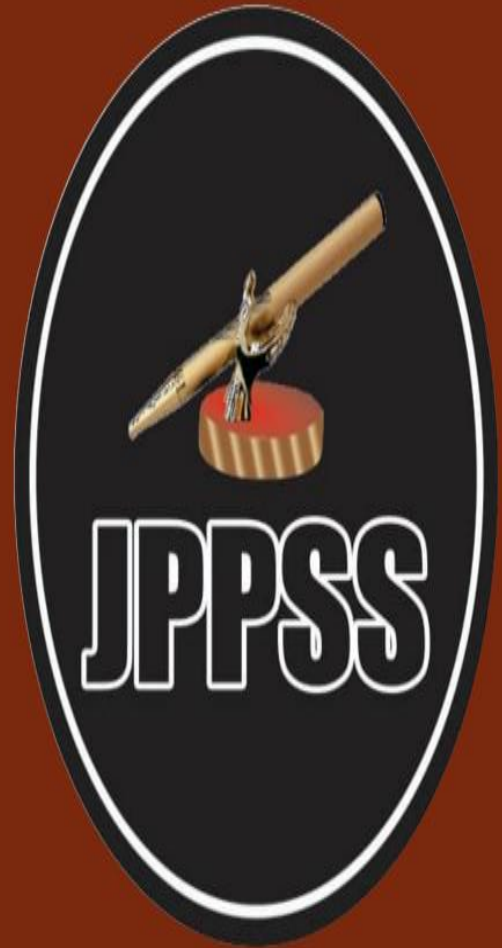


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AFRICAN ONTOLOGY: MYTH OR REALITY?

By

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Abstract

This paper entitled ‘African Ontology, Myth or Reality?’ analyses the conceptions about African ontology if it is really a myth or a reality. The natural question that should have been asked is, is African ontology a myth or reality? The use of the conjunction instead of the disjunction is a curious approach. I therefore, ask can something be a reality and a myth at the same time? Myths, by definition, are unreal representations of the empirical world. They issue from imaginations, fancies and framed-up imageries which try to present a world that though appears real, is the counterfeit of the real, or often, the wish of the person making up the myth. In Africa, we have many myths to explain the origin of the world. For example, the myth of the man who left the sun because it was too hot only to find a more habitable place on the earth. We find that in African notion myths merely provide missing links or offer explanations where no scientific and clear ones exist, the imagined can take its place. They are often fictitious. Can African ontology be both myth and reality? The response is yes because African philosophy is a myth to the extent that it has not properly articulated its self-conscious frame work that is autonomously African. On the other hand, it can be firmly asserted that African philosophy is a reality as a body of literature whose existence is undeniable. Hence, myth serves as a reality in African Ontology.

Keywords: African Ontology, Ontology, Culture, African Philosophy.

Introduction

Philosophy as a discipline is the reflection of mankind on the ideas and institutions guiding their existence. According to Elijah John, “Philosophy is a systematic articulation of wisdom; or, a critical thinking about thinking itself” (27). Philosophy as Staniland defines it is “the criticism of the ideas we live by”; it is the criticism of the ideas and material inventions that a particular society originates for administering itself (3). It is important to emphasize that philosophy ideals with culture met in the descriptive sense but in the critical and prescriptive sense. Where the anthropologist celebrates culture, the philosopher improves it. It is this critical essence of philosophy in relation to culture that informs William James’ conception of philosophy as the habit of searching for alternatives.

The critical nature of philosophy in relation to culture can be explained more aptly with the clarification that Staniland gave. According to her, philosophy is a critical enterprise. She explains that by philosophy being critical, she does not mean the negative destruction of culture, she explains: By criticism I of course mean not negative appraisal; but rational,

impartial and articulate appraisal, whether positive or negative. To be critical of received ideas is accordingly not the same thing as rejecting them; it consists rather in seriously asking oneself whether the idea in question should be reformed, modified or conserved, and in applying one's entire intellectual and imaginative intelligence to the search for an answer (4).

Philosophy is actually a personal reflection about all aspects of reality. It is an exercise in which one tries to give meaning to the world from his or her own standpoint given the prevailing circumstances and environmental influences. Philosophizing in the experience of the traditional African takes the character of critical reflection of the African understanding of reality and world view. Myths, folklores proverbs therefore become the major sources of African philosophy (Jaja 28). More so, myths encode the traditional settings of the African and their belief system. However, ardent critics of myths have branded them pre-philosophic, irrational and devoid of authenticity.

This paper shows that myths are constructs meant to interpret reality. They portray the African way of thinking and as vehicles for preserving and transmitting valued knowledge of philosophical and moral truths. Myth Generally, a myth is a story which is believed to be true and has its origin in the far distant past history of a people. African ontology refers to the branch of metaphysics that focuses on the African communities' nature. The study aims to investigate the perspective in which African communities view life. Their culture, food, socio-economic activities, and religious views are other components of their lives. Alagoa argued that they are historical information transmitted orally by processes peculiar to each community. Elijah John opines that:

African ontology and, by extension, African philosophy, is a lived philosophy. That is to say that African philosophy cannot be divorced from the culture and religion of the people. It is impossible to abstract the ontological doctrines or ideas and cultural practices and devotions connected to this philosophy. This, perhaps, explains the difficulty that certain Westerners encountered in their attempt to investigate African philosophy (94).

Myths are man-made stories that play explanatory functions in the African understanding of reality (9). The Encyclopedia Britannica defined myth as; ... a story handed down in oral form from our forefathers which explain reality, concepts and beliefs and further serve as explanations of nature events such as creations, origin of things, history of a race or a people (1133). This shows that myth is not just a product of human imagination but a direct expression of reality.

An Overview of African Ontology

The concept of African ontology is best understood from Ozumba's position where he contended that: African metaphysics should be seen as the African way of perceiving, interpreting and making meaning out of interactions, among beings, and reality in general. It is the totality of the African's perception of reality. African metaphysics will therefore include systematization of African perspective as it relates to being and existences. This will embrace the holistic conception of reality with its appurtenance of relations, qualities. Characterizations, being and its subtleties universals, particular, idea, minds, culture, logic, moral, theories and presuppositions. African metaphysics is holistic and interrelated. The logic, of their metaphysics underpins their standard and expectations.

The issue and the problem of causality is viewed from a this-worldly standpoint within the ambit of Western metaphysics. In fact, causality is seen as a physical order of reality which is perceptible and can be rationalized. On the other hand, African metaphysical notion of causality is agentive. Ancient Africans viewed causality from other-worldly perspective. The traditionally African understanding of causality is religious, supernatural, spiritual mystical and mythical. Making an evaluation of the concept of cause and chance among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, Sodipo opines that:

The traditional African was not particularly concerned with cognitive problems, but with religious and mythical ones. In essence, the African is not after the satisfaction of his emotional needs nor is he interested in the physical questions of causality as in discovering motives and motivating and motivated agents (who are held responsible for an event and why they do it). Even in the game of pure chance, nine Africans out of ten would attribute their luck or misfortune to a god or the gods" (12).

The above point is further buttressed by Anyanwu who maintained that:

Contrary to the Sartrean (Western) notion that man is the creative drive or force behind his own freedom, in the African view, whatever force he (man) acquires is given to him by a superior being who already possesses this force, just as any diminution of his force is the result of some evil-intentioned agent capable of destroying one's force. Hence it can be said that the African conception (of causality) is essentially religious (49).

For traditional Africans Force is not communicated or reduced primarily by some form of physical causality, because force does not belong to the physical order. It is metaphysical. It is therefore not accessible to scientific or empirical verification. It belongs to the order of invisible entities which cannot be known but believed in; which cannot be rationally proved, but only revealed by tradition; which cannot be coaxed into action by exercising a direct causal influence on them but only by symbolic and ritual (quasi-sentimental) form of causality. The

life-line of African metaphysics is that causality cannot be rationally and empirically perceived or conceived, but only spiritually intuited through the consultation of the supernatural. Thus, the world of aesthetic quality and aesthetic continuum imply the transmutation and transformation forces.

In such a world the form of entities is altered by the animating and deanimating dynamic of spirit or force. What the West regards as lifeless or inert is to the African alive, energized by spirit. This explains why witches can affect one psychically. This also explains why, for instance, hunters appease the spirits of their hunting tools. The same reason can be said to account for how it is possible for sorcerers to use objects as vessels for executing their evil intentions, and it also explains why Africans appease the spirits of the land in order to ensure social and spiritual balance. When we say that traditional African metaphysical notion of causality is religious, mystical and spiritual we do not intend in any way to denigrate African metaphysics.

This point has been severally reiterated by African philosophers at different periods. These philosophers among who are Idoniboye, John Mbiti and Placid Tempels, join their voices to those of Sodipo and Anyanwu to buttress the supernatural and anthropocentric nature of African metaphysics. For example, Idoniboye captures the spiritual nature of African metaphysics in the following words ‘the ontology of any distinctively African worldview is replete with spirits. Spirits are the one entity that remains constant in all African belief systems’ (83).

In simple terms, spiritual metaphysics takes spirit to be the primordial form or primary idea of all entities in the world. It regards spirit as having primacy over matter. For this reason, one who operates within the ambit of spiritual ontology and epistemology sees the world as organic and the entities in it as sacred. This kind of world-outlook stems from the fact that the spiritual metaphysician or epistemologist believes that everything in the world is endowed with life-force and might in actual fact perceive the life-forces of these entities. This explains why the spiritual primacist conceives of a symbiosis of life-forces. Africans are very aware of an unseen world of spirits, powers, and forces. In anthropology, philosophy and theology this view is commonly referred to as ‘animism’ even though the definitions vary from discipline to discipline. Philosophy sees it as; ‘A perspective on the world that sees spiritual powers or forces as residing in and controlling all of the natural world’ (Evans, 10).

The spiritual nature of African metaphysics stems from the fact that “Africans regard spirits as part of the furniture of the World, not merely as local constructions out of certain unaccountable manifestations. It follows then that the cardinal point of African metaphysics is

spirituality. Idoniboye captures this more succinctly when he says: Spirit is real. It is as real as matter. Its reality is primordial and it is, if not superior, at least as primary as that of matter... Spirit is the animating sustaining creative life-force of the universe. It is what gives anything its individuality (84). Perhaps the most ardent proponent of the concept of vital force is Laurenti Magesa. His book on African religion is centred on that concept. Magesa writes:

In African Religion the centrality of the human person in the universal order is indicated by the religious practice it fosters ... This is why all life forces, that is, all creation, are intended to serve and enhance the life force, of the human person and society... Universal order can be maintained only if this plan of the interaction of vital forces for the sake of the enhancement of the vital force of humanity is adhered to and observed (51).

Further, John Mbiti who describes the African as unrepentantly and notoriously religious characterizes African ontology as religious and anthropocentric. According to Mbiti: Africans have their own ontology, but it is a religious ontology and to understand their religions we must penetrate their ontology... this anthropocentric ontology is a complete unity or solidarity which nothing can break up or destroy (15). The spirits are, in the main, the ancestors and the forces of nature: the powers behind storm, rain, rivers, seas, lakes, wells, hills, rocks. They are not just the water or the rock for they are spiritual powers capable of manifesting themselves in many places. Taking a more philosophical approach to the African ontological understanding of reality than Mbiti, Jahn, in building on the works of Tempels and Kagame, proposes four categories of reality. Jahn identifies them as: Muntu (human being), Kintu (thing), Hantu (place and time), Kuntu (modality). Muntu, Kintu, Hantu and Kuntu are the four basic categories of African philosophy.

All being, all essence, in whatever form it is conceived, can be subsumed under one of these categories. Nothing can be conceived outside them. Everything there is most necessarily belong to one of these four categories and must be conceived of not as substance but as force (100). By the term anthropocentric Mbiti implies that African metaphysics though Spiritual, is nevertheless man-centred in which case African metaphysics is intended for the attainment of spiritual harmony and social cohesion and solidarity, intended to attune the individual towards the attainment of mental and emotional balance.

The anthropocentric nature of African metaphysics stems from the hierarchization and interpretability of forces. Man, and the society 'are the centre point of gravity, the coordinating points between the higher spiritual realm of God, divinities and ancestors, and the lower spiritual realm of animals, plants and mineral resources. This explains why Tempels compares the African cosmos to the network system of the spider's web of which the vibration of a string

shakes up the whole edifice that is, causes social and spiritual imbalance. Apart from being alien to African cultural system, the empirical notion of causality of the Western tradition was not considered profound enough to offer complete satisfaction. This led to the giving up on the search for empirical causal explanations even of causal relations between natural phenomena or events and to resort to supernatural causation.

The existence of natural laws and the search for causation when those laws are violated are important elements in the traditional African worldview. As stated previously, Mbiti writes that order in the universe is seen as operating on several levels: ‘first, there is order in the laws of nature. These function everywhere, and give a sense of security and certainty to the universe (36).’ However, Africans do not believe that the natural laws govern absolutely. When the natural laws are violated the principle of causality does govern absolutely and the cause must be found. Nyamiti states: "The connection between cause (supernatural) and effect is immediate; secondary causes are either not admitted or considered negligible (65)." An event that brings good fortune is considered to be ultimately caused by God and an event that brings bad fortune is considered to be caused by a spiritual force and ultimately allowed by God (Mrnkus, 93). Seeking the causes of bad events is the reason for much of the religious activity of the Africans. Mudimbe, in writing about how the life Forces of different beings on earth can directly reinforce or diminish the life forces of other beings, calls it the ‘general laws of vital causality (139).

Magesa confirms that this relationship between and among created vital forces just as that existing between God and creation is therefore essential as well. It is also causal; Causation flows all directions to maintain life in the universe. Thus, every event is seen to have a cause, Jahn writes thus, for everything that happens in the world for fertility and drought, for sickness and its cure, for happiness and unhappiness, some muntu (being) or other is responsible, whether living man, departed or orisha spirit (126). Fundamental to African causal theory is the conception of an orderly universe in which all events are caused and potentially explicable.

Although Gyekye maintains a universal doctrine of causality in African ontology, he emphasizes that greater attention is paid to extraordinary events and not natural events or regular occurrences when issues of causality is discussed. Regular or natural events would include, rain during rainy season, drought during dry season, a pregnancy that lasts nine months, the growth of plants, catching of few fish at some particular times of the year etc. Such events do not constitute a problem for the mind of the African, because, as Gyekye argues “such events are held by them to be part of the order established by the omnipotent creator” (77). They are empirical, scientific and non-supernaturalistic. They have been observed by people

who now know that there is a necessary connection between such events, for instance, they know that during dry season, the river dries up, or that a child stays in the mother's womb for nine months before delivery.

Extraordinary or contingent are those that engage the minds of Africans, and such events would include, a woman being pregnant for more than nine months, drought during rainy season, a tree falling and killing a man. These events according to Gyekye have particular traits that make them mind disturbing, "They are infrequent and hence are considered abnormal; they are discrete and isolated; they appear to be puzzling, bizarre, and incomprehensible; they are not considered subsumable under any immediate known law of nature" (78). The events are deemed insufficient to explain their causes, thus, the ultimate cause of the event is sought. The interest is not on what has happened but why it happened. Thus, not that the tree has fallen, but why it fell on a particular man and not on the ground or on any other man.

African Ontology, Myth or Reality?

Anyanwu citing Houndtonji says that "man cannot live without myths" (241). The reason is quite obvious: man is a being that cannot bear to live with certain questions unanswered that is why he sits down to formulate myths to make those questions answerable. Thus, man is a myth-making animal (280). Some thinkers have rightly observed that myths are pre-philosophic in nature; that philosophy started where myths stopped, which presupposes that philosophy has its roots in myths (Jaja 125). It is pertinent to point out that myths are results of the revelation of "thou" and are often founded upon an original experience that reaches beyond the sensorial and rational, but they are not illogical. They are mostly susceptible to rational analysis and logical interpretation. An analysis of many myths as shown here shows that actions of gods and heroes often presuppose a keen analysis of given circumstances and are based on rational decisions (Kirk 60).

It can be argued that some myths represent complex logical systems which are different from those which are usually found in contemporary western societies. Nevertheless, according to a common view, there is a radical separation between mythos and logos, between myth and philosophy. Myth is associated with the mysterious and illogical, and philosophy with the rational and logical (Apostel, 1981). Myths are part of a way of life and state precedence and models for human actions, but they do not seek to explain them on a rational basis. Myths use images, philosophy, concepts. Philosophy asks generalized questions, relies on systematic

reasoning, and rejects the supernatural explanations of the world, but mythological society; are unsystematic and deal with the sacred (Apostel, 1981).

Myth is a wholeness attained to the world as a whole because those who live in myth and are guided by it are engaged on many different planes with the whole of which the myth is an integral part. By teaching man and by regulating the way of his living in devotional engagement with the whole and by gradually disclosing many layers of its meaning, myth reveals the knowledge of the whole. But the knowledge of the whole is not merely theoretical. It is not merely a partial, intellectual knowledge, but it embraces the whole of life.

Myth reveals the knowledge for which philosophy in a proper sense looks. But it does not disclose this knowledge without appropriate devotional engagement. Myth is completed already at the beginning, whereas philosophy seeks to be completed at the end. Mythical societies live in eternity rather than in historical time. The societies in which philosophy or science plays an important part constantly seek their completion and are in a permanent dissatisfaction with the results of their findings. They live in history and are time oriented.

Myth corresponds to eternity, philosophy to the discovery of history. Myths are seen as vehicles conveying certain facts or truths about man's experiences in his encounter with the created order and its relation to the super-sensible world. For Abanuka (1994:45), myth tells of the super human experiences of the community. Myth exposes the fact that man's misfortunes on earth as well as his hardships are attributed to disobedience to the divine commands and moral codes of the deities as a point in his life. Generally, myths contain three kinds of stories namely, stories of origin, explanatory stories and didactic stories. Each of these stories is meant to explain a particular phenomenon.

Myth is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery but living chronicles in the minds of Africans. They contain and express the history, the culture and the inner experience of the African himself. Africans use myths to explain how things came to be through the efforts of a supernatural being. It is concrete and expresses life better than abstract thought can do. It is indeed surprising that up till this age (2011), some scholars still doubt the existence of African philosophy. The reason being that some philosophers having basically studied Western philosophy treated African philosophy from a typical western standpoint. It is necessary to remind this class of scholars that in traditional Africa there are individuals who are capable of critical coherent and independent thinking. This school of thought is the philosophic sagacity. Philosophic sagacity retains the basic tenets of the professional school. However, unlike it, it is an exposition of the wisdoms and beliefs of the individuals who have

not been schooled in the formal educational system. It consists of wisdoms and views of those who are professionally trained philosophers that is neither classroom taught nor self taught.

Oruka holds that philosophical sagacity is an expression of the view that amongst the various African communities, exists individuals who despite the fact that they have not had the benefit of having contact with the so-called Aquinas, Russell all western philosophy (such as Plato) are nevertheless, critical independent thinkers who guide their thought and judgment by the power of reason and inborn insight rather than by the authority of communal consensus (16). To ease the problem Russell opined that “to understand an age or a nation, we must understand its philosophy” (14); conversely, he observes that the circumstances of men’s lives do much to determine than philosophy. We need to understand the history of the intellectual processes and ideas generated in Africa, the culture, history and experience of the people, to appreciate and connect to the African intellectual explanation and reality of existence. African philosophy therefore is the reflection based on the experiences of ancestors. It is the intellectual development, the how and why they think in a particular way in a particular period. It is the socio-cultural and economic thoughts of the people. African philosophy is the circumstances and environment that have shaped the lives and conditioned of the ideas of the Africans. No wonder, that Sogolo argued that:

Traditional African philosophy is communalistic... It is a body of thought attributed to the community rather than to individual. It is taken to mean a world-view (Weltanschauung); a way of life, that is the fundamental beliefs of the African about life its origin and end, the universe and the entire reality. It is the identified way of life which is specific to the African (6).

African philosophy is the reflective inquiry into the marvels and problematic that confront one in the African world, in producing systematic explanation and sustained responses to them (Iroegbu 16). Its subject matter is, African reality, African experience and how the African understand and interpret these experiences. Momoh states that African philosophy is: African doctrines or theories on reality (Being) and the Universe which is made up of things like God, gods, life, life after death, reincarnation, spirit, society, man, ancestors, heaven, hell, things, institutions, beliefs, conceptions, practices, etc (40). On his part Okolo opined that African philosophy is: A path to a systematic coherent discovery and discovery and disclosure of the African as a being in the African world (10). Through this knowledge or disclosure of himself and his world by critical reflection, the African grasps reality that is to say attains the truth about man and the cosmos in its entirety. In other words, African philosophy is essentially an activity, a systematic and coherent inquiry into African experience and how an African conceives and interprets the world, in the words of Etuk (63). It is the application of the

philosophical tools of analysis, criticism and logic to the problems of Africans in all aspects of life. These views of African philosophy to a large extent re-echo Oruka's claim that African philosophy is a way of thinking that is uniquely African and which radically avoids the European style of thought; it is communalistic (13).

