and healthy environment. The rest falls along every gradation to the opposite extremes. Work is one way that we try to correct the inequalities of fortune (Johnson, 2012, p.21). Keep in mind too that misfortune is one of the ways we build strength and character. We have identified work and fortune as two ways that we come to possess goods. But to live well, it is not enough merely to possess goods. We also have to use them well; we have to make right use of all things.

Wisdom, according to Akam (1991, p.145), is the ability to make right use of all things. The opposite of wisdom is folly, a penchant for making bad use of all things. Without wisdom, none of the things we possess are necessarily good for us. Fortune may shower gifts upon a people, but if they lack wisdom, the greater the gifts, the greater one's potential for disaster. A classic example is Nigeria, a country which has every advantage of fortune,

yet the citizens still fail to possess wellbeing or a good life. This perhaps is because we make foolish choice of leaders and unqualified people often present themselves for leadership positions. Nigerian is a great nation in many ramifications especially in terms of giftedness; but great gifts combined with great folly lead to terrible consequences. In fact, foolish people are better off with fewer gifts since they have fewer ways of harming themselves and others. With wisdom, however, you can live a good and happy life, even if fortune deals you few advantages and many disadvantages. Fate, like game of politics, deals us all a hand. Some get good cards and some get bad ones. But people who play good hands foolishly can end up losing, while people who play bad hands wisely can win the game. *Wisdom allows us to push back against bad fortune and create our own good luck.*

According to Johnson (2012, p.22), conditional goods contribute to a good life only if they are used wisely. Without wisdom, none of the conditional goods accrued by good fortune or hard work will necessarily add up to a happy life. Wisdom, therefore, is the *sine qua non* of a good life – the essential condition without which it cannot exist (Johnson, 2012, p.22). Thus, wisdom, like the good life itself, is an unconditional good. There are no conditions under which one is better off being literally foolish than wise. One can be too rich, smart, or beautiful for one's own good; but one can never be too wise for one's own good – and because wisdom never

loses sight of the good, it can direct all other things towards the good. Thus, wisdom is the most important component of the good life, second in importance only to the good life itself.

The question may also arise, whether wisdom is sufficient for good life. In our view, the idea that wisdom alone is sufficient for a good life is equivalent to the claim that the good life depends entirely on things that we can control, thus we can lead good lives without the goods of fortune, indeed in the midst of the greatest misfortune. The Roman Stoics, Seneca and Epictetus argued that wisdom is sufficient for the good life, thus the wise man is immune from misfortune (Kuzhandai, 2004, pp.107-108). Although this argument is outside the scope of this study, we believe the Stoic view is appealing but false. We follow Aristotle (1962, p.ix), who claims that the good life requires more than just virtue. It also requires external goods, which we must obtain through fortune and work. External goods, however, are not entirely under our control. Thus, the good life is not immune to misfortune.

We have argued, nevertheless, that wisdom is necessary for the good life. But, one may ask, is it always necessary? Is it at least possible that a person who is indifferent to wisdom, even a complete fool, might still lead a good life? The world is filled with happy-go-lucky people who give no thought to tomorrow. It is at least conceivable that some of these people could luck out, not only could fortune deal them certain gifts, but it could do so at the right time, in the right place,

and in the right degree, so they are never challenged to make right use of anything. This lucky streak could, moreover, continue their whole lives long. It is, of course, not very likely. Enjoying the good life through sheer luck could be called 'a fool's paradise.' But only a fool will count on it. The beginning of wisdom is to decide not to depend on luck but instead to create some of one's own.

If we are serious about the good life, then the pursuit of wisdom, namely philosophy, should be our first and foremost concern, prior even to the pursuit of conditional goods. For, as we have shown, the more goods we accumulate without the wisdom to use them, the greater the danger to our wellbeing.

The kind of wisdom under our consideration is usually called practical wisdom, as distinguished from theoretical wisdom. Philosophy is often divided into six fields, namely metaphysics – which deals with being and the cosmos, epistemology – which deals with knowledge and truth, aesthetics – which deals with the beautiful, logic – which deals with the act of reasoning, ethics (or moral philosophy) – which deals with the good life, and political philosophy – which deals with the society. One finds out that moral and political philosophy cannot really be separated as such, since man is a social animal, thus the good life is pursued within the society, and it must be pursued collectively as well as individually.

Metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics and logic are the theoretical branches of philosophy (Johnson,

2012, p.27). Their discoveries are not, in themselves, practical, but they are certainly relevant to practical philosophy. For instance, metaphysical debates about whether the soul is mortal or immortal, whether a God or gods exist(s), whether we are free or determined, and so forth, all have implications for moral philosophy. Epistemological debates on faith and reason, reason and sense experience, science and common sense, etc., all have practical implications. Every serious inquiry, moreover, uses the tools of logic. Aesthetics itself also has practical implications. Aesthetics deals with beauty as such, not just art; and beauty often serves as a guide to determining what is real, true, and good. Furthermore, the appreciation of beauty, which can be systematically cultivated, is one of the components of the good life. Therefore, even if practical wisdom is our primary concern, theoretical wisdom is not merely theoretical. In any case, theoretical wisdom (which is good conditionally) must be guided by practical wisdom, even as practical wisdom is informed by the theoretical wisdom.

Theory is about understanding the world. Practice is about changing it. We must then be able to distinguish between practical wisdom and practical knowledge (such as arts and technical skills). We should be able to distinguish persons who possess practical wisdom from those who possess practical knowledge. Both are about changing the world. Both may not be reduced to statements of facts or abstract principles and rules. Both

involve the perception of unique, concrete, changing situations and insight into the applicability of facts and abstract principles to concrete circumstances. The crucial difference is that practical knowledge is morally neutral, thus, it can be used for good or evil ends, whereas practical wisdom is intrinsically moral, and as such, always directed to the good.

Philosophy, which is the pursuit of wisdom, is the most important activity for anyone who is serious about the good life. Philosophy is the only discipline that aims at attaining unconditionally good things: wisdom and the good life. If philosophy is of paramount importance for all of life, then *a fortiori*, it is of paramount importance for political changes as well. Thus, if a nation, a people, or a person, is serious about pursuing the good life in a society, wisdom is an unconditional good, and philosophy is an indispensable study.

Nigerian nation as a ship in need of a navigator: The relevance of Plato

The ship of state metaphor was put forward by Plato (1955) in Book VI of the *Republic* (488a-489d). It likens the governance of a state to the command of a naval vessel and ultimately argues that the only people fit to be captain of this ship are philosopher kings, that is, benevolent men with absolute power who have access to the 'form of the good.' In the metaphor, Plato's Socrates compares the population at large to a strong but nearsighted ship-owner whose knowledge of seafaring is lacking. The quarrelling sailors are demagogues and politicians, and the

ship's navigator, a stargazer, is the philosopher. The sailors flatter themselves with claims to knowledge of sailing, though they know nothing of navigation, and are constantly vying with one another for the approval of the ship-owner so to captain the ship, going so far as to stupefy the ship-owner with drugs and wine. Meanwhile, they dismiss the navigator as a useless stargazer, though he is the only one with adequate knowledge to direct the ship's course.

One of the difficult and perplexing questions in political philosophy is "who should rule?" Almost all the classical theorists have dealt with it. For Plato, this is the crucial question that every society must face, and his entire political philosophy can be understood as an attempt to answer the aforementioned question. Plato's answer here is that, "A special trained people should rule" (Plato. 1955, p.88). For Plato, the parallel between the just (or well-ordered) individual and the just (or well-ordered) society is important. He believes that the principles of moral theory and political theory are identical.