It is this issue of existence that informed Makinwe's statement: So much debate had regard over the existence or nonexistence of African philosophy that one may be tempted to think that perhaps what is known as African philosophy is nothing more than a controversy about whether or not there is indeed an African philosophy (89). The philosophy of Nyerere, the Ujamaa and all it stands for cannot be non-existent. Ujamaa is a concept from the Swahili word meaning "family-hood or brotherhood. It is essentially a rural development policy/philosophy on economy, politics and the involvement of the citizenry and their reactions to the socialist programmes. It sought to restore the egalitarian and humanistic principles of traditional African to modern Tanzania. Nyerere described his Ujamaa (communities) as a group of families who will live together in a village and will work on a common farm for their common benefits. He hoped to create village settlement where individuals would live and work collectively. Similarly, Leopold Senghor's Negritude is an African philosophy that projects the Africans in being black. It is a self affirmation of black people or the affirmation of the values of civilization of something defined as "the black world".

Having examined some major ideas in African philosophy, let us briefly examine the use of myths in African understanding of reality. Myths play a very important role in the African understanding of reality. African philosophy cannot operate in a vacuum; therefore, myths provide the necessary analytic and conceptual framework for an authentic African philosophy. They provide the solid foundation on which African philosophy hinges. One must note that they are the fertile ground for African philosophizing. They constitute expressions of the inner side of individuals and their relationship with others, nature and with the supernatural. It is the philosophical reflections of the people in past, preserved and handed down to society through myths; if indeed the past is unintelligible and conveys meaning only in the light of the present, then myths convey meaning only when they establish a coherent relationship between the past and the present. The reason is quite simple. A people's world view cannot be studied in isolation of their past and the past is as important as the present in deciding the future. Given this scenario, we can deduce that Myths bring to light the past experiences of the people and from there the present African philosophy sees an avenue for philosophizing.

Uduigwomen observed, in African epistemology, myths serve as a means of acquiring and transmitting knowledge, for knowledge has a prominent place in the African mind. It

enables the African to recollect past activities of men and societies which make it possible for the individual or societies to orientate themselves aimed and bewildering currents of the society (40). There have been disputes and disagreements as to the role and place of myths in African philosophy. Some have argued that myths cannot be regarded as philosophy because they obviously fall short of empirical verifiability and logical consistency, but Horton, debunked this and admitted myths and rituals into the general corpus of experience which is capable of exhibiting a logical and consistent structure (100). Similarly, if African philosophy is a reflection on African experience and myths are stabilizing factors to African experience; it then follows that African philosophy is a critical reflection on myths as stabilizing factors. So, the critical analysis and the awareness of the relevance of myths, proverbs, folklores, etc. would go a long way in inculcating in Africans the habit of critical reflections on issues bordering on life (Jaja 29).

Myths are the essential and ready tools for thinking and communicating in African philosophy. Through their meaningful and communicative features, myths exhibit and enhance the coherence, stability and continuity of the society. They play the role of literature and fill the lacuna created by lack of literature on past history and supplement the oral culture of African experience (Jaja 28). Myths connect the past with the present. The vestiges of what truth is in African epistemology are traceable to mythological depositories and other conventional values. Hence myths serve as sources of truth. Some myths are authoritative and appear to have a compelling force of obedience on the people. Myths also play an important role in the moral education of the society. Generally, beauty is regarded as a form of moral goodness. The value of beauty and goodness is mostly couched in myths. In conformity with this, African aesthetic value is circumscribed in moral beauty. This is epitomized in myths in African culture which focuses on values, virtues, attachments, loyalties, faithfulness, diligence and other social and religious virtues (Jaja 99).

A few examples will suffice. African vision of the universe is entrenched in various creation myths, which basically serve etiological purposes. They thus explain how and why the different natural phenomena came into existence, the forces behind their perfect working and the relationship that existed and still exists between man and the creator God and the universe. Articulations on African cosmology may differ from one locality to another; they varyingly depict God as the Supreme Being and that He created what comprises the universe, and that after creating the universe God dwells in it and sustains its inhabitants. This speaks of God's imminence. And for the African, that is reality incontestable. According to Yoruba myth, God dwelt in the sky (heaven) which was quite low. Men originally went freely to Him to tender

complaints and He responded spontaneously. However, it is related that, after sometime and due to the disobedience of man, God withdrew and separated from the world He created and was no longer bothered about it. Instead, He sent His ministers, the divinities endowing them with various responsibilities. This explains the concept of a transcendent or withdrawn God. God withdrew without informing his people. This is the idea of *Deus Absconditus* (or *Deus otiosus* or *Deus remotus*).

Africans also see man as the center of the universe. Every other thing was created for his use. He is the being that exhibits the absoluteness of God. I will now look closely at the cosmogony of some African societies to illustrate my point. Among the Igbo, the Supreme deity to whom all power of creation is credited is known as Chukwu, Chiokike or Chineke. According to Nwala, the cosmogony of the Igbo is based on a theogony which views Chineke as self-creating; that has always been, will always be. Chukwu, the everlasting deity, created the universe which includes the sky (*Eluigwe*), the heavenly bodies, the earth (*Elu-uwa*) and the spirits and earthly creatures. The myth has it that Chukwu is symbolized by all or anyamvii, which is believed to be the source from which all other reforms of life radiated. The first man that was created was known as *Ife-nta*, meaning junior light. This name places man very close to Chukwu (i.e. Sun, the great light). Man is thus, “is” next to God in order of things in the universe. Furthermore, the first to be created was *obo-omananya*. Other creatures that God made are animals, plants and spirits. All these creatures enjoyed an initial harmony with God.

It should be stated that certain events were responsible for the distortion of this original cosmogonic harmony. In the first place, the Supreme deity granted man too much freedom in terms of action, and man abused it and this led to quarrels, acrimony and confusion among the created beings. For instance, the myth has it that there was constant quarrel among women and the careless use of kitchen utensils, particularly the pestle which was constantly hitting at the sky, the original abode of God. Chukwu was annoyed and thus the sky eventually moved away from the earth. From the myth, we can learn the following. In the first place, there is the acknowledgment of a supreme deity with power of creation and control over what he has created. Furthermore, man is very crucial in this creation. Man misused his initial freedom and restraint has to be imposed. It was on the basis of this that morality and the act of appeasing the Creator emerged. Relation to this is the fact that it was man who distorted the original cosmic harmony and to correct this, he developed certain religious practices to placate his creator.

According to the *Ibibio*'s an ethnic group in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, the most dominant feature in human existence is the belief in the Supreme self-begotten being called

Abasi-Ibom. Abasi in this context means “a divine being who always and will always be forever, while Ibom refers to the limitlessness and infinite nature of this being. It is further held that Abasi Ibom created two offsprings namely: Abasi Enyong (male) with dominion over the sky (Enyong) and whose offspring include the sun, thunder and lighting, the second offspring of Abasi Ibom is AbasiIsong (female), with control over the earth (Isong) and whose offspring include Ndem in charge of the waters and Ekpo in charge of the bushes. The Ibibio believe that this high God (Abasi-Ibom) created all things including Ndem to whom he also gives charge of the different aspects of human affairs. Thus, there is Ndem Isong (fertility deity) to look after land fertility; Ndem Udua (market deity) to protect the interest of traders; Ndem Ikot (farm land deity) who is supposed to dwell in the farmland to look after the growth of the crops.

According to Udoiem, Abasi Ibom having created Himself, caused the sky (enyong), Isong (earth) and Inyang Ibom (the waters) by mere verbal command. At the time of creation, the earth and the sky were separated entities that got struck together to satisfy their natural sexual desire. However, conflict later resulted between them and the sky moved away. It is reported that separation must have been caused by the earthy kids who normally rub their dirty oily hands on the face of the sky after eating and thus forced the sky to move upwards. To effect the separation, Abasi-Ibom sent a giant with an axe to force away the sky from the earth. The Ibibio still hold that despite this separation, the conflict between the earth and the sky persists and this is manifested in the alternation of days and nights. Night reflects when the earth has overpowered the sky, while ‘day’ reflects the reverse.

From the foregoing, it is presented that myths represent the African spirit and the African view of reality. Therefore, for African philosophy to be authentically African, it must operate within the conceptual framework of myths which represent the African reality and they are authentically African in nature. The use of Eurocentric yardstick to judge African philosophy is unacceptable and immoral. The fact that African societies were pre-literate does not negate the existence of a truly African philosophy based on the environment, experience and culture of the people. It is worthy to remember that even in Greece, the emergence of philosophy was preceded by the rationalizing and systematizing of myths, such as we find, for example, in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (Kirk 60). The process by which myth gave way to philosophy is thus not straightforward, extending for centuries. Now, here are those who question. African philosophy takes into considerations the centuries of pre-literate isolation of African societies, in which African myth and philosophy have spread among African peoples but have not been documented in written form. It is a great tragedy and disservice to intellectuals if such sort of views continues among intellectuals.

The concept of ontology in Africa is very fascinating because an African believes that the spiritual is experiential. This position is better explained through an Ibibio proverb that: "the land of the living is not far removed from the domain of the ancestors". In African belief, spirit is the apparent conception of the people. The generality of African thinkers and non-thinkers subscribes to the supremacy of the spirit (John 95 – 96). Myths also remind us of the past, the past in its real existence. In the proper sense, philosophy is the love of wisdom, pursuit of the knowledge of the whole. But when it turns to be scientific and attempts to look at the world "objectively", that is as if it were an object, it arrives only at the partial knowledge of a part. Myths tell us about the reality of the universe and all its components. African myths explain in the context of African cultures, great human concerns and realities such as death, creation, the evolution of living things, man's relationship with other living creatures etc. However, the purpose of a myth is far more than being explanatory. It has many values in the African societal setting. It acts as a socializing agent. It is used to nourish and to buttress the traditions of the ancestors. Myths are also educative in that they teach people especially the younger ones the meaning of the universe and man's place in it. They place the world before us as an object of indifferent investigation, a world to be known not just as an abstracted object but as a wholistic real entity. A universal knowledge arises from man's effective engagement with the world and myths helpful explain the great human concepts of his time. Thus, since African philosophy is unique in its own way and also based on cultural context, mythology makes African ontology a reality.

Evaluation

Hountondji identifies a problem and that is, that African philosophy does not lie where we have been looking for it. If found where we have been looking for it, it is a myth and if found where it is, it is a reality. The fact that African ontology today is both sought where it is, and where it is not, makes it both myth and reality. Hountondji's task appears to be in the direction of showing that there can be transmutation from the mythical orientation of African ontology to the realistic orientation. For Hountondji, African philosophy is not "in some mysterious corner of our supposedly immutable soul, a collective and unconscious world-view which is incumbent on us to study and revive". Philosophy and African philosophy, for him, "consist essentially in the process of analysis itself".

Every culture has the capacity for assimilation. This means that it is wrong to look at any philosophy as being either dynamic or static. Every philosophy has its dynamic and static aspect depending on how we want to proceed in our analyses. At times, we can also fix our

assumptions either along the line of dynamic or of the static. There is no essence of philosophy since essence is found in finality. The final point of philosophy has not been reached, the essence, to that extent, remains illusive. African ontology could be found in the enormous literature that has been devoted to the problem of African philosophy. It is limited to mythological exploitation, that mind-set, that rigour, that adeptness set aside for mythological exploitation can usefully be applied elsewhere and this is what in substance will blossom African philosophy and not the mythical, fictional 'Gerrymandering' that has occupied the ethnographers and "not to the fiction of a collective system of thought, but to a set of philosophical discourses and texts.

African ontology exists, but it is not what it is believed to be. It is developing objectively in the form of a literature rather than as implicit and collective thought, but as a literature of which the output remains captive to the unanimity fallacy. However, there are signs of a new spirit being injected into it. What is needed is that a free, rigorous, dialectical discourse be embarked on by African philosophers to meet the challenges of existence, intellectually and otherwise. The present investigation further showed that affirming or rejecting the reality of supernatural beings does not belong to the field of science because by definition supernatural beings are incorporeal. Therefore, there can be no scientific (set up) or apparatus that can verify such propositions. The appropriate fields were found to be those of metaphysics. Further investigation showed that there is no metaphysical ground for rejecting the reality of supernatural beings (spirit beings).

African ontology places more emphasis on the entire than on a single, isolated person. The uniqueness of the African mind was neither stifled nor given the freedom to exist independently of a corporate life. To put it another way, there is a harmonious equilibrium since the African individual is neither fully free nor fully subject to the society. An individual cannot be "free" from those essential connections with God, the present, and the coming generations. On the basis of this presumption, it is impossible to draw a clear separation between a person's inherent potentialities, traits, and core identity and what the community has bestowed upon him. The only thing that can separate him from society, his forefathers, and God is moral turpitude. Therefore, African ontology is that which, unlike the philosophy of any other race, is concerned with the common welfare, the common interest, and the common sympathy.

Conclusion

At this juncture, I will draw the curtain on this discussion by asserting that, based on everything I have analyzed so far, I have been able to address the concepts of African ontology by positing that it is both myth and reality as an effort to alert the readers to a crucial omission in most contemporary studies on the religion or culture of African people. It is on this note that I agree with Elijah John and Dennis Igwe that “African identity ultimately remains unique as it is evident in many African values: cultures, traditions, morals, folklores, religious practices, songs, dances, leadership and so on” (41-42). This ideology has helped in solving the controversies of whether African ontology is a myth or a reality because it entails that, African worldview of ontology is unique in its own way based on cultural context of a particular African community and as such, mythology analyses reality in African ontology.

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THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE AND THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL: A REFLECTION ON LOCKE'S NATURAL RIGHTS

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Abstract

Philosopher of the Enlightenment John Locke created a fundamental theory of natural rights that had a significant impact on political theory. This essay examines Locke's idea of natural rights and their consequences for both individual freedom and governmental power. According to Locke's thesis, people have inalienable rights to things like life, liberty, and property that existed before the state was created. According to Locke, the power of the state stems from its obligation to defend these natural rights because they are fundamental liberties ingrained in human nature. According to Locke, the state's commitment to defending inherent rights underpins its legitimacy. He also contends that people have the right to fight the state and maybe topple it if it breaks its promises or becomes oppressive. The effects of Locke's thesis are extensive. The natural rights of people serve as a check on the state's authority and prevent the arbitrary use of force. Locke's theory of natural rights still serves as a useful foundation for analysing how individual rights and the power of the state interact in modern society. It serves as a foundation for discussions about human rights, democratic government, and the defence of civil liberties. But Locke's theory still has to be improved upon and modified to take into account the changing difficulties and complexities of the modern world.

Keywords: Natural Rights, Justices, Right, Social Contract, Authority of the State.

Introduction

The interplay between the rights of the person and the power of the state has long been the focus of serious philosophical debate and political debate. John Locke, a prominent Enlightenment theorist whose writings have had a significant influence on political theory and the advancement of contemporary democratic institutions, offers one notable viewpoint on this relationship. This introduction acts as a springboard for discussion of Locke's theory of natural rights and its consequences for comprehending the power of the state and individual rights. According to John Locke's notion of natural rights, people have certain fundamental rights that existed before political institutions were created. Natural rights are regarded as inherent and unalienable, rooted in human nature and reason, and include the rights to life, liberty, and property. According to Locke, people are born with certain rights, and the state's responsibility is to safeguard them.

Locke's viewpoint casts doubt on the idea of unrestricted governmental power. He contends that upholding and defending people's natural rights is the role of the state. Locke introduces the concept of a social contract in his seminal work "*Two Treatises of Government*," in which people willingly agree to the establishment of a government to protect their rights and uphold social order. According to Locke, the permission and confidence of the governed is the source of the state's power. The balance between governmental power and individual rights is a crucial issue that is brought up while considering Locke's notion of natural rights. The idea of limited government and the rule of law are founded on Locke's worldview. It indicates that the state's commitment to upholding citizens' rights and advancing the common good is a requirement for the legitimacy of its authority. Individuals have the right to oppose or even topple the government in order to defend and restore their basic rights if the state violates its commitments or becomes oppressive. Consideration of Locke's idea of natural rights serves as a foundation for analyzing the relationship between the power of the state and individual rights within a political and ethical context. For determining the legitimacy of governmental power and defending individual freedoms, it is crucial to comprehend how these two aspects interact. We may explore the complexities and dynamics of the connection between the state and the person and contribute to the ongoing conversation on governance, rights, and social justice by critically analyzing Locke's idea.

Conceptualizations of Natural Rights

An analysis of the opinions that many people have voiced on the concept of natural rights is necessary for a thorough meditation on it. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle Aquinas, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau are some of the thinkers who have discussed the theory of natural rights. Classic natural rights philosophy, or Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle's view of natural rights, acknowledges the distinction between nature and law (convention). Strauss claims that "the classics presuppose the validity of that distinction when demanding that the law should follow the order established by nature, or when speaking of the co-operation between nature and law" (121).

According to the classics, man's natural sociality is where natural rights—in the strict or restricted sense of the term—come from. In general, the classics have criticized hedonism. Apart from the fact that the good and the pleasant are not interchangeable, they contend that the former is even more important than the latter. In the words of Strauss, "the primary fact is not pleasure or the desire for pleasure, but rather the wants and the striving for satisfying them"(126). We agree with the claims made by Strauss and the classics. This is because their

viewpoints assume that intrinsic good and instrumental good are two different things. What is pleasant, worthwhile, or worth having for its own sake—such as happiness—is referred to as an intrinsic good. An instrumental good, on the other hand, is anything that is necessary for the achievement of other things; it is beneficial insofar as it results in other benefits. Money and useful work are a couple of examples (Hospers 582). The Socratic-Platonic, Aristotelian, and Thomistic schools of traditional natural rights teaching are the three that Strauss identifies. The natural rights teaching of Socrates can be summed up as follows:

Justice is the habit of giving to everyone what is due to him according to nature... The just man is he, who gives to everyone, not what a possibly foolish law prescribes, but what (by nature) is good for the other. (Since) not everyone knows what is good for man in general, and for every individual in particular...only the wise man truly knows what is good in each case for the soul. This being the case, there cannot be justice, i.e. giving to everyone what is by nature good for him, except in a society in which wise men are in absolute control (Strauss 146-147).

From the aforementioned quotation, we can infer that the doctrine of Platonic natural rights assumes the existence of a just society governed by wise men, just individuals, a knowledge of what is generally and particularly good, a knowledge of human nature, and a readiness to act in a just and good manner. The teaching appears to have overlooked the complexity of the ideas of justice and virtue. It makes sense to discuss topics like legal justice, social justice, and natural justice, to name a few, in addition to the teaching's understanding of justice. It is challenging to have a just and good individual, or to have a good society, regardless of the sense of goodness or justice used. A consensus on what is exceptionally or generally good is also difficult to come by.

In addition to the aforementioned definitions of what is good, there is also the issue of deciding which standard of goodness to use, such as God, the law, society's traditions or customs, reason, conscience, or revelation, among others. The notion of human nature is also debatable. In general, nature can affect a person's perception of the world and propensity to act "justly" or "righteously," in particular. In this regard, we need to be aware of factors like subconscious influences, genetic effects, childhood experiences, negative and positive emotions and instincts, and hereditary influences. Additionally, IQ levels vary. This fact implies varying levels of human reason. The teaching in question must also be able to justify individuals like psychopaths, kleptomaniacs, and the insane, to name a few. The severity of each defect establishes the extent to which the affected individuals are excluded from the category of moral actors. The aforementioned mental, emotional, or spiritual states have an impact on people's decisions and behaviour, even those who are considered to be

knowledgeable. The aforementioned statements are not intended to imply that agreement on the pertinent issues cannot be reached. It demonstrates the potential for some agreements that each human community functions on certain ideas of morality, justice, logic, and wisdom, for example. This essay has attempted to highlight the complexity of the problems and the need for caution in solving them.

The class of natural rights is a subset of the class of political rights, in accordance with Aristotelian natural rights theory. A natural right also needs to be amendable in order to be effective in thwarting the "inventiveness of wickedness". According to Aristotle, the "most fully developed form of natural right" is the one that exists between individuals who are a part of the same community. According to Thomas Aquinas, only the more particular rules—such as the rule requiring the return of deposits—are subject to change from the axioms underlying natural rights (Strauss 157). Along with the traditional natural rights idea, the modern natural rights doctrine put forth by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, among others, should also be mentioned. The right to self-preservation, according to Hobbes, is a natural right that is wholly independent of any agreement or custom amongst humans (188). He feels that this right is unqualified or unconditional. It is a right that shouldn't be infringed upon. Any person who is given the order to commit suicide is free to ignore it. Rights to life or self-preservation, freedom, and property are recognized by John Locke as natural rights. These liberties are unalienable and inherent (323). He places a lot of emphasis on having private property. Locke, like Hobbes, maintains that people have the right to protest any infringement of their fundamental rights. According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, every man has a natural right to freedom, which cannot be waived by any man or limited by any outside force without their voluntary assent (xxxv). To put it another way, the natural right to freedom is a fundamental freedom. The right to self-preservation and the right to appropriate "the means required for self-preservation" (i.e., the right to property) are both included in this fundamental right to freedom.

The concept of natural rights is supported by some United Nations Organization (U.N.O.) statements or resolutions. For instance, the U.N. declared in response to the genocide that resulted from the first and second world wars that people had decided "to re-affirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women." This resolution aims to highlight the importance of everyone understanding the value of human life and advocating for it. The preambles to the French Declaration of Human Rights and the American Declaration of Independence are reflected in

the declaration. The American Declaration of Independence contains the following quote: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Strauss 1).

Contributions of Lockean Discourse on Natural Rights

Numerous important discussions in political philosophy are still influenced by Lockean discourse on natural law and natural rights. The Lockean state of nature has come under fire for being unhistorical, and this critique is particularly relevant given that Locke does appear to argue occasionally in his writings that his state of nature is historical. As an empiricist, he presumably found this to be significant, but there is no historical support for the kind of natural condition he described. Locke has also received criticism for beginning his book *Locke: Natural Rights* with an upbeat assessment of the state of nature but ultimately embracing Hobbes' dismal viewpoint. This seems to be Locke pulling a fast one. There is also a lot of debate among academics regarding whether Locke gave natural law or natural rights precedence. The former would imply that Locke gave preference to the rights enjoyed by individuals over obligations, whilst the latter would imply that Locke gave individual rights less importance than obligations. Locke favored rights over obligations, according to scholars like Strauss, because the duties he outlined were subject to people's right to self-preservation. The rights under the Lockean framework generally center on demonstrating respect for the life, liberty, and property of others, as mandated by natural law, according to authors like Dunn and Ashcraft, who contend that Locke favors natural law and obligations over rights. The Lockean discourse on natural law and natural rights continues to impact a number of significant political philosophical topics. It has been argued that the Lockean state of nature is not historical, and this criticism is particularly pertinent given that Locke does occasionally seem to suggest in his writings that his state of nature is historical. He probably thought this was significant since he was an empiricist, but the kind of natural situation he described doesn't have any historical backing. Locke has also come under fire for starting *Locke: Natural Rights* with an optimistic assessment of nature but ultimately adopting Hobbes' pessimistic stance. Locke appears to be pulling a fast one with this.

As was said in the introduction, Locke believed in the empirical method and disregarded the notion of innate concepts. He has drawn criticism, though, for failing to provide a convincing scientific basis for his views on natural law and natural rights. His assertion that natural law and natural rights are supplied by God and accessible by reason at many points in

his writings seems to go against his conviction against innate conceptions. Because of this paradox, academics like Strauss have come to the conclusion that Locke did not actually believe in a truly God-given natural law but was merely using the name of God as a secure justification for his reason-based beliefs. Naturally, this would render natural law and natural rights arbitrary and not all-encompassing because various people can reason in different ways. It must be acknowledged that Locke's theory of natural law and natural rights cannot be satisfactorily deduced if God is excluded from the equation, despite the efforts of other scholars like Ashcraft to do so. In fact, Dunn contends that Lockean discourse's applicability to modern culture, where many of those theistic assumptions are not shared, is rather constrained because of the theistic presuppositions that underlie it.

By easing his own labour, spoilage, and sufficiency limits on property accumulation with the advent of money, Locke is accused by authors like Macpherson of allowing unlimited capitalist accumulation in his theory of property. For instance, someone with money could employ workers and use their labour to increase their property, which would go against the labour restriction. Since money does not spoil and can thus be held without restriction, it violates the spoiling rule. The sufficiency restriction may be broken if a small group of individuals amass land through the use of hired labour and money while leaving nothing for others to own. Therefore, Macpherson contends that the Lockean social contract serves to preserve and justify the amassed wealth of the rich as it develops to defend natural rights, which include property rights. Many academics, however, disagree with this viewpoint and claim that there is little evidence to support the idea that the introduction of money will totally eliminate all of Locke's suggested restrictions. Money may completely remove the spoiling restriction, but other restrictions just change. For instance, Sreenivasan argues that Locke's justification for sufficiency is about leaving enough resources for others to survive, not necessarily about leaving some of the same resource, like say, land. People are still paid for their labor, so even if there is no more land to possess, they have enough money to live on. Using money to hire employees does not always go against the limitation against hiring people because the accumulation of money is also rooted in labor. Even though the spoiling restriction might be broken, Locke's efficiency defense is a strong one. People can use more resources more effectively when they have more money. For instance, laborers from a distance may be engaged to farm additional, underused fields. Even while inequalities widen, this boosts a society's overall prosperity, which benefits everyone. Additionally, it must be remembered that Locke's proposed monetary system is based on permission rather than compulsion. Others have noted that Locke uses the term "property" to refer to both life and liberty, which Macpherson neglects

to take into account. Additionally, it must be remembered that Locke's theory of property rejects the aristocratic privileges that were popular at the time regarding land or other resources and is ultimately grounded in labor, even after the invention of money. The development of contemporary concept of human rights has been influenced by Lockean discourse on natural rights. People all across the world have been inspired by the notion that all people have certain unalienable rights from birth, which has influenced global movements for equality and justice.

John Locke's Theory of Natural Rights and its Implications for the Authority of the State and the Rights of the Individual

Political philosophy and our comprehension of the connection between the power of the state and individual rights have been greatly influenced by John Locke's idea of natural rights. According to Locke's thesis, people have inherent rights to things like life, liberty, and property that predate the creation of political organizations. These inalienable and universal natural rights are rooted in human nature and reason.

According to Locke, the consent and confidence of the governed are the source of the state's power. Protecting people's natural rights is the state's main objective. Locke introduces the concept of a social compact in his seminal work "Two Treatises of Government," in which people voluntarily band together to form a government that serves as a trustee to protect their rights and uphold social order. Therefore, the ability of the state to carry out this fundamental responsibility of upholding individual rights determines the power of the state. Locke's viewpoint casts doubt on the idea of unrestricted governmental power. It outlines the idea of limited government, according to which the state's authority is restricted by its obligation to uphold and defend the natural rights of its people. Individuals have the right to oppose or even topple the government in order to defend and restore their basic rights if the state violates its commitments or becomes oppressive.

The effects of Locke's thesis are extensive. It emphasizes the value of individual rights, self-determination, and freedom as the guiding principles of a just society. It lays the foundation for the idea that people have fundamental rights that the government cannot arbitrarily violate. This idea serves as the foundation for contemporary democratic institutions, which also guarantee civil liberties and human rights. Additionally, Locke's theory poses crucial questions about how to strike a balance between people's rights and the good of the whole. While everyone has natural rights, they also have duties and commitments to the community. Careful consideration and the creation of legal and political frameworks that strike a balance between individual rights and the common good are necessary to address the conflict between individual

liberties and society's requirements. In the ongoing discussions about civil liberties, constitutionalism, and governmental responsibility, Locke's idea is still relevant today. His theories influenced the creation of legal systems, the discussion of human rights, and the formation of checks and balances to stop the abuse of state authority. In conclusion, John Locke's idea of natural rights serves as a foundation for comprehending both the power of the state and individual rights. It introduces the idea of limited government and emphasizes the crucial part the state plays in defending individual rights. In contemporary democratic nations, questions over how to strike a balance between the power of the state and the rights of the person are still influenced by Locke's political thought.

Conclusion

The discussion of John Locke's theory of natural rights and its consequences for both the legitimacy of the state and the individual's rights sheds light on crucial political philosophy and governmental issues. The framework provided by Locke's philosophy highlights the defense of individual rights as a primary goal of government while also challenging absolute state power. Natural rights make it clear that the legitimacy of state power depends on its dedication to ensuring and defending the fundamental rights of people. According to this interpretation of the social contract, the state and its citizens have a mutually beneficial relationship in which the agreement and confidence of the governed serve as the foundation for the state's power.

In accordance with Locke's thesis, the relationship between individual freedoms and state power should be critically analyzed. It acknowledges that people have certain inalienable rights that the government should uphold and not violate. It also recognizes the necessity of governance and the creation of laws in order to uphold order and safeguard the general welfare. The analysis of Locke's theory reveals the conflict between people's rights as individuals and their obligations to the group. It makes us think about how to balance the exercise of personal freedoms with the requirements and objectives of society at large. It takes careful consideration, open discussion, and the creation of legal and political structures that respect and safeguard individual rights while nurturing a just and peaceful society to strike the correct balance. The continuous discussions and fights for civil freedoms, human rights, and democratic governance further demonstrate how current Locke's idea is. His theories had a significant impact on the growth of constitutionalism, the delineation of powers, and the defense of individual rights in contemporary nations. In conclusion, thinking about Locke's idea of natural rights can help you understand how the government's power and people's rights interact. It highlights how crucial

it is for governments to uphold citizens' rights while also acknowledging how difficult it can be to strike a balance between their freedom and the good of the whole. In order to build communities that respect and uphold the intrinsic dignity and liberties of every person, we can contribute to the continuing discussion on governance, rights, and social justice by critically examining Locke's philosophy.

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A CRITIQUE OF PLOTINUS' NOTION OF THE ONE

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Abstract

Plotinus, a prominent philosopher of the late antiquity, is renowned for his metaphysical system centered around the concept of "The One." This work explores and critiques Plotinus' notion of "The One" as the ultimate reality and source of all existence. While acknowledging the profundity of Plotinus' ideas, this critique raises several points of contention. Firstly, Plotinus posits "The One" as a transcendent, ineffable, and indeterminate principle from which everything emanates. This paper argues that the very nature of "The One" as indeterminate raises questions about its intelligibility and coherence, as it becomes challenging to grasp or articulate its essence. Secondly, Plotinus' concept of emanation, wherein all levels of existence emanate from "The One" in a hierarchical manner, is subject to critique. Critics argue that this hierarchical model presupposes a linear, top-down causation, which may oversimplify the complexities of existence and limit the agency of other beings. While Plotinus advocates for the soul's return to "The One" through contemplation and intellectual ascent, critics contend that this hierarchical approach can be seen as elitist and exclusionary, neglecting the potential for diverse paths to spiritual realization. This critique of Plotinus' notion of "The One" highlights the philosophical challenges and potential limitations of his metaphysical system. While acknowledging its historical significance and enduring influence, it underscores the need for a nuanced evaluation of the complexities and implications of his ideas in contemporary philosophical discourse.

Keywords: The One, The Intellect, The Soul, Emanation, Neoplatonism.

Introduction

Plotinus, a towering figure in the history of philosophy, stands as one of the foundational thinkers in the development of Neoplatonism. His philosophical system, articulated primarily in his six Enneads, revolves around a central and enigmatic concept: "The One" (often referred to as "The Good" or "The First Principle"). Plotinus' notion of "The One" serves as the keystone of his metaphysical framework, and it has captivated the minds of scholars and philosophers for centuries. It is a concept that purports to explain the ultimate source of all existence, the nature of reality, and the path to spiritual enlightenment. However, this paper embarks on a critical journey to examine and evaluate Plotinus' notion of "The One." While Plotinus' ideas have left an indelible mark on the course of Western philosophy, it is essential to subject them to rigorous critique. The aim of this critique is not to diminish the profound influence of

Plotinus but to engage in a critical dialogue that allows us to uncover potential weaknesses, inconsistencies, or limitations within his philosophical system.

Plotinus conceived "The One" as an ineffable and indeterminate principle from which everything emanates. This initial characterization raises profound questions about the intelligibility and coherence of "The One." How can one engage in meaningful discourse about a concept that, by its very definition, eludes description and understanding? This question forms the starting point of our critique, prompting us to explore the tensions between the indeterminate nature of "The One" and the human capacity for comprehension and philosophical inquiry. Moreover, Plotinus' hierarchical model of emanation, wherein all levels of reality cascade down from "The One" in a descending order of perfection, invites a critical examination of its explanatory power and implications. Critics argue that this hierarchical model presupposes a linear, top-down causation, which may oversimplify the complexities of existence and relegate other beings within the metaphysical framework to secondary roles. This critique delves into the potential drawbacks of such a model and its implications for understanding the diversity and interrelatedness of existence.

Plotinus' metaphysical system does not exist in isolation from ethical considerations. He posits that the soul's return to "The One" is achieved through intellectual ascent and contemplation. However, critics raise questions about the exclusivity of this approach. Does Plotinus' emphasis on intellectual ascent marginalize other ethical and spiritual paths? This critique explores whether Plotinus' system offers a comprehensive and inclusive approach to ethics and spiritual growth or if it inadvertently perpetuates a hierarchical and exclusionary perspective. Furthermore, Plotinus' explanation of evil as the absence of the good, known as the "privation theory of evil," is not immune to scrutiny. While this theory may provide some insight into the nature of evil, it confronts significant challenges when applied to the complexities of moral evil. This critique investigates the limitations of Plotinus' explanation for the existence of evil within a universe emanating from a supremely good principle.

This critical examination of Plotinus' notion of "The One" aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of his philosophical legacy. It acknowledges his historical significance and enduring influence but also underscores the need for a robust and nuanced evaluation of his ideas in contemporary philosophical discourse. By engaging with the complexities, challenges, and potential limitations of Plotinus' metaphysical system, this critique seeks to promote a more comprehensive and reflective appreciation of his contributions to the rich tapestry of Western philosophy.

The Indeterminate Nature of "The One" in Plotinus' Philosophy

Plotinus, the renowned philosopher of the 3rd century CE, is celebrated for his profound contributions to metaphysics and the development of Neoplatonism. At the heart of his philosophical system stands the enigmatic concept of "The One" (also known as "The Good" or "The First Principle"). "The One" represents the ultimate source and principle of all existence, a transcendent and ineffable entity that defies conventional description and comprehension. This essay embarks on an in-depth exploration of the indeterminate nature of "The One" in Plotinus' philosophy, examining its implications, challenges, and its role in his metaphysical framework. To engage with the indeterminate nature of "The One," it is crucial to first understand how Plotinus conceives of this concept within his metaphysical framework. Plotinus defines "The One" as the highest reality, an absolute and transcendent unity that exists beyond all attributes, descriptions, or determinations. It is an entity of pure simplicity, devoid of multiplicity, division, or differentiation. For Plotinus, the essence of "The One" is ineffable, transcending human language and conceptualization. Any attempt to characterize or define "The One" in positive terms falls short of its true nature.

Plotinus emphasizes that "The One" cannot be grasped through discursive reason, as it eludes all forms of intellectual analysis. Instead, he suggests that it can only be apprehended through a form of mystical intuition or direct experience, often referred to as "henosis" or "union." The indeterminate nature of "The One" is fundamental to Plotinus' philosophy. It sets the stage for a radical departure from the Aristotelian tradition and even from Plato's philosophical system, emphasizing the absolute unity and simplicity of the transcendent source of all existence. Plotinus' assertion that "The One" is indeterminate raises several philosophical challenges. One of the primary challenges is the tension between the indeterminate nature of "The One" and the human inclination toward understanding and explanation. Philosophers, by their very nature, seek to comprehend and articulate the essence of concepts and principles. However, when faced with a concept as fundamentally indeterminate as "The One," the traditional tools of philosophy appear ill-suited to the task.

The indeterminate nature of "The One" also poses questions about the intelligibility of Plotinus' metaphysical system. If "The One" is truly indeterminate, how can it serve as a foundational principle for understanding the cosmos and the nature of reality? Critics argue that an indeterminate principle may render Plotinus' system vague and inaccessible, as it becomes difficult to articulate the essence of "The One" or its relationship to the emanated realms. Additionally, the indeterminacy of "The One" challenges the traditional boundaries of philosophy. Plotinus' insistence on the ineffability of "The One" invites exploration into the

limits of philosophical discourse and the potential intersections with mysticism and direct experiential knowledge.

Plotinus' recognition of the paradox inherent in describing "The One" as indeterminate is a central theme in his thought. He grapples with the challenge of articulating a concept that resists characterization. In his writings, Plotinus often employs negative or apophatic language to describe "The One" by stating what it is not rather than what it is. For instance, Plotinus asserts that "The One" is not a being, not a non-being, not a substance, not a quality, and so on. This apophatic approach aims to create a space for contemplative engagement with "The One" by negating all conceptual limitations. It is a strategy that acknowledges the limitations of language and thought while inviting the philosopher to transcend them through mystical intuition. However, the paradox remains: How can one effectively communicate the indeterminate nature of "The One" through language that inherently relies on determinate concepts and negations? Plotinus' response is that the apophatic language serves as a pathway to direct apprehension. By negating all that "The One" is not, the philosopher is left with a sense of what remains—a pure, indeterminate unity.

Plotinus' philosophical system introduces a mystical dimension, emphasizing that direct experience or mysticism is the most authentic way to apprehend "The One." Mystical experience, in this context, is not limited to a passive, emotional state but represents an active engagement with the transcendent reality. Plotinus suggests that through contemplative practices and intellectual ascent, the philosopher can achieve a state of unity or oneness with "The One." This mystical union transcends the limitations of language and conceptualization, allowing the individual to directly participate in the ineffable unity of "The One." This experiential aspect of Plotinus' philosophy challenges the traditional boundaries of rational philosophy. It introduces a transformative dimension, where the philosopher seeks not only to understand but to become one with the ultimate source of all existence.

This union with "The One" is described as the highest form of knowledge and the pinnacle of human existence in Plotinus' thought. However, this emphasis on mysticism also raises questions about accessibility and inclusivity. Critics argue that not everyone may have the capacity or inclination for mystical experiences, potentially marginalizing those who do not conform to this particular mode of engagement with "The One." To embark on defining "The One" in Plotinus' philosophy is to confront an inherent paradox. Plotinus posits "The One" as an entity that transcends all attributes, descriptions, or determinations. It is an indeterminate principle of pure unity, simplicity, and absolute transcendence. Any attempt to capture the essence of "The One" using positive language or conceptual categories falls short, according

to Plotinus. He asserts that "The One" eludes discursive reason and defies conventional language. In this respect, Plotinus' notion of "The One" represents a significant departure from classical philosophy, which traditionally sought to define and categorize principles and entities. Instead, Plotinus challenges the philosopher to confront the limitations of language and thought in the face of the ineffable.

Given the indeterminate nature of "The One," Plotinus adopts an apophatic approach to defining it. Apophatic theology or negative theology involves characterizing a concept by stating what it is not rather than what it is. In the case of "The One," Plotinus employs a series of negations to describe its nature. He asserts that "The One" is not a being, not a non-being, not a substance, not a quality, not a quantity, not an intellect, and not a soul. These negations serve to strip away all determinate characteristics and attributes, leaving only the pure, undetermined essence of "The One." This approach aligns with Plotinus' view that the essence of "The One" can only be apprehended through a process of intellectual purification and negation. This use of negations is a key feature of Plotinus' attempt to define "The One" and reflects his commitment to preserving its absolute transcendence and unity. Plotinus' notion of "The One" as an indeterminate, transcendent principle presents both profound insights and philosophical challenges. The indeterminacy of "The One" challenges the traditional boundaries of philosophy and raises questions about the limitations of human language and conceptualization. The paradox of describing the indescribable underscores the inherent tension in articulating a concept that resists characterization.

Plotinus' apophatic approach, emphasizing negation, serves as a strategy to navigate this paradox and invites contemplative engagement with "The One." Moreover, the role of mystical experience in Plotinus' philosophy introduces a transformative dimension, where the philosopher seeks to achieve direct union with "The One." While this experiential aspect adds depth to his system, it also prompts discussions about accessibility and inclusivity within his philosophical framework. Plotinus' philosophy, with its emphasis on the indeterminate nature of "The One," invites ongoing reflection and exploration. It challenges philosophers to contemplate the limits of language and rationality, and it encourages seekers to engage in a profound quest for direct experience of the transcendent unity that lies at the heart of his metaphysical system. In the end, "The One" remains a concept that continues to inspire, mystify, and provoke philosophical inquiry.

The Hierarchical Emanation Model in Plotinus' Philosophy

Plotinus elaborates on the relationship between "The One" and the world of multiplicity through his theory of emanation. Emanation is a key concept in Neoplatonism and serves as a means to explain the process by which the many emanate from the One. According to Plotinus, "The One" emanates in a hierarchical manner, giving rise to a series of less perfect and less unified levels of reality. These levels are often referred to as hypostases and include "Intellect" (Nous), "Soul" (Psyche), and the material world. "The One" emanates "Intellect," which embodies pure thought and contains the Forms or Ideas. From "Intellect," "Soul" emanates, and "Soul" is responsible for the generation of the physical universe. Each level of emanation is less unified and less perfect than the previous, with the material world representing the lowest level of reality, characterized by multiplicity, diversity, and imperfection.

This hierarchical model serves several purposes in Plotinus' philosophy. It explains the existence and diversity of the cosmos while maintaining the ultimate unity of "The One." It also provides a framework for understanding the process of returning to the divine source through a process of spiritual ascent. Plotinus suggests that individuals can achieve a deeper understanding of reality and unity by contemplating these successive levels and ultimately transcending them to reunite with "The One." At the core of Plotinus' metaphysical system lies the concept of "The One" (also known as "The Good" or "The First Principle") and the associated theory of emanation. This theory of emanation serves as a foundational element in understanding how all things originate from "The One" and are interconnected within a hierarchical framework. In this essay, we will explore the hierarchical emanation model in Plotinus' philosophy, delving into its components, its implications for understanding the cosmos, and its role in the broader Neoplatonic tradition.