Plato's main recommendation is that a philosopher should be in charge of governments. Plato would certainly have agreed with Marx, in believing that the point is not only to understand the world but to change it (Popkin & Stroll, 1993, p.113). The Ancient Greeks knew the *polis* (a city or city-state) as the most developed form of institutional life, springing from the principle that man's *political* environment constitutes his essential

condition as human (Gueguen, 1973, p.109). According to Plato, a state comes into existence because no individual is self-sufficient. We all have many needs – for food and shelter, for heat and tools, for roads and paths, for protection from attacks. This 'minimum state' works best when each members of it is making only the things for which he or she is best suited. And that means specialization.

For him the work goes easier and is better done when everyone is set free from all other occupations to do, at the right time, the one thing for which they are naturally fitted. The ruler's art of 'politics' is in turn fulfilled when the State is in balance and human happiness and the 'Good' is maximized. When, on the other hand, a ruler believes the nation should concentrate on generating wealth to the detriment of this, or tries to pursue power and military adventure, then, the political art is perverted (Plato. 1955, p.88).

Plato socially divided the society into different groups of persons, for he believes that "the most functional state is built around a division of labor. "It is foolish for me to take time to make my own shoes, because there are skilled workers who are much better at it than me," he said. Now there are two distinct classes of people, those who fill all the crafts: farmers, artisan and traders, and those who guard the community also called guardians. From this latter class are then chosen the most highly trained guardians who will become the rulers of the state (Stumpf, 2003, p.65). They are a selected group of individuals,

distinguished by their intelligence and philosophical wisdom. Their job is to establish the policies and laws within the society. Plato condemns the practice of interchanging one's profession with another person at another field of job. To buttress this point he said:

But if someone who belongs by nature to the class of artisans and businessmen is puffed up by wealth or popular support or physical strength or any similar quality, and tries to enter our military class; or if one of our military auxiliaries tries to get into the class of administering guardians for which he is unfit, and they exchange tools and prestige; or if a single individual tries to do all these jobs at the same time, well, I think you'll agree that this sort of mutual interchange and interference spells destruction to our state (Stumpf, 2003, p.65).

That is to say that interchange and interference of one on the duties of others as well as absolute freedom, which is destructive, are detrimental to political societies.

Who should be the captain of a ship? Should it be most "popular" person, or the one who knows the art of navigation? Who should rule the state, should it be someone whose training is in war or commerce? Plato believed that competence should be the qualification for authority. The ruler of the state should be the one who has the peculiar abilities to fulfill the function. Disorder in the state is caused by the same circumstances that produce

disorder in the individual, namely, the attempt on the part of the lower element to usurp the role of the higher faculties. In both the individual and the state, the uncontrolled drives of the appetites and the spirited action lead to internal anarchy. At both levels, therefore, the rational element must be in control.

The ruler, said Plato, should be the one who has been fully educated and has come to understand the difference between the visible world and the intelligible world – between the realm of opinion and the realm of knowledge, between appearance and reality. In short, the philosopher-king is one whose education has led him up, step by step through the ascending degrees of knowledge of the divided line until at least he has knowledge of the Good, that synoptic vision of the interrelation of all truths to each other (Stumpf, 2003, p.66).

It is to this point that Odhiambo (19198) rightly writes:

The study of philosophy or "dialectics" is the culmination of their theoretical preparation for the task of ruling, since it will lead them finally to a complete knowledge of "Good". Once they have the knowledge, their actions must be good and they would always, therefore, make decisions which are in the best interest of the State. They were to be appointed to administrative positions of a lesser order and be constantly observed in the performance of their duties. It is upon completion of these duties that they would become "philosopher-kings". Plato justified

these by given philosopher-kings absolute power of the bases that ruling is a skill just like medicine. In other to rule properly, one has to be trained for it just as in order to practice medicine properly, one has to be trained for it. To allow an untrained person in matter of governance is as foolish, in the eye of Plato, as to allow an untrained person to give advice for the proper conduct of a surgical operation (p.7).