Plotinus' theory of emanation represents a central and distinctive feature of his metaphysical system. Emanation, in this context, refers to the process by which all reality flows forth or emanates from "The One," the highest and most transcendent principle. The theory posits a hierarchical structure wherein successive levels of existence emanate from "The One" in a descending order of perfection, unity, and simplicity. This hierarchical emanation model is integral to Plotinus' attempt to explain both the unity and diversity of existence. It also provides a framework for understanding how individuals and entities can strive to return to the source of their being, "The One," through spiritual and philosophical ascent. To grasp the hierarchical emanation model, one must first understand the various levels or hypostases through which reality emanates from "The One." Plotinus typically identifies three primary hypostases, each representing a stage in the emanation process:

- i. The One (The Good): At the summit of the hierarchy is "The One" itself. It is the ultimate source, an undetermined unity that transcends all attributes and distinctions. "The One" represents pure existence, pure goodness, and pure simplicity. It is the origin of all subsequent reality and serves as the unifying principle of existence.
- ii. Intellect (Nous): The second hypostasis emanating from "The One" is Intellect, also known as Nous. Intellect embodies pure thought and contains the Forms or Ideas, echoing Plato's philosophical framework. In Intellect, the archetypal Forms exist as intelligible realities. It is characterized by a higher level of unity and perfection than the subsequent hypostases.
- iii. Soul (Psyche): The third stage of emanation is Soul, which emanates from Intellect. Soul is responsible for the generation of the physical universe. It is a principle of life, animation, and the organizing force behind the material realm. While Soul possesses a degree of unity, it is less perfect and unified than Intellect.

The hierarchical nature of these hypostases signifies a descending order of unity, with each level representing a further departure from the ultimate simplicity and unity of "The One." Plotinus' hierarchical emanation model addresses the philosophical question of how unity and diversity coexist within the cosmos. "The One" is the ultimate unity, representing the purest form of existence. As reality emanates downward through the hypostases, it becomes increasingly diversified and complex. This hierarchical model allows Plotinus to reconcile the tension between unity and diversity. At the highest level, there is pure unity, but as emanation progresses, distinctions, multiplicity, and diversity emerge. This diversity encompasses the richness and complexity of the material world, which is a result of the emanation process. Thus, Plotinus' theory of emanation offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how the multiplicity of the physical universe originates from the ultimate unity of "The One."

The hierarchical emanation model has profound philosophical and spiritual implications within Plotinus' system. One of the central themes in Plotinus' philosophy is the notion that individuals can return to "The One" through a process of intellectual and contemplative ascent. By transcending the lower levels of existence and reuniting with higher realities, the soul can ultimately achieve a state of unity with "The One." This spiritual ascent represents the highest goal of human life in Plotinus' philosophy. Plotinus places a significant emphasis on the role of contemplation and intellectual pursuit in achieving unity with "The One." Intellectual contemplation, particularly of the Forms in Intellect, is seen as a means to transcend the limitations of the material world and ascend towards higher levels of reality.

The hierarchical model also has ethical implications. Plotinus believes that the closer an individual aligns with the higher hypostases, the more virtuous and morally pure they become. Virtue, in his view, is a reflection of a soul's alignment with the higher, more unified principles of existence. However, it's important to note that Plotinus' emphasis on intellectual ascent has sparked debates about whether his system is elitist, as it appears to prioritize the role of philosophers and intellectuals in achieving unity with "The One." Critics argue that this may neglect the diverse paths to spiritual realization and exclude those who do not have access to formal education or philosophical training. Plotinus' hierarchical emanation model had a profound and lasting impact on the development of Western philosophy and religious thought. It influenced subsequent philosophers, theologians, and mystics, contributing to the shaping of philosophical traditions such as Christian Neoplatonism and Islamic philosophy. Notable figures like Augustine of Hippo and the Christian mystic Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite drew upon Plotinus' ideas to integrate Neoplatonic thought into their own theological frameworks. The hierarchical model provided a conceptual bridge between pagan philosophy and monotheistic religious traditions, facilitating a synthesis of ideas.

The hierarchical emanation model in Plotinus' philosophy represents a foundational and innovative concept that addresses the origins, unity, and diversity of existence. Through the successive emanation of hypostases from "The One," Plotinus offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how reality unfolds from a transcendent source. This model not only provides a philosophical account of the unity and multiplicity within the cosmos but also offers a pathway for spiritual and intellectual ascent toward unity with "The One." However, it is not without its challenges and critiques, particularly concerning issues of accessibility and inclusivity within the pursuit of unity. Despite these challenges, Plotinus' hierarchical emanation model left an enduring legacy in the history of Western philosophy and religious thought, serving as a point of departure for subsequent generations of thinkers who sought to explore the interplay between unity and diversity in the quest for understanding the nature of reality and the divine.

The Three Fundamental Principles of Plotinus' Metaphysics

The three basic principles of Plotinus' metaphysics are called by him 'the One' (or, equivalently, 'the Good'), Intellect, and Soul. These principles are both ultimate ontological realities and explanatory principles. Plotinus believed that they were recognized by Plato as such, as well as by the entire subsequent Platonic tradition. The One is the absolutely simple first principle of all. It is both 'self-caused' and the cause of being for everything else in the

universe. There are, according to Plotinus, various ways of showing the necessity of positing such a principle. These are all rooted in the Pre-Socratic philosophical/scientific tradition.

A central axiom of that tradition was the connecting of explanation with reductionism or the derivation of the complex from the simple. That is, ultimate explanations of phenomena and of contingent entities can only rest in what itself requires no explanation. If what is actually sought is the explanation for something that is in one way or another complex, what grounds the explanation will be simple relative to the observed complexity. Thus, what grounds an explanation must be different from the sorts of things explained by it. According to this line of reasoning, explanantia that are themselves complex, perhaps in some way different from the sort of complexity of the explananda, will be in need of other types of explanation. In addition, a plethora of explanatory principles will themselves be in need of explanation. Taken to its logical conclusion, the explanatory path must finally lead to that which is unique and absolutely uncomplex. The One is such a principle. Plotinus found it in Plato's Republic where it is named 'the Idea of the Good' and in his Parmenides where it is the subject of a series of deductions (137c ff.). The One or the Good, owing to its simplicity, is indescribable directly. We can only grasp it indirectly by deducing what it is not. Even the names 'One' and 'Good' are *fautes de mieux*. Therefore, it is wrong to see the One as a principle of oneness or goodness, in the sense in which these are intelligible attributes. The name 'One' is least inappropriate because it best suggests absolute simplicity.

If the One is absolutely simple, how can it be the cause of the being of anything much less the cause of everything? The One is such a cause in the sense that it is virtually everything else. This means that it stands to everything else as, for example, white light stands to the colors of the rainbow, or the way in which a properly functioning calculator may be said to contain all the answers to the questions that can be legitimately put to it. Similarly, an omniscient simple deity may be said to know virtually all that is knowable. In general, if A is virtually B, then A is both simpler in its existence than B and able to produce B. The causality of the One was frequently explained in antiquity as an answer to the question, 'How do we derive a many from the One?' Although the answer provided by Plotinus and by other Neoplatonists is sometimes expressed in the language of 'emanation', it is very easy to mistake this for what it is not. It is not intended to indicate either a temporal process or the unpacking or separating of a potentially complex unity. Rather, the derivation was understood in terms of atemporal ontological dependence. The first derivation from the One is Intellect. Intellect is the locus of the full array of Platonic Forms, those eternal and immutable entities that account for or explain the possibility of intelligible predication. Plotinus assumes that without such Forms, there would

be no non-arbitrary justification for saying that anything had one property rather than another. Whatever properties things have, they have owing to there being Forms whose instances these properties are. But that still leaves us with the very good question of why an eternal and immutable Intellect is necessarily postulated along with these Forms.

The historical answer to this question is in part that Plotinus assumed that he was following Plato who, in *Timaeus* (30c; cf. *Philebus* 22c), claimed that the Form of Intelligible Animal was eternally contemplated by an intellect called ‘the Demiurge’. This contemplation Plotinus interpreted as cognitive identity, since if the Demiurge were contemplating something outside of itself, what would be inside of itself would be only an image or representation of eternal reality – and so, it would not actually know what it contemplates, as that is in itself. ‘Cognitive identity’ then means that when Intellect is thinking, it is thinking itself. Further, Plotinus believed that Aristotle, in book 12 of his *Metaphysics* and in book 3 of his *De Anima* supported both the eternality of Intellect (in Aristotle represented as the Unmoved Mover) and the idea that cognitive identity characterized its operation.

Philosophically, Plotinus argued that postulating Forms without a superordinate principle, the One, which is virtually what all the Forms are, would leave the Forms in eternal disunity. If this were the case, then there could be no necessary truth, for all necessary truths, e.g., $3 + 5 = 8$, express a virtual identity, as indicated here by the ‘=’ sign. Consider the analogy of three-dimensionality and solidity. Why are these necessarily connected in a body such that there could not be a body that had one without the other? The answer is that body is virtually three-dimensionality and virtually solidity. Both three-dimensionality and solidity express in different ways what a body is. The role of Intellect is to account for the real distinctness of the plethora of Forms, virtually united in the One. Thus, in the above mathematical example, the fact that numbers are virtually united does not gainsay the fact that each has an identity. The way that identity is maintained is by each and every Form being thought by an eternal Intellect. And in this thinking, Intellect ‘attains’ the One in the only way it possibly can. It attains all that can be thought; hence, all that can be thought ‘about’ the One.

Intellect is the principle of essence or whatness or intelligibility as the One is the principle of being. Intellect is an eternal instrument of the One’s causality. The dependence of anything ‘below’ Intellect is owing to the One’s ultimate causality along with Intellect, which explains, via the Forms, why that being is the kind of thing it is. Intellect needs the One as cause of its being in order for Intellect to be a paradigmatic cause and the One needs Intellect in order for there to be anything with an intelligible structure. Intellect could not suffice as a first principle of all because the complexity of thinking (thinker and object of thought and

multiplicity of objects of thought) requires as an explanation something that is absolutely simple. In addition, the One may even be said to need Intellect to produce Intellect. This is so because Plotinus distinguishes two logical ‘phases’ of Intellect’s production from the One. The first phase indicates the fundamental activity of intellection or thinking; the second, the actualization of thinking which constitutes the being of the Forms. This thinking is the way Intellect ‘returns’ to the One.

The third fundamental principle is Soul. Soul is not the principle of life, for the activity of Intellect is the highest activity of life. Plotinus associates life with desire. But in the highest life, the life of Intellect, where we find the highest form of desire, that desire is eternally satisfied by contemplation of the One through the entire array of Forms that are internal to it. Soul is the principle of desire for objects that are external to the agent of desire. Everything with a soul, from human beings to the most insignificant plant, acts to satisfy desire. This desire requires it to seek things that are external to it, such as food. Even a desire for sleep, for example, is a desire for a state other than the state which the living thing currently is in. Cognitive desires, for example, the desire to know, are desires for that which is currently not present to the agent. A desire to procreate is, as Plato pointed out, a desire for immortality. Soul explains, as unchangeable Intellect could not, the deficiency that is implicit in the fact of desiring.

Soul is related to Intellect analogously to the way Intellect is related to the One. As the One is virtually what Intellect is, so Intellect is paradigmatically what Soul is. The activity of Intellect, or its cognitive identity with all Forms, is the paradigm for all embodied cognitive states of any soul as well as any of its affective states. In the first case, a mode of cognition, such as belief, images Intellect’s eternal state by being a representational state. It represents the cognitive identity of Intellect with Forms because the embodied believer is cognitively identical with a concept which itself represents or images Forms. In the second case, an affective state such as feeling tired represents or images Intellect (in a derived way) owing to the cognitive component of that state which consists in the recognition of its own presence. Here, x’s being-in-the-state is the intentional object of x’s cognition. Where the affective state is that of a non-cognitive agent, the imitation is even more remote, though present nevertheless. It is, says Plotinus, like the state of being asleep in comparison with the state of being awake.

In other words, it is a state that produces desire that is in potency a state that recognizes the presence of the desire, a state which represents the state of Intellect. In reply to the possible objection that a potency is not an image of actuality, Plotinus will want to insist that potencies are functionally related to actualities, not the other way around, and that therefore the affective

states of non-cognitive agents can only be understood as derived versions of the affective and cognitive states of souls closer to the ideal of both, namely, the state of Intellect. There is another way in which Soul is related to Intellect as Intellect is related to the One. Plotinus distinguishes between something's internal and external activity. The (indescribable) internal activity of the One is its own hyper-intellectual existence. Its external activity is just Intellect. Similarly, Intellect's internal activity is its contemplation of the Forms, and its external activity is found in every possible representation of the activity of being eternally identical with all that is intelligible (i.e., the Forms). It is also found in the activity of soul, which as a principle of 'external' desire images the paradigmatic desire of Intellect. Anything that is understandable is an external activity of Intellect; and any form of cognition of that is also an external activity of it.

The internal activity of Soul includes the plethora of psychical activities of all embodied living things. The external activity of Soul is nature, which is just the intelligible structure of all that is other than soul in the sensible world, including both the bodies of things with soul and things without soul. The end of this process of diminishing activities is matter which is entirely bereft of form and so of intelligibility, but whose existence is ultimately owing to the One, via the instrumentality of Intellect and Soul. According to Plotinus, matter is to be identified with evil and privation of all form or intelligibility. Plotinus holds this in conscious opposition to Aristotle, who distinguished matter from privation. Matter is what accounts for the diminished reality of the sensible world, for all natural things are composed of forms in matter. The fact that matter is in principle deprived of all intelligibility and is still ultimately dependent on the One is an important clue as to how the causality of the latter operates.

If matter or evil is ultimately caused by the One, then is not the One, as the Good, the cause of evil? In one sense, the answer is definitely yes. As Plotinus reasons, if anything besides the One is going to exist, then there must be a conclusion of the process of production from the One. The beginning of evil is the act of separation from the One by Intellect, an act which the One itself ultimately causes. The end of the process of production from the One defines a limit, like the end of a river going out from its sources. Beyond the limit is matter or evil. We may still ask why the limitless is held to be evil. According to Plotinus, matter is the condition for the possibility of there being images of Forms in the sensible world. From this perspective, matter is identified with the receptacle or space in Plato's *Timaeus* and the phenomenal properties in the receptacle prior to the imposition of order by the Demiurge. The very possibility of a sensible world, which is impressively confirmed by the fact that there is one, guarantees that the production from the One, which must include all that is possible (else the

One would be self-limiting), also include the sensible world. But the sensible world consists of images of the intelligible world and these images could not exist without matter.

Matter is only evil in other than a purely metaphysical sense when it becomes an impediment to return to the One. It is evil when considered as a goal or end that is a polar opposite to the Good. To deny the necessity of evil is to deny the necessity of the Good. Matter is only evil for entities that can consider it as a goal of desire. These are, finally, only entities that can be self-conscious of their goals. Specifically, human beings, by opting for attachments to the bodily, orient themselves in the direction of evil. This is not because body itself is evil. The evil in bodies is the element in them that is not dominated by form. One may be desirous of that form, but in that case what one truly desires is that form's ultimate intelligible source in Intellect. More typically, attachment to the body represents a desire not for form but a corrupt desire for the non-intelligible or limitless.

Ethical Implications of Plotinus' Metaphysical System

At the heart of Plotinus' metaphysical system lies the concept of "The One" (also known as "The Good" or "The First Principle"), and his philosophy has profound ethical implications. This essay explores the ethical dimensions of Plotinus' metaphysical system, focusing on his views on virtue, the soul's ascent, the role of intellectual contemplation, and the potential criticisms and challenges his ethics face. Plotinus' ethics are grounded in his metaphysical framework, which posits that all existence emanates from "The One." The ultimate aim of human life, according to Plotinus, is to return to the source of all existence, to achieve a state of unity and oneness with "The One." This spiritual ascent is intimately tied to the pursuit of virtue. In Plotinus' philosophy, virtue is not merely a set of moral principles but a reflection of the soul's alignment with higher, more unified realities. Virtue is the soul's recognition and emulation of the divine order that emanates from "The One." It is an ethical and moral transformation that reflects the soul's ascent toward greater unity and goodness.

Plotinus views virtues as interconnected and interdependent. He argues that the virtues are unified because they all flow from the same source—the divine order of "The One." Therefore, the pursuit of one virtue naturally leads to the development of others. For example, cultivating wisdom naturally leads to courage and justice, as wisdom informs our actions and decisions. The ethical ideal in Plotinus' philosophy is the alignment of the individual soul with the highest reality, "The One." Virtuous actions and choices bring the soul closer to this ideal, while moral vices distance it. The pursuit of virtue is the path to unity with "The One," and it

represents the highest form of happiness and fulfillment. Plotinus places great emphasis on intellectual contemplation as a means to achieve ethical and spiritual growth. Intellectual contemplation is a central component of the soul's ascent toward unity with "The One." Plotinus believes that the soul can transcend the material world and ascend to higher levels of reality through intellectual contemplation. By directing the mind inward and contemplating the Forms in the realm of Intellect (Nous), the soul detaches from the distractions and desires of the material world.

Intellect is the realm of pure thought and contains the archetypal Forms or Ideas. It represents a higher level of reality than the material world and is closer to the divine source. Through intellectual contemplation, the soul gains access to these higher realities and begins to understand the unity and goodness inherent in them. Plotinus argues that intellectual contemplation transforms the soul by aligning it with the divine order of the higher realms. It purifies the soul from the distractions of the material world and elevates it toward greater unity and virtue. Contemplation leads to self-knowledge and self-awareness, allowing individuals to recognize their divine essence. Intellectual contemplation is not merely an abstract or theoretical exercise in Plotinus' philosophy; it has practical and ethical significance. It serves as a means to achieve virtue and moral excellence by connecting the soul to the divine source of goodness and unity.

Plotinus' emphasis on intellectual contemplation and the soul's ascent has led to debates about the exclusivity of his ethical framework. Critics argue that his system may be perceived as elitist because it appears to prioritize the role of philosophers and intellectuals in achieving unity with "The One." Critics question whether Plotinus' emphasis on intellectual contemplation makes his ethical path accessible to all individuals. Not everyone may have the inclination, opportunity, or capacity for philosophical and contemplative pursuits, potentially excluding many from the path to virtue and unity with "The One." Critics argue that Plotinus' system may neglect the diverse paths to spiritual realization and ethical growth. While intellectual contemplation is central to his philosophy, other ethical and spiritual traditions emphasize different practices, such as meditation, devotion, or social engagement, as equally valid means to achieve ethical excellence and spiritual enlightenment. The exclusivity debate challenges Plotinus' vision of ethics and unity by questioning whether it accommodates a broader range of human experiences and capabilities. Critics call for a more inclusive perspective that acknowledges the diversity of human paths to virtue and unity.

Plotinus' ethics, while emphasizing intellectual contemplation, can also be understood in a more holistic sense. His system recognizes the interconnectedness of all aspects of human

existence and their potential contribution to ethical growth. Plotinus acknowledges that intellectual contemplation is not the sole path to virtue. Other aspects of life, such as social interactions, relationships, and daily activities, can contribute to the cultivation of virtues like justice, compassion, and patience. While intellectual contemplation is a central practice in Plotinus' philosophy, ethical engagement with the world is also crucial. He recognizes the importance of living a virtuous life in the material world and practicing kindness, empathy, and moral integrity in one's interactions with others. Plotinus' ethics can be seen as a comprehensive approach that integrates various aspects of human experience and existence. It encourages individuals to seek unity with "The One" not only through intellectual contemplation but also through ethical behavior, compassion, and an understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings.

The ethical implications of Plotinus' metaphysical system are deeply intertwined with his vision of the soul's ascent toward unity with "The One." Virtue, according to Plotinus, is the alignment of the soul with the divine order and goodness that emanate from "The One." Intellectual contemplation plays a central role in this ethical framework, serving as a means to achieve spiritual and ethical growth. However, Plotinus' emphasis on intellectual contemplation has sparked debates about the exclusivity of his ethical path and its accessibility to all individuals. Critics argue for a more inclusive perspective that recognizes diverse paths to virtue and unity. Ultimately, Plotinus' ethics can be understood as holistic, acknowledging the interconnectedness of all aspects of human existence and encouraging individuals to seek unity with "The One" through both contemplative practices and ethical engagement with the world. His philosophy challenges individuals to aspire to the highest moral and spiritual ideals, with the ultimate goal of achieving unity with the source of all existence.

The Indeterminate Unity in Plotinus' Philosophy

This work delves into the profound and complex idea of the indeterminate unity in Plotinus' philosophy, exploring its nature, implications, and the philosophical challenges it presents. To understand the concept of the indeterminate unity in Plotinus' philosophy, it is essential to begin with an overview of "The One" itself. Plotinus defines "The One" as the highest reality, an absolute and transcendent unity that exists beyond all attributes, descriptions, or determinations. It is an entity of pure simplicity, devoid of multiplicity, division, or differentiation. "The One" is, in essence, the ultimate source from which all reality emanates. It represents the unity underlying the entire cosmos and serves as the unifying principle of

existence. However, this unity is indeterminate, meaning it eludes conventional categorization and description.

Plotinus insists that "The One" cannot be grasped through discursive reason, as it transcends all forms of intellectual analysis and linguistic expression. Any attempt to characterize or define "The One" in positive terms falls short of its true nature. The paradox lies in the very act of attempting to describe the indescribable. How can one use language and concepts, which rely on determinate attributes, to articulate the essence of an indeterminate unity? This paradox underscores the limitations of human language and thought in capturing the ineffable. Plotinus suggests that "The One" can only be apprehended through a form of mystical intuition or direct experience, often referred to as "henosis" or "union." This implies that the indeterminate unity is not an abstract philosophical concept but a reality to be encountered and known through a transformative and transcendent experience.

Plotinus addresses the challenge of indeterminacy through an apophatic approach. Apophatic theology, also known as negative theology, involves characterizing a concept by stating what it is not rather than what it is. Plotinus employs this approach to describe "The One" by negating all that it is not. For instance, Plotinus asserts that "The One" is not a being, not a non-being, not a substance, not a quality, not a quantity, not an intellect, and not a soul. These negations serve to strip away all determinate characteristics and attributes, leaving only the pure, undetermined essence of "The One." While this approach helps circumvent the paradox of description, it also raises questions about whether negations alone can truly convey the essence of the indeterminate unity. Plotinus' philosophy introduces a mystical dimension, emphasizing that direct experience or mysticism is the most authentic way to apprehend "The One." Mystical experience, in this context, is not limited to a passive, emotional state but represents an active engagement with the transcendent reality. Plotinus suggests that through contemplative practices and intellectual ascent, the philosopher can achieve a state of unity or oneness with "The One." This mystical union transcends the limitations of language and conceptualization, allowing the individual to directly participate in the ineffable unity of "The One."

This experiential aspect of Plotinus' philosophy challenges the traditional boundaries of rational philosophy. It introduces a transformative dimension, where the philosopher seeks not only to understand but to become one with the ultimate source of all existence. This union with "The One" is described as the highest form of knowledge and the pinnacle of human existence in Plotinus' thought. However, the emphasis on mysticism also raises questions about accessibility and inclusivity. Critics argue that not everyone may have the capacity or

inclination for mystical experiences, potentially marginalizing those who do not conform to this particular mode of engagement with "The One." Plotinus' notion of the indeterminate unity has had a profound and enduring impact on the history of philosophy and religious thought. It has influenced subsequent philosophers, theologians, and mystics who grappled with questions of ultimate reality and the limitations of language and reason in expressing it. Plotinus' ideas found resonance in early Christian thinkers, particularly in figures like Augustine of Hippo and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. They incorporated Neoplatonic concepts, including the indeterminate unity, into Christian theology, contributing to the development of Christian Neoplatonism. Neoplatonic ideas, including the indeterminate unity, played a significant role in the development of Islamic philosophy, with philosophers like Al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), and Ibn Arabi drawing upon Plotinus' thought in their own explorations of metaphysics and mysticism. Plotinus' philosophy continues to inspire philosophical inquiry into the nature of ultimate reality and the challenges of indeterminacy. Contemporary philosophers explore the boundaries of language, thought, and experience in addressing questions of transcendence and unity.

The indeterminate unity in Plotinus' philosophy represents a profound and complex concept that challenges traditional boundaries of language and thought. "The One," as the ultimate source of all existence, is characterized by its indeterminacy, defying conventional description and comprehension. Plotinus addresses this challenge through negations and apophatic language, emphasizing what "The One" is not as a means of stripping away determinate attributes. Additionally, he highlights the role of mystical experience and contemplation as pathways to direct apprehension of the indeterminate unity. Plotinus' notion of the indeterminate unity has left a lasting philosophical legacy, influencing subsequent thinkers across various traditions and inspiring ongoing inquiry into the nature of ultimate reality and the limits of human understanding. It continues to provoke contemplation on the profound mysteries that lie at the heart of existence.

Exploring the Inexpressible Problem of Ineffability in “The One”

The philosophy of Plotinus, a prominent figure in the tradition of Neoplatonism, centers around the concept of "the One" as the ultimate reality or source of all existence. Plotinus believed that the One transcends human understanding and language, posing a profound philosophical challenge: the problem of ineffability. This problem arises when attempting to articulate or describe an experience or concept that surpasses the limits of language and human

comprehension. In this essay, we will delve into the problem of ineffability in Plotinus's philosophy, exploring its origins, manifestations, implications, and attempts by both Plotinus and later philosophers to address this challenge. To understand the problem of ineffability in Plotinus's philosophy, it is essential to grasp the broader context of Neoplatonism and Plotinus's teachings. Neoplatonism emerged in the 3rd century CE as a philosophical system rooted in the ideas of Plato but with significant innovations. Plotinus, its primary exponent, sought to reconcile and synthesize elements from Plato's philosophy with insights from earlier traditions, such as Pythagoreanism and Aristotelianism. At the core of Plotinian metaphysics is "the One" (or "the Good"), an ineffable and transcendent principle that represents the highest reality. The One is the source and origin of all that exists, including the hierarchy of beings that emanate from it.

The problem of ineffability revolves around the limitations of language and human cognition when attempting to articulate experiences or concepts that surpass ordinary understanding. Ineffability refers to the quality of being beyond expression, description, or adequate representation in language. It implies that certain experiences or concepts elude verbalization or cognitive grasp. Ineffability often accompanies experiences or concepts that transcend ordinary reality or human comprehension. These may include mystical experiences, ultimate truths, or the nature of the divine. Plotinus's concept of the One is central to his philosophy and serves as a prime example of the problem of ineffability. The One, in Plotinus's system, is utterly transcendent, existing beyond all predicates, attributes, and distinctions. It is beyond being and non-being, beyond thought and language. The One is characterized by perfect unity and simplicity, lacking any internal differentiation. It is the source from which all multiplicity and diversity emanate. Plotinus frequently acknowledges the aporetic nature of the One, recognizing that it poses philosophical paradoxes and challenges the capacity of human reason to fully comprehend or articulate it.

Plotinus grapples with the problem of ineffability in multiple ways within his philosophy. Plotinus often employs a negative or apophatic approach, emphasizing what the One is not rather than attempting to define what it is. This reflects the recognition that positive assertions about the One fall short. Plotinus posits that direct apprehension of the One is possible through intellectual ascent, transcending discursive thought. However, even this ascent is not without its limits, as the One remains ultimately ineffable. Plotinus's writings suggest that the soul can achieve a kind of mystical union with the One, but this union surpasses ordinary knowledge and language. Mystical traditions, both within and outside of Neoplatonism, have also grappled with the problem of ineffability in their encounters with

ultimate reality. Mystics from various traditions describe encounters with divine or transcendent realities that defy description. These experiences often lead to a recognition of the limitations of language. Mystical traditions frequently employ negative theology, similar to Plotinus, to articulate the ineffable. This involves negating all attributes and concepts to arrive at a more direct apprehension of the divine. Mystics sometimes turn to paradox and poetry as a means of conveying the inexpressible. These forms of expression can point beyond the limits of ordinary language.

Plotinus's ideas on the problem of ineffability in the One had a profound impact on later philosophers and theologians. This Christian mystic and theologian drew heavily from Plotinus's thought, particularly the problem of ineffability, in his own writings on mystical theology. Figures like Meister Eckhart in Christian mysticism and Ibn Arabi in Islamic mysticism engaged with the problem of ineffability, building on the Neoplatonic tradition. Thinkers in the modern era, such as Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schelling, were influenced by Plotinus's ideas on the limitations of human reason and language when confronting ultimate reality. In the 20th century, the linguistic turn in philosophy brought renewed attention to the problem of ineffability. Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy, particularly his later work, emphasized the limits of language and the idea that "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." This resonates with the problem of ineffability. Phenomenological philosophers like Martin Heidegger explored the ways in which language shapes our understanding of reality, acknowledging that some experiences may resist linguistic capture. Postmodernist thinkers critiqued the idea of a unified, stable reality accessible through language, highlighting the diversity of linguistic and cultural frameworks.

The problem of ineffability has profound implications for philosophy, theology, and human experience. It underscores the epistemological limits of language and thought, suggesting that there are dimensions of reality that exceed our cognitive capacities. In interfaith dialogue, the problem of ineffability can promote humility and mutual respect by acknowledging the diversity of religious and philosophical expressions. Artists and writers often engage with the problem of ineffability as they seek to convey profound experiences and emotions that defy easy description. Recognizing the limits of language can lead to ethical and moral reflection, as individuals grapple with the inexpressible dimensions of moral values and human dignity. For individuals on existential or spiritual journeys, the problem of ineffability can be a central concern as they seek to articulate their deepest experiences and questions. The problem of ineffability in the One by Plotinus illuminates the challenges inherent in attempting

to articulate experiences and concepts that transcend ordinary understanding. Plotinus's recognition of the limitations of language and reason in confronting the One resonates with philosophical, mystical, and artistic traditions throughout history. While the problem of ineffability poses profound challenges, it also invites individuals to embrace the limits of expression and explore the mysteries of existence with humility and awe. It reminds us that some truths are best approached in silence, wonder, and contemplation, rather than through words alone.

A Critique of Plotinus' Notion of "The One": Exploring Challenges and Implications

Plotinus, a pivotal figure in the development of Neoplatonism, articulated a profound metaphysical system centered around the concept of "The One" (often referred to as "the Good" or "the Monad"). In his *Enneads*, Plotinus presents "The One" as the highest reality, the source of all existence, and the ultimate goal of human philosophical and mystical contemplation. His philosophy significantly influenced later thinkers, both within the Neoplatonic tradition and beyond. This essay undertakes a comprehensive critique of Plotinus' notion of "The One," examining its strengths, weaknesses, and its enduring significance within the history of philosophy. To establish a foundation for critique, let's first outline the key aspects of Plotinus' conception of "The One". "The One" is transcendent, existing beyond all attributes, qualities, and differentiations. It is utterly simple, lacking any multiplicity or complexity. "The One" is the ultimate unity, the source from which all existence emanates. It is the "One without division," an absolute unity that stands in contrast to the multiplicity of the material world. In Plotinus' metaphysical system, everything emanates from "The One." The emanation process consists of a hierarchy of levels or hypostases, each progressively less unified and more complex, culminating in the material world. Plotinus proposes a method of intellectual ascent through contemplation and introspection, leading the soul back towards union with "The One." This ascent involves transcending the material world and ascending through the levels of reality. Plotinus often employs negative or apophatic theology when discussing "The One," emphasizing what it is not rather than attempting to define it positively.

Let's begin our critique by acknowledging the strengths and merits of Plotinus' conception of "The One". Plotinus' emphasis on unity as the ultimate reality provides a compelling counterpoint to the diversity and fragmentation of the material world. The idea of an ultimate source of unity resonates with many philosophical and religious traditions. Plotinus' method of intellectual ascent offers a systematic and structured approach to spiritual and philosophical contemplation. It provides a framework for individuals seeking deeper

understanding and spiritual growth. Plotinus' ideas on "The One" and the Neoplatonic system as a whole had a profound influence on later philosophers, theologians, and mystics. Figures such as Augustine of Hippo, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and even Islamic philosophers like Avicenna were influenced by Neoplatonism. The use of negative theology in discussing "The One" acknowledges the inherent limitations of language and human understanding when confronting the divine or transcendent. This approach underscores the ineffability of ultimate reality. While Plotinus' notion of "The One" possesses notable strengths, it is not without its weaknesses and critiques. One of the most significant challenges is the problem of ineffability. Plotinus repeatedly emphasizes that "The One" is beyond human comprehension and description. While this underscores the transcendence of "The One," it also raises questions about the epistemic value of a concept that cannot be meaningfully articulated or understood. Plotinus primarily characterizes "The One" through negations, stating what it is not rather than offering a positive definition. This can leave readers and philosophers without a clear understanding of what "The One" is in itself.

Plotinus' intellectual ascent, while valuable for some, may not resonate with individuals who approach spirituality and philosophy through different paths, such as emotion, experience, or ethical engagement. It could be seen as overly intellectual or abstract. Plotinus' hierarchical model of emanation, with multiple hypostases emanating from "The One," has been criticized for its complexity and potential for confusion. Some critics argue that it introduces unnecessary layers between the ultimate reality and the material world. Plotinus' metaphysical system rests on certain ontological commitments, such as the existence of a hierarchical structure of reality and the primacy of "The One." These commitments are not universally accepted and may be subject to alternative interpretations.

Plotinus' philosophy, including his notion of "The One," continues to be a subject of philosophical inquiry and debate in contemporary thought. The concept of a transcendent unity akin to "The One" has relevance in interfaith and interphilosophical dialogue. It provides a common ground for discussing ultimate reality beyond doctrinal differences. Scholars of comparative mysticism explore the commonalities and differences in mystical experiences across various traditions. Plotinus' ideas on spiritual ascent and union with the divine are pertinent in this context. Plotinus' emphasis on the ineffability of "The One" raises questions about the limits of language and human cognition. These questions remain relevant in contemporary philosophy of language and epistemology. Contemporary metaphysicians and ontologists engage with questions about the nature of reality, unity, and multiplicity. Plotinus'

metaphysical system, including the notion of emanation, offers a historical perspective on these inquiries. Plotinus' notion of "The One" represents a significant contribution to the history of philosophy and metaphysics. While it has strengths, such as its emphasis on unity as ultimate reality and its influence on later thought, it also faces critiques related to ineffability, lack of positive definition, and the complexity of its hierarchical structure. The enduring legacy of Plotinus' "The One" lies not only in its historical significance but also in its capacity to inspire contemporary philosophical inquiries, interfaith dialogues, and discussions on the limits of language and cognition. Whether one accepts or challenges Plotinus' conception of "The One," it remains a focal point for philosophical exploration and contemplation of the deepest questions about the nature of reality and the human quest for transcendence.

Conclusion

In this comprehensive critique of Plotinus' notion of "The One," we have explored the strengths, weaknesses, and enduring significance of his metaphysical concept. Plotinus, a prominent figure in the history of philosophy, developed a profound system centered around the transcendent and ineffable nature of "The One." While his ideas have left a lasting impact on Western thought and continue to inspire philosophical inquiry, they also face significant challenges and critiques. One of the foremost challenges lies in the problem of ineffability. Plotinus repeatedly emphasizes that "The One" is beyond human comprehension and description, underscoring its transcendence. While this emphasis highlights the ultimate mystery and unknowability of the divine, it raises questions about the epistemic value of a concept that cannot be meaningfully articulated or understood. Furthermore, Plotinus' approach to characterizing "The One" primarily involves negations, specifying what it is not rather than offering a positive definition. This approach, while reflecting the limitations of language and human understanding when confronting the divine, can leave readers and philosophers without a clear understanding of what "The One" is in itself.

The hierarchical structure of Plotinus' metaphysical system, with multiple hypostases emanating from "The One," has been criticized for its complexity and potential for confusion. Some argue that it introduces unnecessary layers between the ultimate reality and the material world. Nevertheless, Plotinus' philosophy and his notion of "The One" continue to be relevant and influential in contemporary thought. They play a role in interfaith and interphilosophical dialogues, offering a common ground for discussing ultimate reality beyond doctrinal differences. Additionally, his ideas on spiritual ascent and union with the divine are pertinent

in the study of comparative mysticism. Moreover, Plotinus' emphasis on the ineffability of "The One" raises important questions about the limits of language and human cognition, contributing to ongoing discussions in philosophy of language and epistemology. His metaphysical system also provides historical insight into contemporary inquiries into the nature of reality, unity, and multiplicity in metaphysics and ontology. In conclusion, Plotinus' notion of "The One" represents a significant and enduring contribution to philosophical thought. Its enduring legacy lies in its capacity to inspire philosophical exploration, interfaith dialogue, and contemplation of profound questions about the nature of reality and the human quest for transcendence. Whether one embraces or challenges Plotinus' conception of "The One," it remains a focal point for the pursuit of wisdom and the exploration of the deepest dimensions of human existence.

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MARX ON RELIGION: IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Abstract

The eminent philosopher Karl Marx offered a critical assessment of religion and its function in human society. This paper examines how Marx's views on religion have affected society and human advancement. Marx believed that religion was an outcome of social and economic circumstances, a strategy employed by the ruling classes to maintain power and uphold social injustice. He said that religion served as the common people's opium, distracting people from the oppressive realities of their lives and offering them false solace. Marx's criticism of religion originates from his larger theory of historical materialism, which holds that the material conditions of society, particularly the method of production, are what fundamentally influence social change and growth. According to this viewpoint, religion is viewed as a mirror of the current social and economic dynamics and acts as an ideological tool to uphold and defend the status quo. Marx thought that in order to free people from the alienation and delusion imposed by capitalist systems, religion had to be abolished. According to Marx's perspective, the fall of religion is closely related to socioeconomic trends. Marx aimed to uncover religion's role in upholding inequality and impeding social progress by exposing it as a social construct formed by economic and class processes. Understanding and critically analysing Marx's views on religion helps advance a larger discussion of how ideology, power, and social change interact in modern society.

Keywords: Religion, Societal developments, Social Thought, Alienation, Materialism.

Introduction

One of history's most famous intellectuals, Karl Marx, not only studied political and economic ideas but also offered a fascinating examination of religion and its effects on society and human growth. A key component of Marx's larger critique of capitalist societies and the oppressive structures that support them was his consideration of religion. Marx's critique of religion was based on his overall thesis of historical materialism, which claimed that the material circumstances of people's lives and employment essentially determine how human societies develop. Marx claimed that a particular society's social and economic structures prompted the emergence of religion. He saw religion as a social construct created by the privileged classes in order to preserve their power and sustain social injustice.

Marx also thought that religion was a major factor in the justification of the current social structure. Religion contributed to the upkeep of the class divisions and power structures

present in capitalist civilizations by spreading doctrines that prioritized submission, obedience, and acceptance of the existing quo. Therefore, religion served as an ideological tool to sustain and defend the dominant system of production. Understanding Marx's larger conception of social transformation requires an understanding of his ideas on religion and its consequences for human and societal changes. Marx viewed the elimination of religion as a vital step toward the freedom of mankind. He thought that people could become aware of their true social and economic conditions by revealing the false nature of religious beliefs and destroying the intellectual underpinnings of capitalist society. Marx predicted that this awakening would motivate the general populace to seek revolutionary change, resulting in the development of a socialist or communist society devoid of exploitation and alienation. This analysis allows us to assess Marx's theories' continuing applicability as well as their potential to help create a more just and equitable future.

Karl Marx Philosophy

Marxism is a philosophy that is founded on the social, political, and economic theories of Karl Marx. In his writings, Marx explores how men try to meet their basic needs through their economic activity and material circumstances. As a result, he writes:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or- this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms- with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure (Marx 3-4).

According to Marx, the struggle with nature and the means man used to deal with nature to satisfy his needs mark the beginning of human history. Marx offers what is known as historical materialism, a materialist theory of history that explains the "central developments of human history, the series of stages of social development through which human societies have passed, and an account of the key dynamics determining the development of any given social

formation" (Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 731–732). The materialist theory of history is seen as a science by Marx and Engels, a longtime friend of his: "Where speculation ends - in real life - there real, positive science begins" (Marx 6). This perspective is supported by the notion that their approach is not predicated on philosophical dogmas or abstractions, but rather on true real-world situations that can be independently confirmed using just empirical data (Marx 6). According to the materialist view of history, how individuals create their daily needs (i.e., their mode of production) influences the kinds of societies in which they live:

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production (Marx 3).

The forces of production and the relations of production are all included in the term "mode of production," which refers to everything involved in producing requirements of life. The characteristics of the distribution, circulation, and consumption modes, which together make up the economic sphere, are influenced by the mode of production. Marx argues that society's economic structure serves as its true bedrock. This base is the origin of the legal and political systems. Therefore, the method of life's material creation affects social, political, and intellectual processes generally. A new era of social revolution results from the struggle between the forces of production as they advance and the dominating relations of production. A new, better method of production is introduced to replace the current one. Every kind of production has a dominant and a subordinate class, where the former uses the latter's labour for its own gain. Every culture, with the exception of the primitive, generates more than it can consume right away. The class structure of that particular society is also shaped by how this surplus is appropriated.

According to Marx, there are many forms of production that are associated with various historical eras. The primordial society, the slave society, the feudal society, the capitalist society, and, presciently, the communist society are among them. The first civilization that "corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production at which a people live by hunting and fishing, by rearing animals, or, in the highest stage, by agriculture" (Marx 4), is referred to as primitive society. The tools of production there belonged to the community. Because there was

no surplus value to be seized, there was no class structure and no exploitation. The slave civilization, which was characterized by a system of slave ownership, followed the primitive society. The slave-owner is the owner of the labour force and the slaves. A crisis in the slave-owning system gave rise to feudalism, a new adversarial system. The serfs (labourers) who are enslaved to the land and must pay the feudal lords rent are exploited by the exploiters, known as feudal lords. In contrast to a slave, a serf in a feudal society is not owned by the feudal lord; but he is not free either because he is enslaved to the soil, which he neither owns nor can leave, and he is required to labour for his master.