In other to rule properly, one has to be trained for it just as in order to practice medicine properly, one has to be trained for it. To allow an untrained person in matter of governance is as foolish, in the eye of Plato, as to allow an untrained person to give advice for the proper conduct of a surgical operation. Philosopher-kings are, according to Plato, those with philosophical wisdom. They are a select group, distinguished by their intelligence and philosophical wisdom. They have the wherewithal to pilot the affairs of the state.

Philosophy and the development challenges in Nigeria

Tadaro conceptualizes development as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty (cited in MacDonald, 2013). Moreover, development is an ever-changing step towards achieving some goal and the optimum realization of the wellbeing of people in their communities. It is a stage by stage

improvement of a person's or a people's wellbeing. With these, it becomes evident that development is an integral part of the sane life of a people. And one can fittingly say that a people who do not develop are not normal. Furthermore, Aristotle (1962) points out the fact that every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good.

Following from this, every nation, being a community of sorts, is established with a view to some good. If Nigeria, as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has it, is a nation, then the many people who have come together to form this nation called Nigeria, have some good in view. Primarily, this good is their welfare. Whatever is done to promote this welfare is an act of national development. This is why national development has been described as the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens. Hence, it is acceptable to hold that every responsible government is expected to draw comprehensive plans periodically through which the welfare of citizens can be enhanced socially, economically and politically among others.

In this connection, nothing can be more tenable than the fact that a developed society is the one that has succeeded in providing a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants and that in such society premium is attached to elimination of poverty,

provision of food, shelter and clothing to its members (MacDonald, 2013, p.72). It becomes clearer that the concept of national development refers to the improvement of the life of the people of Nigeria in various ramifications. The ramification of societal development touches on the political, the economic, and the social, as well as other aspects of the life of the people of Nigeria. It is the end to which all the development plans that have been put forward since the coming to be of Nigeria have tended. Although despite all the development plans the Nigerian state is characterized by widespread poverty, massive unemployment, social and physical infrastructural decay, hunger, food insecurity, illiteracy, low capacity utilization, neglect of rural areas, insecurity of lives, urban congestion.

This is to say that the development process in Nigeria is quite slow, and the development plans are not achieving much of their projected objectives. But why is this so? Many commentators on the issue point to a number of challenges to national development including corruption, lack of discipline, lack of commitment, over ambitious development plans, lack of continuity of government programs, inefficient public service and lack of proper public/private sector partnership (McDonald, 2013, p.72). Besides, other factors challenging national development in Nigeria are noted to include the

inapplicability of development plans to the Nigerian situation and insufficient funding, among others. These challenges to societal development in Nigeria are not insurmountable. As a matter of fact, proper philosophy would solve some, if not all, of them. And to the question of how philosophy can achieve this let us now turn.

Philosophy is useful in societal development in terms of the drafting of workable development plans. As we already know, philosophy is considered as the love of wisdom and the philosopher is the lover of wisdom (the wise person). Accordingly, Aristotle notes that it is the office of the wise person to order things to their end. Philosophers know what the best thing to be done is. This is because they have a broad and perspicacious view of things. In this connection, philosophy would enable the working out of practicable development plans after the merely wishful ones have been laid off. To be able to do this, philosophers should be incorporated into the actual planning process. With their presence, whatever choices of development strategies are laid down would be the ones possible, given the Nigerian context. Hence, their presence is to questions the legitimacy of the choices for national development plans, and in so doing to show the ones that are best suited. Moreover, philosophy provides proper training for good leaders. Not one person would look at the situation in Nigeria and not finger

bad leadership as a bane of its political life. There is great need of good leaders in Nigeria. The cry for the elimination of corruption and the culture of waste is a testimony to this.

Therefore, following the Platonic maxim, *if Nigeria must develop politically, her kings must become philosophers and her philosophers, kings*. It is rather strange that in Nigeria, as it is unfortunately so in many other nations, people who have never had a class of political theory would be admitted to high public offices of profound political significance. What ideas are such people supposed to put to practice? This is not to say that possession of theory necessarily means ability to practice. But the real question is “what is a mechanical engineer doing in a bank as a cashier?” This looks more like a misplacement of priorities. No one doubts the fact that one can have academic knowledge in one field as well as competence in another field. But, the fact remains that when those whose task it is to do something do it, there will be a better result.