The capitalist society followed the feudal society, and Marx spent a lot of time describing and criticizing it. The capitalist mode of production, according to Marx, "rests on the fact that the material conditions of production are in the hand of nonworkers in the form of property in capital and land, while the masses are only owners of the personal condition of production of labour power" (Marx 12). The Proletariat (workers) and the Bourgeoisie (capitalists) are the two main classes in capitalism. The worker is fully cut off from the means of production, which forces him to sell his labour for wages to the capitalist. The capitalist is the owner of the means of production. In a capitalist system, the worker is exploited to the point that any value he produces that is greater than the amount of labour required to produce it is wholly taken by the capitalist. Marx foresees the demise of capitalism due to its inherent contradictions and the development of communism as a more desirable mode of production.

A free society, a communist society is one where there is no class distinction, alienation, or exploitation of any kind of man. The distribution of basic material needs will be determined by necessity. As Marx notes: "The theory of Communism, in this sense, may be summed up in the specific sentence: Abolition of private property" (Marx 18), the eradication of private property is one of its distinguishing features. Marx predicts that communism will have two stages: a lower phase and a greater phase. The initial period, which is marred by capitalism, is the first phase. From each according to his ability, to each according to his contribution (famously known as the "Contribution Principle") will serve as the guiding principle for the merit-based payment system (Marx 4). From each according to his capacity, to each according to his need is the principle that will be carried out in the higher phase (communism proper) (Marx 5). The developed production forces will enable a superabundance of material wealth in it. According to their needs, people will receive rewards. Marx was certain that the society would grant people the freedom they needed and put an end to all the negative aspects of

capitalism, such as class differentiation, alienation, exploitation, oppression, religion, and so on.

Marxian Social Thought

Karl Marx's philosophy was based on the notion that social activity is driven by economic conditions. Marx felt that the material circumstances of each era finally resulted in a revolution and transformation of society, and this belief has led to his method being referred to as "dialectical materialism" by at least some interpretations. Or, to put it another way, the relationships of exchange and the means of production always evolve in such a way that society eventually needs to be fundamentally restructured. His method was somewhat materialist because he concentrated on economic issues, and it was dialectical because he argued that every societal formation undergoes self-transformation. On top of the economic features of society were constructed the non-economic aspects, such as its ideology, culture, religion, etc.

Marx remarked that the proletariat and bourgeoisie's class rivalry was one of the current era's material circumstances. The class of people who exchange their labour for money is known as the proletariat. They are typically alienated from one another because they compete, from their labour because they do not own the products of their labour, and from themselves since they are under the influence of their employers. The class of people who own the means of production is known as the bourgeoisie. They have the financial resources to hire the proletariat's labour. They are so wealthy that they don't need to work to earn money. In essence, they don't have to labour at all because of their capital (machinery, extra cash, land, etc.), which can increase wealth. In the end, the proletariat's life is characterized by pain at labour and estrangement in their interactions with others and themselves. Marx argues that while religion acknowledges the proletariat's suffering in this life, it provides a false sense of solace by emphasizing a happy afterlife. More information on how religion upholds and defends the pain it acknowledges in working conditions will be provided later.

Marxian theory is entirely predicated on how things are made in society. Humans must generate food and material goods in order to survive, and in order to do so, they must form social bonds with one another, turning the act of creation into a social enterprise. For Marx, the primary subject of social analysis was the method of production. He divides history into various epochs, each of which is associated with a specific method of production, depending on the mode of production. The groups of individuals that control the means of production in each of these historical eras rule the society and oppress and exploit the rest of it. He divides society into two classes based on this: the ruling class and the downtrodden class. These two classes

are fundamentally at odds with one another, and as a result, there was struggle that ultimately resulted in the changing of historical eras.

Marx separates the forces of production and relations of production into two parts that make up the mode of production. The technical aspect of production is represented by the forces of production, which also include the labour power of the workers and the technology, raw materials, and scientific knowledge used in the production process. Each historical era's production forces will correspond to certain production connections. The social relationships that people enter into in order to produce goods are known as relations of production. In a feudal society, this would entail the relationship between the lord and vassal and the associated rights, obligations, and duties.

Marx contends that the economy, or the mode of production, which encompasses the forces of production, the relations of production, and their relationships to various social groups, shapes the fundamental structure of society in each historical era. The primary institutions, value, and belief systems that make up the superstructure of the society are considered as being formed by the economic infrastructure of the society, which combined forms the base structure or infrastructure of the society. There are inherent incompatibilities between the forces and relations of production in all historical civilizations, as well as fundamental conflicts of interest between the social groupings engaged in the production process. The main social groups are in an oppressive and exploitative relationship with one another. Marx contends that there is a fundamental antagonism between the social groupings of the exploiters and the exploited in all historical societies, with the potential exception of primitive society. For instance, in medieval society, there was a conflict between the exploiter group, the lords, and the exploited group, the serfs. He thought that since one social group benefits at the expense of another, the contradictions could not continue in their current shape for very long. The resolution of this clash of interests resulted in a significant societal shift that helped shape the subsequent historical epoch.

The upper-level Marxian theory reproduces the production relations and, as a result, reflects the interests of the dominant group in those relations in all historical societies. It does this by drawing heavily on the infrastructure. Marx refers to the prevailing beliefs of each historical era as the ideology of the ruling class. He contends that the ideology of the ruling class seeks to legitimize and justify the status quo by distorting the genuine character of society. The infrastructure's contradictions, however, will eventually cause the system to collapse and give rise to a new society. Marx's ideal society is a socialist, communist society in which

everyone would have an equal relationship to the forces of production and there will be no contradictions.

Marx Notion of Alienation

The estrangement (or sort of separation) that people go through as a result of residing in a capitalist society is portrayed by Marx as alienation. The primary hypotheses of alienation in a capitalist society are that the worker loses his or her potential for creativity, autonomy, and self-determination; is unable to own the things that his or her labour generates; and is unable to define his or her relationship with other men. The capitalist, who owns the means of production and appropriates the surplus value created by the worker's labour power, controls his economic existence. Marx distinguishes between four types of alienation experienced by workers: alienation from the labour output, estrangement from the labour activity, alienation from other people, and alienation from species existence. In relation to the first, which is alienation from the labour product, the worker is cut off from the thing he created. The capitalist is the owner of the item created by his labour. The second is alienation from the activity of working; in this case, the worker no longer finds fulfillment or an outlet in his employment.

Labor, as defined by Marx as the essence of man (since it demonstrates how humans behave as a species), becomes strange and a burden to him, no longer voluntary but compelled. The third alienation, which is the estrangement from other people, shows how distant the worker is from both himself and the end result of his labour. He confronts others in the same way that he confronts himself. In actuality, every guy behaves egotistically and without regard for others. People's interactions with one another deteriorate into hostile, abusive, and toxic partnerships. The worker is also cut off from the essence of his species, which is the potential for free conscious action. This is the last stage of alienation. Marxism's humanitarian appeal is on display here as the alienation that man experiences is detested. It stifles human development and undercuts human potential. As defeated beings, the workers experience annihilation in estrangement and recognize their helplessness as well as the truth of an inhuman existence (Marx 28). Alienation brings about pain. Marxism and humanism are opposed to the pitiful plight that man is currently experiencing. The creative demands of man must be met. His work deserves to be fairly compensated. He can work and live comfortably in this manner.

Karl Marx on Religion

Marx postulated that the circumstances of capitalism will eventually cause its demise. The proletariat would eventually have to take control of the means of production, eliminate the non-labouring class, and establish a communist society that would spread across the entire planet.

The proletariat was also the only class that acquired labour skills and had an enormous population due to capitalism. The bourgeoisie were sparse and hardly self-sufficient in the meanwhile. As a result, capitalism had sufficiently altered society for the proletariat to serve as the forward-thinking class that spearheaded the communist revolution. Marx went on to point out that some aspects of society are fundamentally conservative and prevent society from progressing. According to Karl Marx's thesis on religion, one of these conservative forces is religion.

Marx had a nuanced perspective on religion, claiming that it is the opiate of the people. Because it causes hardship and gives workers a false feeling of stability, he said it was the opium of the people. Some people may believe that they would suffer in this life but be rewarded in the next. Marx saw religion as a manifestation of real pain, but he also saw it as a problem since it masked the root of that alienation and made it more difficult to find a solution. The idea behind Karl Marx's "religion" encompasses the reality of the widespread suffering that exists in the real world, but it also helps to further that misery. Furthermore, because religion disincentivizes people from altering their circumstances (via revolution), it protects the interests of the bourgeoisie. In addition, several religions—particularly Christianity—created a caste of priests and urged followers to submit to them. Therefore, it is clear that religion has a right to acknowledge the suffering of this world. Additionally, it acknowledges the necessity of using happiness to lessen that suffering. When religion postpones that happiness for a hereafter, though, it turns into a vice. Real suffering, in Marx's view, can be alleviated through various social structures present in the world. Religion is a sincere way for people to express their spirituality, but it is mistaken because it places too much emphasis on a world that is solely spiritual and cut off from social reality.

Karl Marx was moved by the great inequality, oppression, dehumanization, exploitation, enslavement, and intense suffering of the masses in the society of his day. He began investigating alienation as a result, and this eventually led him to study religion, particularly Christianity. Marx thought that the ruling class or the bourgeois were manipulating Christian notions of submission to authority, politeness, humility, and other related ideas to hold the masses in permanent servitude. Therefore, he thought that religion was a tool for tyranny over the populace and the populace's opiate. He denounced the idea that anyone who acts in riot, such as rebellion, public conflict, and strife, is unfit for God's kingdom. This idea is latent in many religious doctrines. He compared adhering to Christian doctrine to using opium. Karl Marx included capitalism in his considerations and concerns. Marx defined capitalism as an economic system founded on the private ownership of the means of production

and one that is motivated by the pursuit of profit. This theory, also known as free enterprise, argues that only through investing labour can profit be generated. Profit is only realized when laborers in the masses are paid less than the value of their contributions. He claims that this is being exploited. The forces of supply and demand are encouraged to intervene to set prices rather than government interference in the economy, which capitalism despises. In conclusion, Marx thought that the ruling class simply used religion as a ruse to oppress the masses.

Marx Materialist Interpretation of Religion

Marx lay the foundations of the conception of history with a radical inversion of perspective leading to the elaboration of historical materialism. For him:

The phantoms formed in the brains of the humans are necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology as well as the forms of consciousness corresponding to these, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence (Marx 36-37).

The materialist conception of history was thus born along with its dialectical dimension:

This conception of history thus relies on expounding the real process of production – starting from the material production of life itself – and comprehending the form of intercourse connected with and created by this mode of production, i.e., civil society in its various stages, as the basis of all history; describing it in its action as the state, and also explaining how all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, morality, etc., etc., arise from it, and tracing the process of their formation from that basis; thus the whole thing can, of course, be depicted in its totality (and therefore, too, the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another) (Marx 53).

An insightful statement on religion was made in the manuscript: "Religion is from the outset consciousness of the transcendental arising from actually existing forces which the authors did unfortunately not develop more popularly' as they intended to do" (Marx 93). What they offered on the materialist explanation of religion was essentially a research program's starting point. Marx and Engels expanded on this idea of the close relationship between religion as a form of consciousness and the material conditions of society in their Communist Party Manifesto. They came up with a rough but effective heuristic explanation for the historical survival of religions and other kinds of ideology, attributing it to the enduring nature of class distinction:

Undoubtedly, it will be said, 'religious, moral, philosophical and juridical ideas have been modified in the course of historical development. But religion, morality, philosophy, political science, and law, constantly survived this change... The history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms, antagonisms that assumed different forms at different epochs. But whatever form they may have taken, one fact is common to all

past ages, viz., the exploitation of one part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within certain common forms, or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms (Marx and Engel 504).

The two co-thinkers' comments on Christianity in particular frequently touch on the dialectics of religious permanence and change, the transmutation of religions along with the historical change of material conditions while retaining some forms, which is the key to religions' historical persistence. Christianity is portrayed as the quintessential religion of capital in Marx's later economic writings. In his 1861–1863 economic papers, he used the satirical phrase "capitalism is as truly cosmopolitan as Christianity." Because of this, capitalism's official religion is also Christianity. Only humans are taken into account in both. In the abstract, the value of one human is equal to or different from that of the next. Everything in one situation depends on a person's level of faith, and in the other, it depends on their level of credit. Predestination must, however, be added in one case, and the accident of whether or not a person is born with a silver spoon in their mouth in the other (Marx 369).

Criticisms of Marx Notion of Religion

The Marxian idea of religion has its detractors. Marx, who was most familiar with Christianity, derives the majority of his religious interpretations from the study of that religion. He is not considering all religions, even while his remarks do apply to other religions that share the same beliefs of a strong god and a fulfilling afterlife; they do not apply to fundamentally different religions. It is plausible to claim that Hegel, who believed Christianity to be the ultimate form of religion and that everything said about it automatically extended to "lesser" religions, impacted him in this regard. However, this is untrue. He claims that religion is solely influenced by material and economic realities, which is another weakness in his thesis. Beyond the fact that nothing else is basic enough to affect religion, influence also cannot go the opposite way, from religion to material and economic realities. Additionally, if Marx were correct, Protestantism would have emerged before capitalism in countries because capitalism is the system of belief that Protestantism is, but this is not the case. Real capitalism doesn't emerge until the 19th century in Germany, which is still a feudal society when the Reformation takes place. This led Max Weber to postulate that religious organizations ultimately result in the creation of new economic realities.

Some claim that Marxian claims concerning the function of religion in society must be restricted to the practice of religion at specific times and locations. Similarly, one should not

limit themselves to the notion that religion depends solely on economics and nothing else, rendering the real beliefs of other religions essentially unimportant. Instead, we can acknowledge that a number of social factors, such as societal economic and material reality, have an impact on religion. The economic structure of society can, in turn, be influenced by religion. Marx's theory of society and of religion, while in many ways controversial, has nevertheless provided significant insight into how society functions despite a number of issues with his ideology and personality. Whatever one's final judgment on Marx's beliefs on religion, we should acknowledge that by making people take a close look at the social web in which religion constantly exists, he served an important purpose. His contributions have made it impossible to analyse religion without also considering how it interacts with other social and economic elements. His social theory, which is founded on the interaction between the social infrastructure and superstructure, has been and continues to be a key departure point for the sociological approach to the study of society and religion, even for those who find it difficult to embrace his political beliefs.

Conclusion

Marx's examination of religion and its effects on societal and human development provides a provocative viewpoint on how religion affects social structures and the way to emancipation. Conventional perceptions of religion's function and importance are called into question by his critique of it as a weapon of social control and the opium of the masses. Marx's understanding of religion emphasizes its role as a tool of the ruling classes for maintaining power and sustaining social inequality. He contends that religion serves as a deterrent, drawing people's attention away from the repressive facts of their life and impeding their progress toward liberation. Marx aims to awaken the masses to the need for revolutionary transformation and the eradication of religion as a method of emancipation by revealing religion as a byproduct of social and economic circumstances.

Marx's ideas on religion have important ramifications for human and societal progress. He contends that the collapse of religion is closely related to society development, especially during the shift to socialism or communism. Religion increasingly loses importance as a dominant factor as cultures shift toward more egalitarian systems, allowing people to concentrate on material and social reality. But it's crucial to recognize how Marx's views on religion have been challenged and reexamined. While some believe that his focus on socioeconomic circumstances ignores the complexity of religious thought and practice, others assert that religion can work as a catalyst for social transformation and freedom.

The consequences of Marx's ideas on religion continue to be a topic of discussion and debate in modern culture. They add to a broader conversation about how ideology, power, and social change interact. Understanding and critically interacting with Marx's viewpoints might help clarify the processes through which religion and other ideological systems influence social structures and human behavior. In conclusion, Marx's examination of religion has significant ramifications for the advancement of society and the human race. Marx challenges us to critically evaluate the impact of religion on people and society by critiquing the prevalent narratives surrounding religion and exposing its part in sustaining inequality. Engaging Marx's viewpoints helps advance knowledge of the intricate relationships between religion, ideology, and social change and further the ongoing fight for a more just and equitable society.

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AFRICA AND DEVELOPMENT: A REFLECTION ON TRADITIONAL IGBO AND IBIBIO PENAL SYSTEMS

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Abstract

The traditional Igbo and Ibibio penal systems in Africa are examined in the article titled "Africa and Development: A Reflection on Traditional Igbo and Ibibio Penal System" along with their reflection on development. The Igbo and Ibibio societies, which are found in Nigeria's south-eastern and south-south regions, feature decentralized governing structures and distinctive methods for preserving social order. The Igbo criminal system places a strong emphasis on reparation and reconciliation, with the goal of bringing peace back to the society. Offenders participate in reconciliation rituals, mediation, and, if required, ostracism. Similar to this, the Ibibio criminal system emphasizes restitution and public shame in order to restore harmony and dignity. Offenders made amends to victims and participated in communal cleaning rites. The Igbo and Ibibio penal systems encourage social cohesion, trust, and accountability among members of the community. This is possible by placing a strong emphasis on reconciliation because these systems also reduce conflicts and support offenders' reintegration, which promotes social harmony and the advancement of society. In order to get insight into the cultural values and approaches to justice in these African cultures, it is important to understand the historical background of these traditional criminal systems. The results of this study demonstrate that African Socio-political Philosophy contains strategies for upholding social norms, order, and peace. As a result, the Igbo and Ibibio penal systems are utilized in this study to provide an overview of African legal theory and serve as a lens through which to examine Africa and its growth.

Keywords: Penal system, Igbo penal system, Ibibio penal system, Jurisprudence, African culture.

Introduction

Penal systems are the institutional and legal frameworks put in place by society to deal with and punish criminal actions. These systems include the laws, regulations, practices, and organizations that are involved in the identification, inquiry, prosecution, sentencing, and rehabilitation of criminals. The differing penal systems in many nations and cultures are a reflection of those nations' distinctive social, political, and legal environments. Key elements and characteristics of punitive systems include:

- i. **Criminal Law:** A set of laws that define offenses and prescribe penalties for their commission. Criminal laws typically categorize offenses based on their severity, ranging from minor infractions to serious crimes.

- ii. **Law Enforcement:** The agencies responsible for enforcing criminal laws, such as police departments, investigative bodies, and specialized law enforcement units. They investigate crimes, gather evidence, and apprehend suspects.
- iii. **Judicial System:** The courts and judiciary that administer justice by conducting fair and impartial trials. This includes judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and other legal professionals involved in the adjudication process.
- iv. **Sentencing and Punishment:** The determination of appropriate penalties for convicted individuals. This may involve fines, probation, community service, imprisonment, or, in some cases, capital punishment. Sentencing aims to deter future criminal behavior, protect society, and provide opportunities for rehabilitation.
- v. **Corrections and Rehabilitation:** Institutions and programs designed to detain and rehabilitate offenders. These can include prisons, correctional facilities, probation services, parole boards, and various rehabilitation programs that address the social, psychological, and vocational needs of individuals involved in the criminal justice system.
- vi. **Restorative Justice:** Alternative approaches that focus on repairing the harm caused by crimes, promoting healing for victims, and reintegrating offenders into the community. Restorative justice emphasizes dialogue, mediation, and victim-offender reconciliation as part of the resolution process.

Cultural, historical, and societal aspects influence penal systems. In reaction to shifting societal norms, legal precepts, and human rights considerations, they change with time. A correctional system's efficacy is frequently judged in light of elements like crime prevention, recidivism rate reduction, fairness, proportionality, and respect for human rights. The continuous debates and reforms aimed at striking a balance between punishment, rehabilitation, and social growth within countries benefit from an understanding of penal systems and their various approaches. Traditional Igbo and Ibibio societies in Africa had their own distinctive criminal systems that were crucial in preserving order and fostering growth within their individual society. Let's investigate these systems and how they have influenced the growth of these cultures.

Traditional Igbo Penal System

With each village having its own set of laws and regulations, the Igbo people, who were largely found in southeast Nigeria, had a decentralized system of governance. Instead of concentrating only on punishment, the Igbo correctional system sought to maintain social cohesiveness and

restore harmony. It placed a strong emphasis on community reunification and restitution. The Igbo penal system's salient characteristics included:

- i. **Village Assembly:** Disputes and crimes were usually addressed within the village assembly, where community members gathered to discuss and resolve issues. This assembly ensured collective decision-making and involvement of all stakeholders.
- ii. **Mediation and Reconciliation:** Offenders were often required to reconcile with their victims and the community as a whole. This involved public apologies, compensation, and performing various rituals to cleanse the community from the negative effects of the offense.
- iii. **Ostracism:** In cases where an individual posed a persistent threat to the community's well-being, they could be temporarily or permanently expelled. Ostracism acted as a deterrent and protected the overall welfare of the community.

The traditional Igbo society was founded on a republican, almost democratic, form of government. In contrast to a feudalist system in which a king ruled over subjects, this one ensured equality for its residents in the majority of Igbo villages (Furniss, 65). Igbo communities and local governments were generally governed by a republican consultative assembly of the common people, with a few notable exceptions like Onitsha, which had rulers called Obi, and locations like the Nri kingdom and Arochukwu, who had priest kings. A council of elders would typically oversee and manage the community. Self-reliance, equality among people, democratic systems, and fierce competitiveness for social, economic, and political success are values highly valued in Igbo culture.

Independent village groupings (confederations of villages) and city-states (cities and their surrounding areas) make up the traditional Igbo social structure. A network of markets and shrines that they all shared, along with religious and professional organizations, connected these towns. Without a doubt, their worldview is the source of Igbo culture. A person's perception of how things are and ought to be symbolizes the development of their worldview. In this sense, Kraft refers to it as a "control box" that directs how people apply the way they think about their connections to reality (53). A person's worldview, according to Okafor, is defined as "the concepts of the basic notions underlying their cultural, religious, and social activities" (13).

It provides a logical justification for the order that governs both the environment and human existence. It primarily derives from local mythology, taboos, traditions, and proverbs. People's viewpoint is strongly influenced by their environment and cultural heritage. As new

experiences inside the group and stimuli from outside contacts are considered, it is continually being reinterpreted and reformulated (Metuh, 49). A people's worldview aids them in the interpretation, forecasting, and management of space-time occurrences. Knowing a person's worldview essentially means understanding how they judge life, and how they evaluate life gives them a moral code and standards for behaviour.

The Igbo people of Nigeria have their own worldview, which has a significant impact on how they act, live, and perceive the world. It is important to list certain components of the traditional Igbo worldview. The Igbos hold a belief in a Supreme Being, or God, whom they refer to by various names depending on the subculture area group. The names of God in Igbo include Chukwu, Chineke, and Obasi bi n'elu. Chi (God) and Ukwu (Big) are the two words that make up Chukwu. The name "Chi-Ukwu" is used to distinguish the Supreme Being from other gods. Fage interprets it to imply "the biggest Deity of all." Chineke refers to the Creator God (20). The Supreme Being is the only god in the eyes of the people who can create. On the other side, obasi bi n'elu refers to the God who is above. The word "Obasi bi n'elu" refers to the belief among the Igbo that the Supreme Being resides in the sky.

The Igbo people have a very strong belief in the existence of gods. According to popular belief, the Supreme Being caused the creation of the divinities. The divinities are those supernatural creatures or gods that are frequently referred to as "agbara" in many regions of Igboland. Typically, they serve God in His theocratic rule over the universe as His servants. Because of the close connection between their nature and the human experience, they need a wide variety of temples, shrines, priests, cults, images, and offerings to manage the numerous interactions between them and humanity. The worship of the deities typically demonstrates how man recognizes their divine essence. In Igbo Traditional Religion, the divinities are seen as mediators between man and the Supreme Being and are used to communicate with them. The Supreme Being is thought to be the source of the divinities' authority and power. They carry out important tasks and help God administer the universe as His servants and agents.

The concept of spirits is another aspect of traditional Igbo worldview. The traditional Igbos believe that spirits can be either friendly or malevolent, good or bad. Some spirits are created from energies or natural phenomena. The majority of the time, shrines are constructed for the divinities and priests are devoted to their devotion in order to distinguish them from the spirits. They are viewed as the acceptable means of communication with the Supreme Being (Awolalu and Dopamu, 7).

Another aspect of the traditional Igbo worldview is the belief in the ancestors. The deceased spirits known as ancestors are closely related to their family or tribe (Anyanwu, 112).

Even though they are deceased, the ancestors are still honoured as the heads of the families and communities to which they belonged when they were still living. It is thought that they meddle with the daily affairs and lives of their offspring. Finally, another aspect of the traditional Igbo worldview is the belief in magical forces. The traditional Igbo believe that there are powers at work in the universe that can be harnessed and used to improve quality of life. Magic, sorcery, witchcraft, and other occult practices all stem from a strong belief in spiritual forces or abilities. Thus, both positive and negative uses of the forces are possible.

The Igbos have laws governing their behaviour that, when broken, result in punishment in order to guarantee peaceful coexistence and justice among members of the community. Therefore, punishment results from crime. In other words, retribution follows crime, and the Igbo people are governed by rules to maintain peace and harmony and prevent crime. As a result, the concept of a judicial system is clear in traditional Igbo society. Igbo jurisprudence has focused on studies of the nature, sources, rationale, and effects of these traditional standards, however due to space constraints, we won't go into detail about them here. I will restrict this investigation, nevertheless, to the rules that an ideal African community has in place to deal with lawbreakers. I wish to demonstrate that Africans had a history that was different from what was believed to be the case among European intellectuals in the 18th and 19th centuries. The laws that control and direct Igbos' life generally follow a set hierarchy and come from a variety of sources.

Igbo laws can be broadly divided into two categories: divine laws and human laws. Divine laws are regulations that apply to God, other deities, ghosts, and ancestors. It is believed that breaking these regulations is both unlawful and an offense against a supernatural force. These statutes have a few noteworthy characteristics. First of all, while not having been created by humans, they appear to have been recorded in the Igbos' hearts. Typically, they are referred to as a component of the *Omenala* (custom). The opposite of the divine law, known as the natural law, is brought to light, according to Okafor, by the inability to link these laws to any historical sources or sources at all (45). The fact that the offenses or crimes primarily target God, the creator, divinities, spirits, or ancestors makes them extremely grave and makes them subject to harsh punishments that seem to come from the divine authority. Third, breaking divine laws is never forgiven. Criminals are powerless to evade the wrath of the supernatural forces. The criminals must be punished, whether it is now, at the end of their life, or even during their next cycle of reincarnation.

According to Igbo tradition, man is subject to natural laws, which are the laws of reason, and he is expected to follow their rules. The Igbos hold that since man is endowed with reason

by nature and must use reason while interacting with nature. In traditional Igbo civilization, reason acts as a bridge between moral law, natural law, and heavenly law. The Igbo people do not distinguish between natural or supernatural rules and moral law. Furthermore, in traditional Igbo philosophy, morality and religion intertwine. Igbo tradition despises morality as it is defined by reason alone in western ethics. An action is considered harmful or immoral in traditional Igbo society if it displeases God, the ancestors, or is against Omenala (local custom). Omenala thus, in this circumstance, becomes the 'grundnorm', in Kelson's terminology, after which the legality of every other rule and norm must be assessed.

The second division of Igbo law is "human laws". The Igbos pass laws on a variety of topics, including political, social, and economic issues. There is no permanent legislative body or specialized legal organization having the authority to enact laws for the Igbo people. However, laws are made by the Ndi Ichie (elders), the Oha (an ad hoc general assembly), or the Umunna (a male line of succession from a founding ancestor with groupings of compounds of closely related families headed by the eldest male member). In terms of economics, regulations can be created about the usage of marketplaces, the ownership and management of certain economic entities, and the use of common natural resources like lakes and streams that produce fish for market and human consumption. Laws can be created to provide societal guidelines for the use and upkeep of public amenities like highways, village squares, springs, etc. Laws can also be created to regulate political matters, particularly the diplomatic and political ties between neighbouring villages.

In Igbo philosophy, a crime is actually an act that violates a law (divine or human) and is sanctioned by the law. In Igboland, crimes include murder, incest, suicide, arson, theft, changing the boundaries of land, revealing a masquerade, adultery, killing or eating a totem animal, consuming food offered to gods, engaging in sexual relations with an Osu (an outcast), getting married to an Osu (an outcast), having a woman climb a tree, breaking kolanuts, etc.

I will talk about a few offenses in regard to how traditional Igbo society handles the criminal justice system. In traditional Igbo society, homicide is seen as a very serious offense that violates both the divine law and the rules of society. It is thought that God, who created the world, is the source of life. As a result, spilling another person's blood is evil - aru. Even during times of conflict, those who took part, especially those who killed go through ritual cleansing.

If someone kills another person, they are supposed to hang themselves or be exiled from the community. If the person runs away, his family loses access to the majority of community benefits and their possessions are seized. Typically, this is the case when someone murders a

relative. If the murderer hails from another village, the situation is different. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, a classic instance is illustrated by the murder of Ogbuefi Ezeudo's wife by residents of Mbano village. The Umuofia people made the decision to either wage war against Mbano or demand compensation in the form of a young man and a virgin. A famous Umuofia warrior named Okonkwo was chosen by his people to deliver the word to Mbano.

According to Achebe, Okonkwo "returned from his mission two days later with a young lad of fifteen years old and a young virgin" (67). The young virgin was thus handed to Ogbuefi Ezeudo as his wife in the course of retributive justice, while the little boy, Ikemefuna, was killed at the community's request. Heavy compensation is offered even in cases of unintentional killing. As was evident from the examples given above, punishment has a dual purpose. By doing this, the disharmony caused by murder on both a human and a divine level is resolved.

The suspect would have to swear before a deity that he is innocent in the absence of any concrete evidence of the crime, especially if it involved psychic poisoning or other occult methods. It is thought that if the accused is not harmed after a year or two, the heavenly judge will declare him innocent. If not, the deity or his ancestors would either murder him or subject him to a severe penalty, such as blindness, the small pox, the deaths of family members, etc. Making the suspect drink the deceased's bathwater in order to prove his innocence instead of swearing under oath would have the same result as swearing.

Incest is another instance of breaking a heavenly commandment. Incest is defined as sexual conduct between blood relatives who aren't allowed to be married to one other. Offenders are frequently sold into slavery since it is believed that they have contaminated the land. They have angered the goddess of the ground. The offenders are excommunicated for two months in some Igbo groups. They must provide white chicken, water, and firewood for the earth goddess priest continually for two weeks if they are under the age of eighteen. If they are adults, they will also have to provide two fowls, a basket full of yam and cocoa-yam, a pot of palm wine, and a lump of chalk in addition to being exiled for three months (Ndubuisi 69). The earth goddess's looming menace couldn't be avoided till then.

Another major offense in traditional Igbo society is revealing a masquerade. The ancestors' spirits are thought to be represented by the masquerades that appear during significant occasions. Therefore, it is a sin to reveal a masquerade because doing so would be the same as killing an ancestral spirit. The traditional Igbo believe that such an act would cause the ancestors to stop providing valuable benefits to the community. A person who commits the crime faces the death penalty and has his corpse burned in the forest. In the traditional Igbo society, theft is also discouraged. The village square is typically the site of a public trial for a

suspected thief. If found guilty, the punishment may include being severely flogged, stripped nude, and decorated with ashes, depending on how heinous the offense was. He will also receive a fine. Furthermore, he is immediately expelled from his age group and any other groups to which he might join. However, if it can be shown that he has changed for the better, he may be allowed to rejoin the associations.

Another heinous crime in traditional Igbo society is adultery. It is strongly disapproved of. The lady involved views it as extreme dishonesty and disrespect for her husband, and the male views it as an intrusion on the personal space of another man. The offending woman receives a one-month exile from her husband's house as punishment. She would return with two pots of wine, a basket full of yam and cocoa-yam, a chicken, and an apology to her husband and his folks at the end of the time period in the company of her kindred. If the apology is accepted, she would be welcomed back into the family with a firm commitment to behave properly. Her male counterpart, on the other hand, is likewise intended to express regret to the woman's husband and his people. He does so while carrying two wine pots, a basket full of yam and cocoa-yam, a chicken, and members of his own family. If he holds any titles, they would be taken away from him until he is absolved. He is not exiled, though, like the wife.

Another repugnant offense in traditional Igbo society is lying. Lying comprises deceit, hypocrisy, and betrayal of confidence. In traditional Igbo society, a liar is seen as having weak morals, as an outcast, and as a cheat. He is viewed as posing a risk to the neighbourhood's safety. Depending on the severity or impact of the lying, traditional Igbo society imposes punishments that can include yams, poultry, goats, cows, and money. A liar is prohibited from testifying, participating on a committee or panel, and may also face expulsion from the town's union and the age grade.

It is important to note at this point that in traditional Igbo society, the process involves numerous human actors when laws governing interpersonal relationships are broken. The party that feels wronged may initially appeal to the offender's family head or a panel of village arbitrators. If everything else fails, the offended party may call a meeting of the Amala, a more powerful body than the former that will likely include some of the disputants' relatives and close friends. Other institutions, such as the Age grade, the Dibia fraternity, numerous named societies, town union, and Mmanwu (masquerade) society, may be resorted to if this too fails. When all else fails, a submission in the form of an oath swearing is made to the ultimate tribunal as a last resort, which after the allotted time will uncover the guilty. The possible penalties include death, exclusion from society, exile, a fine, and the forfeiture of valuable property.

Traditional Ibibio Penal System

The Ibibio people, who predominantly lived in the south-south region of Nigeria, had a social structure that was equally decentralized and a unique judicial system. The Ibibio penal system put an emphasis on repaying the victim and upholding the dignity of the criminal in order to restore harmony and sustain societal equilibrium. The Ibibio criminal system's salient elements were:

- i. **Compensation:** Offenders were required to compensate the victim or their family for any harm or loss suffered. Compensation took various forms, such as providing goods, livestock, or performing specific services.
- ii. **Public Shaming:** Offenders were publicly shamed as a form of punishment. This was intended to deter others from committing similar offenses and to reinforce social norms.
- iii. **Rituals and Cleansing:** In cases where offenses were deemed serious, specific rituals were performed to cleanse the community of the negative impacts. These rituals often involved offerings, sacrifices, and ceremonies aimed at restoring harmony.

It would be important to mention social institutions when discussing the Ibibio criminal system because they influenced the Ibibio people's morality, behavior, and social relationships. There were many different types of institutions, each with its own set of established guidelines for its members. These institutes were available for men, women, and young people. Even while not all community members participated in these social institutions, their actions had a significant impact on the population as a whole.

The majority of these social institutions including ekpo, idiong, ekpri akata, atat, ebre, and mbopo, to name a few were hidden in nature. Secret societies acted as both a judicial system and a means of maintaining Ibibio community life. These societies were secret in the sense that only their members or initiates may participate in particular rites, ceremonies, and rights. They were not secret in the sense of a crime syndicate or underworld organization. Even non-members were unaware of certain of their rituals and ceremonies, which were not carried out in their presence (Umo, 68).

The name "Ekpo" means "ghost" or "ancestor" and was used to describe one of the punishment systems in Ibibio history. Ekpo Nyoho, which was widespread throughout Ibibio territory before the establishment of Western style governance, was highly valued in Ibibio traditional society. The ancestors, who were believed to return to earth during the ekpo season, were given special status in the Ekpo society, which was established to govern the affairs of

men in accordance with the earlier established code of conduct (Udoma, 59). Fadeye adduces the statement above by saying:

Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, one finds the continuing relevance of the dead to the life of the present and of future generations. It is expressed in the belief that each community was founded by an ancestor...that whatever the status or possessions of the community, they were owed to the ancestors, and that the ancestors had established for all time, the basic charter of life...the fear of what the ancestors would say was an ever-present consideration and one of the most powerful sanctions in African societies (18).

All laws of the land were passed and put into effect by the ekpo's power as a means of social control. The institution was also accepted as a social system for enforcing the law. Ekpo looked into offenses like theft, adultery, prostitution, and murder. The group had words of praise for notable members of the community and chastised those who violated social rules. It served as an agent in some locales for the collection of penalties and debts owed by disobedient locals. Members of the ekpo had an obligation to fight for their village or clan during times of war, following the orders of the village chief, who was required to be an ekpo initiate. Because of the apparatus that was already in place for the distribution of power, a political dictatorship was unimaginable. Every year, the ekpo's yearly activities, which last between two and three weeks, usually start in the first week of August (Udo, 140). All community members were impacted by the ekpo regulations during this time because violent acts were forbidden and defaulters were required to pay fines in the form of food, cash, and alcohol. Additionally, women were forbidden from viewing ekpo masquerades and were urged to go out with men for protection.

In Ibibio tradition, Ekpri Akata was also one of the punishment systems. Today, Ekpri Akata refers to the village secret agent, whom everyone views as a ghost that visits the earth at night. Every year, ekpri akata would reveal to the entire village whatever misdeeds people had been committing covertly. On such occasions, for instance, ekpri akata would divulge to everyone in the community by listing all of the criminals' names, what they had stolen, and from whom. Additionally, ekpri akata would name and shame every adulterous man and woman. Since ekpri akata was believed to be a ghost, any knowledge or narrative about him was taken as fact (Ekong, 155). Since it disappeared shortly after disclosing its information, no one could pursue legal action against it because "a ghost" was impossible for anybody to handle or touch. The accused individual could, however, take an oath in front of everyone in the village square to demonstrate their innocence of the accusations stated by the ekpri akata. The "ghost" or messenger of the local deity was called Ekpri akata. According to instructions from the

Supreme God, the Ibibio tradition banned murder, the covert poisoning of others, and recurrent stealing among other things.

Another feature of the Ibibio penal system is based on age and gender groups, and in the Ibibio traditional land, each grade had its own norms of conduct. Breaches of their codes included crimes including stealing, adultery, flippancy, and disclosing classified information. Age groups also resolved disputes among themselves, which decreased the number of disputes that may have been brought before the village council. Offenders received fines and, in severe cases, were shunned, albeit they might appeal from a lower junior grade to a higher one. The offender's specific age grade consulted the other age grades and the local authorities in the instance of stealing. The perpetrator was finally apprehended on a particular day, stripped naked, and had charcoal rubbed all over his body. The stolen item was then tied around the victim's neck while he was paraded through the streets of the village, neighbouring villages, and the market.

While being flogged, the offender was made to dance around specific locations. It was unrelenting cruelty applied to the offender in the name of justice. The perpetrator was then demoted for a period of months or years, after which the case might be revisited if an appeal was filed. Although the individual had lost his credibility and esteem, penalties were enforced for re-admittance into the group (Ukpong, 140). Age grades, much like law enforcement agencies, would forcibly break into the offender's home, seize items or property (including domestic animals), and sell the seized items or property to pay the offender's fine if he failed or avoided performing community service or failed to pay it. The perpetrator was required to make restitution to the owner of any seized goods or animals if they belonged to someone else. In the majority of Ibibioland, some still persist as voluntary informal groupings, albeit (Ukpong, 140).

In the traditional Ibibio community, the mbiam (bizarrely referred to as juju), which was used for swearing, was a crucial tool for social control and the judicial system. Belief in the power of mbiam played a larger role in the traditional system's success. Before the spread of Christianity, mbiam was widely accepted by the majority of Ibibio people, and as a result, judges were rarely bought off and the rule of law was rarely subverted. In addition to asking the accused to declare himself innocent of the crime, members of the family were asked to swear under oath in cases of doubt so that the penalty imposed by mbiam might extend to the entire family if they lied. The majority of the time, the entire family chose not to swear to mbiam because they knew that mbiam would kill them as well and instead chose to find the accused guilty and pay the fine or fines that were imposed on him (Offiong, 423).

Getting individuals and groups to follow the conventional behaviors and standards of any group to which they belong is a challenge faced by any community or culture. As was already mentioned, one method of controlling improper behavior in traditional Ibibio society was through the use of ekpo, or raw physical force. Other methods were mbiam, slander, ridicule, banishment, belief in the goodness and evil of ancestors, and gossip. Mbiam, a powerful magical device used to take oaths and protect one's possessions from thieves, had the supernatural power to distinguish between the guilty and the innocent and to punish offenders with diseases including whooping cough, paralysis, dysentery, and death. Mbiam may take the form of a liquid, a sacred drum, particular foliage, human blood, the Bible, or a cross (Offiong, 431). Property defense, conflict resolution, and guilt or innocence determination were the three principal applications of mbiam. The allegations and mistrust persisted unabated since there was still a significant belief in witchcraft. In this circumstance, mbiam was crucial in identifying witches and punishing them. When mbiam killed the offender, it was occasionally mandatory that the person beheaded. A really terrifying sight, several skulls were fastened to the bottles holding the mbiam (Offiong, 440).

As the accuser must offer the mbiam to be taken by the accused after he approaches the person or family thought to have the most lethal sort of mbiam and pays the requisite expenses, swearing on mbiam was one means to prove one's innocence if accused of being a witch. The mbiam was transported to a predetermined location on the scheduled day, and typically sacrifices were made before the accused took the oath. The owner of the mbiam was frequently given a second mbiam to swear on behalf of himself and the original mbiam that he would not deceive the accuser by covertly deactivating the mbiam after receiving a bribe from the accused. It was always strictly adhered to some mbiam's requirements that the accused stand naked during the oath (Udo, 152). Some mbiam, such as mbiam Nko, prohibited people from consuming any nocturnal food. The statement that the accused made before the mbiam was given to him or her while a small amount of the mbiam (in the case of liquid), was poured in a cup, frequently a calabash or gourd, and the accused drank it. The popular belief in the effectiveness of mbiam stems from the fact that once the accused had taken it without experiencing any negative effects, he or she was exonerated of the charge. Therefore, the accused was thoroughly questioned by close relatives and friends before taking the oath, and was encouraged to confess if he or she was, in fact, guilty. When the complainant insisted that the accused also ask the mbiam to kill other members of his or her own family, this interrogation became extremely necessary (Offiong, 441).