More to this, philosophy ensures the integral development of the human person. So, the true philosopher is a person who values the moral life and who shows concern for the good of the society (Macdonald, 2013, p.73). Having such a person at the helm of political affairs can ensure nothing but greater good for all. In addition, philosophy furnishes people with requisite autonomy and confidence to raise questions about

their fundamental human rights. A nation where human rights are violated indiscriminately is not bound for development.

In Nigeria, there are many human rights violations committed by the many in the helm of affairs and many Nigerians are not even aware of which of their rights are violated on a daily basis. The terrible situation is such as can be best described by Chukwuemeka Ojukwu’s words: “Followership has become such that our leaders are seduced and tyrants are made of them. We are sycophants. We even applaud executive imbecility. We genuflect to mediocrity and defend the indefensible executive indiscretions.”

A philosophical attitude gives one the confidence to rise up and question such violations. Put simply, philosophy helps people to think for themselves and not slave around. They know when to ask for what they want and demand for accountability from the nation to which they legitimately belong.

Conclusion

At this stage, a word of caution needs to be addressed. Philosophy can be and has been a lethal tool in the hands of many and they have used it very wrongly. Indeed, philosophy has been used to give grounds for such terrible things as slavery, wars, pogroms, etc. There is even the belief that philosophers are atheists. Some even believe that philosophers are the worst set of people walking about this earth. Not all of these are untrue. However, we can always test the spirit.

What is truer than the statement that to be valuable, “A philosophy must be true to life and in close touch with life?”

And again, philosophy is born from closeness to reality and must lead man to a more genuine and authentic closeness to reality. Philosophy that is true to its name therefore, culminates in positivity. It culminates in truth. It makes life easier. It clarifies existence. It is ultimately the love of wisdom. So such a philosophy would bring about development in Nigeria. And it ought to be allowed to do so. In this regard, there is urgent need to allow philosophers to have some more leverage on the development planning of this nation. In some ways, philosophy enters into so many fields as a second order discipline to question their presuppositions and demand of them solid grounds for their claims. It is in this way that we can speak of a philosophy of economics, philosophy of law.

Philosophers should be incorporated into the actual planning process. With their presence, whatever choices of development strategies are laid down would be the ones possible, given the Nigerian context. Hence, their presence is to questions the legitimacy of the choices for national development plans, and in so doing to show the ones that are best suited. Those with philosophical wisdom should navigate the ship of our state in the hope to eradicating injustices, tyranny, inhumanity, religious extremism, ethnic clashes, greediness, electoral manipulation and

despotism, in the state so as to ensure a true wellbeing of the citizens.

It is indeed absurd to talk about politics or impose on a human race a civilization without reference to Philosophy. Philosophy is a living subject which embraces all dialectical interpretations of life changes in society. It gives the hermeneutics understanding of reality by acting as a means to an end, through the interpretations of logical relations, ethical issues of categorical imperatives and methodological principles and concepts in our lives given situations. This paper therefore, intends to look into the importance of philosophy to politics and leadership in Nigeria. The ideas of politics and leadership in the light of philosophical postulations are required for human and societal development. Philosophy in this perspective is the form and abstraction or the orientation man uses to interpret his world view. Philosophy can be a genuine supporting tool for a harmonious existence in Nigeria, through proper restructuring of the polity, educational system, judicial system with respect to justice etc.

Philosophy, which is the pursuit of wisdom, is the most important activity for anyone who is serious about the good life. Philosophy is the only discipline that aims at attaining unconditionally good things: wisdom and the good life. If philosophy is of paramount importance for all of life, then *a fortiori*, it is of paramount importance for political changes as well. Thus, is a nation, a people, or a person, is serious about pursuing the good life in a society, wisdom is an

unconditional good, and philosophy is an indispensable study.

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