Conclusion

The Igbo criminal system promoted communal accountability, trust, and cohesiveness. It promoted the reintegration of convicts into society by emphasizing reconciliation and restitution over punitive measures. By reducing disagreements and encouraging a sense of accountability among community members, this strategy assisted in upholding social harmony and supporting progress. By offering methods for settling disputes and restoring balance, the Ibibio penal system played an important part in upholding social order and fostering progress. It promoted accountability and deterred the repetition of transgressions by focusing on restoration and compensation. Public humiliation served as a deterrent, bolstering communal norms and encouraging a feeling of shared accountability. In a nutshell the Igbo and Ibibio cultures in Africa had traditional penal systems that were deeply founded in their cultural ideals and placed an emphasis on community involvement, restitution, and reconciliation. These mechanisms significantly contributed to the preservation of social harmony, the advancement of growth, and the creation of a sense of responsibility among community members. The core concepts of these systems continue to influence the values and approaches to justice in these societies, despite the fact that they may have changed or evolved in more recent times.

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THE IMPLICATIONS OF RAWLS' VEIL THEORY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In the context of Nigeria, this piece examines the implications of John Rawls' Veil of Ignorance thesis on social justice. The Veil of Ignorance was created by renowned political philosopher John Rawls as a thought experiment to identify justice principles that would be unbiased and fair to all members of a community. This theory's main tenet is that people ought to make decisions on societal institutions and structures independent of their own social standing, wealth, ethnicity, or employment. This study looks at how Rawls' Veil of Ignorance can be used to address urgent social justice issues in Nigeria, a diverse and complicated country that has tough problems with social exclusion, inequality, poverty, and corruption. Rawls' theory might provide a framework for formulating policies that give the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups priority by going beyond individual interests and embracing the collective well-being. It aims to encourage thoughtful debates regarding the potential advantages and drawbacks of using Rawls' Veil of Ignorance as a guiding principle for creating a more equitable and inclusive society. The work concludes by arguing that Rawls' Veil of Ignorance could be a useful moral compass in the quest for social justice in Nigeria, urging decision-makers, civil society organizations, and citizens to take into account the perspectives of all members of society, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalized, when formulating plans to deal with the most urgent issues facing the country. Fairness and inclusivity should be prioritized if Nigeria is to achieve its goal of a just and peaceful society for all.

Keywords: Rawls' Theory, Social Justice, The Veil of Ignorance, Democracy, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria, a country with significant socioeconomic gaps and a wide range of cultural, ethnic, and religious identities, has always placed a high priority on social justice. Over time, decision-makers, academics, and activists have looked for solutions to the urgent problems of inequality, poverty, corruption, and prejudice that continue to jeopardize the nation's development and unity. The philosophy of John Rawls and his Veil of Ignorance theory stand out as a compelling framework for examining and influencing social justice in Nigeria as part of this effort to create a more just and equal society.

The Veil of Ignorance was a key idea in John Rawls' foundational work, "*A Theory of Justice*," which was presented by the well-known political philosopher of the 20th century. The premise of this thought experiment is that those charged with creating the guiding principles of justice for a community ought to do so in an entirely impartial manner. The hypothetical curtain that Rawls asks us to picture puts us in the dark about our own social standing, financial status,

skills, and other identifying qualities. Since we have no idea where we might end up in the society we are constructing, we are more inclined to adopt choices that value fairness and prevent maintaining inequity.

The Veil of Ignorance by Rawls has broad repercussions for social justice because it pushes us to think beyond our own interests and take into account the wellbeing of all members of society, especially the most vulnerable and oppressed. In the setting of Nigeria, where numerous ethnic groups, socioeconomic classes, and religious affiliations coexist and frequently experience unfair treatment and restricted access to basic resources, this strategy has a strong resonance.

In this work, we examine how Rawls' theory of the Veil of Ignorance affects social justice in Nigeria. We consider how changing the country's strategy for addressing systemic inequality and promoting a more inclusive society could result from adopting this philosophical framework. We want to critically evaluate the viability and usefulness of adopting Rawls' theory within the Nigerian sociopolitical context while understanding the particular difficulties the country faces.

The work is organized as follows: first, we give a general summary of the situation of social justice in Nigeria today, emphasizing the ongoing injustices and inequalities. We then explore the core ideas of Rawls' Veil of Ignorance theory, clarifying its tenets and justification. A full consideration of how this theory may be used to solve particular social justice issues in Nigeria, such as those related to education, healthcare, economic possibilities, and political representation, is provided in the section that follows.

However, we also recognize that applying Rawls' theory in a complicated and culturally varied nation like Nigeria may present difficulties and objections. The way that this idea is applied to Nigerian society may be influenced by cultural norms, historical legacies, and political realities. As a result, we will discuss these worries and make suggestions for avoiding potential obstacles to its successful implementation.

By analyzing the consequences of Rawls' Veil of Ignorance theory, this paper aims to add to the ongoing conversation about social justice in Nigeria. We aim to shed light on how this important philosophical idea may be harnessed to build a more equal and just society for all Nigerians by using a multidimensional approach that combines philosophy, social sciences, and policy analysis. Through this investigation, we seek to promote critical thinking and motivate significant acts that will advance social justice objectives in Nigeria.

The Notion of Justice in the Pre-Socratic Epoch

Justice is absolutely not thought of the same manner today as it was in the past by thinkers. This explains why, despite Anaximander's interest in cosmology, he perceived injustice in nature whenever and wherever the four basic elements—fire, earth, water, and air—were at odds since each element's territory was invaded by the other due to this battle. According to Omoregbe, "the conflict among various elements was interpreted by Anaximander as an example of injustice in nature" (4). Although Anaximander's concept appears to be rather straightforward, the cosmic wave from which it emerges renders it incompatible with our conception of justice. Thus, Anaximander was interested in cosmic justice. Therefore, justice was not ignored as the focus of philosophy changed from cosmic to human with the advent of sophism. Justice has to transition in this way from being a cosmological concern to an ethical one. Today, when the word "justice" is mentioned, we no longer immediately conjure up Anaximander's images of fire, earth, water, and air. This suggests that everyone will seek to determine whether they are acting justly, both personally and institutionally, especially in a political environment.

Heraclitus was a notable thinker in antiquity who held the view that everything is in a constant state of flux. According to Heraclitus, "we must know that war is common to all and strife is justice" (Russell 60). It is impossible to deny that conflict affects everyone. This is confirmed by the frequency of armed conflict in both developed and developing countries. This, however, in no way implies that we should give up and be content with the way things are. But can conflict that breeds hatred, havoc, and even death be considered to be concurrent with or to constitute the end of justice? It appears more logical to hold to Heraclitus' opposing theory. That is, conflict is unfair in and of itself and, if left unresolved, can result in further injustices like military conflict and bloodshed. This is why, despite the solace that our conception of justice differs substantially from that of the ancients, one continues to ponder the logic behind the bizarre, paradoxical claim that "strife is justice." According to Cavendish's assessment of Heraclitus, "he wrote in an obscure oracular style, full of puns and oblique allusions" (4). Heraclitus was known as the "dark philosopher" because of these traits in his writings (Owens 42). In *The Republic*, Plato uses the authorial voice of Thrasymachus to express a viewpoint that was prevalent in Greece at the time. Thrasymachus, in the words of Magill, "represents a position which has since been stated many times in which justice is presented as the advantage or interest of the stronger party" (58).

Justice does not pay in this situation; only the feeble-minded and simple-minded engage in it. A citizen's entitlement to something like freedom of movement cannot be used when the

state's agents (the stronger in this example) wish to have the right of way. If Thrasymarcus had not made this point, one would have thought that he was deeply offended. But once a man is informed that sophism, a school of thought to which Thrasymarcus belonged, claimed it could use argument to make black appear white, this presumption is vitiated. As a result, the validity of Thrasymarcus' perspective is questioned because it fits the description of such illegitimate attempts to pass off white as black.

The Notion of Justice in the Socratic Era

In *The Republic*, Plato makes an effort to define justice and the prerequisites for both personal and societal application. According to Plato, justice entails a proper balance between the intellectual, spirited, and appetitive aspects of a person's soul. The state should be divided into guardians, auxiliaries, and craftsmen since it is the individual multiplied. The guardians need to be in charge for society to be just. According to Russell (129), "in Plato's conception, justice consists in everybody doing his own work and not being a busy body" Following a thorough analysis of Plato, Etuk claims that "the republic would have fallen quickly if it had not been a utopia. Because either the soldiers would have revolted and seized the chance to rule and enjoy the trappings of power; or the vast armies of laborers or producers would have rebelled against their predetermined lot in life; or the "golden" rulers would have seized real gold and silver and thus destroyed the myth (19).

We will now examine Aristotle's understanding of justice as it is presented in his *Nichomechean Ethics*. When Aristotle asserts that justice is the constellation of all virtues after realizing that justice is a moral virtue that embraces all other virtues, one can easily relate to him. Aristotle asserts that "if persons are not equal, their shares will not be equal" with relation to whatever that is to be distributed. This indicates that justice is realized in the allocation of public assets and social benefits by giving a man what he deserves (3). For Aristotle, it is just that some men such as slaves should be used as means to various ends as their owners may please. However, can a slave holding society legitimately claim to be just, especially when servitude or slavery frequently comes with the threat of death? Russell argues that for Aristotle, justice of a master or a father is different from that of a citizen or a son, for a slave is a property and there can be no injustice to one's property (186). Equal rights and opportunities are not relevant in the relationship between the master and the slave. It is somewhat unexpected that a teacher of an empire builder would try to justify slavery philosophically.

The issue of the right index for separating equals from unequals—what egalitarian theorists refer to as "the index problem"—was one that Aristotle was unable to solve. Or, to use

stronger language, what should be considered a desert, a birth, money, or wisdom? Etuk comes to the conclusion that Aristotle did not fare any better in his handling of social justice than did Plato (19) because he was unable to define what should constitute desert in plain terms.

The Notion of Justice in the Post-Socratic Era

Philosophers are aware that the time after the Socratic era saw a rise in skepticism and cynicism. According to legend, Caneades of Cyrene (214–129 BC) gave lectures in Rome outlining Aristotle and Plato's perspectives on social justice. In his second set of lectures, he disproved everything he had said in the first, with a particular sneer directed at Plato's theory that the victim of injustice suffers greater harm than the perpetrator. What would you do if you were returning from a fight when you lost your horse but were fortunate to find a wounded colleague on a horse? Caneades thunders. Caneades responds, "If you were sensible, you would drag him off and seize his horse no matter what justice might decree." Caneades believed that big States had grown powerful via illegitimate aggressions against their lesser neighbors (Russell 245). Caneades has a classic skeptic's perspective on justice. It embodies the mood of the time, which was marked by conquest-focused warfare. The issue of global justice and peace did not, however, come up at that time.

To be fair, Thomas Hobbes is considered a philosopher of the contemporary era. He limits the concept of justice to the upholding of real estate transactions. According to him, the "fountain and origin of justice" is the natural law that governs the keeping of contracts. While injustice is the breach of a contract, justice is the keeping of one. In reality, breaking a contract is what constitutes injustice (Hobbes 156). According to Hobbes, the sovereign should make it more difficult to live justly, which involves keeping commitments, than to commit an injustice, which is the breaking of a contract (Magil 234). Hobbes "did not appear to realize that even in dealing with what is one's own, he was touching on fundamental issues which go beyond external properties, for example, life itself," according to Etuk (21). How are we to prove this? Christians are familiar with the biblical account of the series of incidents that led to John the Baptist's passing, which is thought to have occurred in or around 32 AD. The Holy Bible's Matthew 14:1–12 tells the tale of a king who made a vow to give anything, even up to half of his kingdom, to his beloved daughter. The monarch was obligated to uphold this vow even when it meant sacrificing a man's head on a tray. Hobbes might be asked, in this situation, who should we hold accountable—the king for upholding his word, the young girl for obeying her mother in a just manner, or the executioner for lawfully carrying out the king's command? These series of ostensibly righteous deeds resulted in such a manifestly overwhelming injustice

as the murder of a man. The monarch clearly erred in treating the covenant as the end goal, with John's life serving as the means, as opposed to treating John as the means to the end of the agreement.

Justice is defined as righteousness or rightness in the Greek language. Humans are not always morally upright; hence it is necessary to protect and control man in his interactions with other men. Therefore, it is appropriate to view safeguarding as the social justice guiding concept. According to Banu, social justice consists of "a set of division of social advantages and for underwriting a consensus as to the proper distributive shares" (3). Because theorists have varied ideas about what "a fair treatment" or a "justice share" should entail, social justice is a contentious political notion that is accessible to multiple interpretations. Examining Rawls' social justice, which is founded on his justice of fairness premise, will be helpful.

Rawls' Concept of Social Justice

Social justice as it is defined by Rawls is different from how it was imagined by Plato and Aristotle. The distribution of social benefits based on equality rather than merit is what worries Rawls. Therefore, Rawls' primary interest is with how the major social institutions create and disseminate fundamental rights and obligations. Therefore, the main idea behind the need criterion is that the demands and benefits must consider the needs of the people. As a result, Rawls claims that the major institutions refer to diverse political organizations, governing documents, and government socioeconomic policies. According to Rawls, these sociopolitical and economic institutions can control how well people are integrated into society and how their advantages are distributed within the state. He continues by saying that these institutions are crucial in determining the goals, lifestyles, rights, and obligations of men in any given state. According to Rawls, social justice encompasses all significant socioeconomic systems as well as the people's constitution (John 354).

Rawls' Social Contract Theory

Like all social contractarians, Rawls offers his own interpretation of the social contract in order to successfully establish his concept of social justice. Intuitionism and utilitarianism are in contradiction to his social contract idea. Rawls bases his theory on two fundamental tenets: the first is that everyone has the right to the greatest amount of freedom that is consistent with the freedom of others. The first principle, according to Rawls, is that "Each person is to have equal rights to the most comprehensive total system with a similar system of liberty for all" (215).

The second principle of Rawls is concerned with social and economic inequities that should be resolved in a way that benefits everyone and ensures equal opportunity. According to his statement, "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just saving principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity" (Rawls 215).

Rawls' Veil Theory

Rawls heavily depends on the metaphysical superstructure of a situation in which everyone is placed in an initial position behind his veil of ignorance in order to elaborate on these ideas. For Rawls, the veil theory is crucial since it is the only method to guarantee justice and fairness while establishing a new society. Rawls imagines a scenario in which all future residents of the new society are deprived of certain knowledge about their individual circumstances due to the veil of ignorance. This implies that nobody will know for sure in the interim what they will develop into in the new society. Only if a workable thesis of governance has been broadly agreed upon will everyone's knowledge of his situational role, position, or profession be revealed? The implication is that no member of the proposed society will be aware of his obligations or duties prior to the selection of the guiding principles for the society.

According to Rawls, each member of the society should choose one or more of these guiding principles. Men and women of various "gifts" make up the membership of this society, including lawyers, doctors, teachers, farmers, clerks, carpenters, drivers, mechanics, the rich and the poor, the intelligent and the hardworking, leaders and politicians, among others. This is because men might be tempted to favor or be biased toward a particular profession or role if they knew what their future careers or roles would entail in advance. Therefore, Rawls contends that before choosing the principles, everyone must be shrouded in ignorance. According to Rawls, the goal of agreement or selection is to uphold equality and fairness in society. Everyone will objectively select the values that would be fair and beneficial to everybody due to the veil of ignorance. No one will be terrified of what may happen to their profession in the future if they do it this way. The veil will be lifted so that people can learn about their careers and duties in the new society once the decision regarding the governing principles has been made, according to Rawls.

Furthermore, Rawls issues a warning that the principles cannot be altered or changed once the curtain has been lifted and people have learned about their (new) responsibilities and positions in the new society. This means that regardless of whether or not the governing

principles benefit a specific individual, everyone has a responsibility to accept them because they were created with their participation (John 356). It is important to realize that another advantage of the veil of ignorance is that it lends some impartiality and direction to all professions and positions in the selection of the values that will guide men in the new society. According to Rawls, everyone will be guided to make decisions that are fair by an internal force, akin to a conscience. Since one could become the victim of repressive ideals he may have chosen, the problem of fairness in judging is crucial.

Justice is the first and most important virtue of social institutions, according to Rawls, who makes this claim in the first paragraph of *A Theory of Justice*. This is because if a social institution is unjust, it must be changed or eliminated, regardless of how effective or well-organized it is. We must consider society to be a cooperative enterprise with shared benefits. In other words, society's members should be viewed as participating on a par with individuals in order to provide basic social benefits. Rights, liberties, powers, opportunities, money, and wealth are examples of these social goods. Since people care about how the results of their cooperation are to be dispersed, the issue of distributive justice is raised. When no partner to the agreement has an advantage over others in advancing his own interests, fairness is present. This reasonable stance is what Rawls refers to as "the original position," which he wants us to comprehend as a hypothetical condition that asks for us to picture the negotiators of the fundamental conditions of political association conducting their discussions while shrouded in ignorance (11). That is, being unaware of their unique life circumstances, such as their skills, intelligence, sex, race, class, religion, wealth, and moral outlook.

According to Sterba, "the veil of ignorance has the effect of depriving persons in the original position of the knowledge they would need to advance their own special interests"(407). According to Rawls, "since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favour his particular condition, the principles of justice are as a result of a fair agreement or bargain" (12). We must make sure that our resulting vision of justice reaches a reflective equilibrium. Our values and our intuitions about fairness are in harmony in this instance. The original position's parties would also concur. Prior to the second principle, sometimes known as the difference principle, there is the first principle, generally referred to as the liberty principle. Social goods should be given evenly unless doing so will benefit the society's most vulnerable citizens. For this reason, according to Rawls, justice consists of "simply inequalities that are not to the benefit of all" (62). People have distinct character qualities, both physical and mental, depending on the socioeconomic class they are born into. In distributing social goods and rewards, society should equalize these natural and societal

contingencies. Since utilitarianism asserts that when there is a conflict between individual rights and the interests of society as a whole, it is the claims of the latter that counts, Rawls' concept of justice as fairness is a rejection of utilitarianism. We wholeheartedly concur with Rawls that the absence of a superior theory is what leads us to accept an incorrect theory. Our second concern is how much better Rawls is in this "better" hypothesis.

Only through the institutions, political or social, which are seen as necessary agents in an organized society, can we achieve distributive justice. As a result, they have a significant impact on how benefits and liabilities are distributed among citizens, which is the most crucial factor. This is a lawful business that has been granted to the institutions with the agreement of the people. This seems to illustrate how Rawls was influenced by the social contract perspective, albeit with a deviation from its practical principles as stated in the theory of justice. However, Rawls contends that all citizens have an equal level of social primacy, which is largely based on social institutions. He further contends that decisions or choices must be made without consideration of the characteristics of the decision makers (such as sex, abilities, position, or consequent experience), which may be positive or negative.

By saying that "the individuals' lack of knowledge about their backgrounds, positions, and personal traits is a way of conceptualizing impartial justice" (38), Bojer throws more light on this supposition. However, the author argues that someone cannot be "emptied" or "stripped-off" of his experience, including both the influence of historical knowledge and social awareness on decision-making. In a genuine sense, this illustrates how Rawls' premise about the veil of ignorance is nearly purely utopian. In addition, experience actually greatly influences his interest even though it only appeared to be one of the background aspects that inspired and guided people's decisions. Thus, it is practically impossible to completely exclude personal interests from decision-making, albeit they can be changed by mutual agreement or compromise in certain situations. Additionally, Rawls contends that in order for this decision to be fair, the least advantaged welfare and benefit should be given top priority. He refers to this as the "decision behind a veil of ignorance," which emphasizes the existence of a class society that must influence the benefits to the poor masses.

Assuming that collective decisions would be the least subjective, Rawls' line of reasoning shows that he took into account lower class and would be fair to all when policymakers concurrently put aside their own interests in favour of the needs of the less fortunate. This emphasizes how very important the establishment of institutions and their leadership are to the growth of every political system's political and socioeconomic borders. But given the prevalence of human nature's propensities for greed, selfishness, and other vices,

would it be possible for managers of an institution to naturally possess these traits rather than having to learn them or acquire them through political socialization in a polity? The impossibility of achieving the optimum situation, however, may be another contributing cause to Nigeria's flawed structure and the predominance of centrifugal forces and traits noted by experts.

The Criticism of Rawls' Veil Theory

It should be noted that, in the same manner that Rawls' concept of social justice won the appreciation of some philosophers, it has continued to draw a range of objections. Rogers has noted that Rawls' prohibitions against allowing people to capitalize on their inherent talents and endowments are categorically rejected by the British Commission on Social Justice (10). Rogers thus raises the following conundrums: What is the cause of Rawls' theory's lack of significant influence on the "real" world, notwithstanding its merits? Why does Rawls' work seem to be only having a huge theoretical impact and no longer be a political force? Even Rawls expressed worries about the reality that political liberty is not almost infinitely bigger for some than it is for others during the 25th anniversary of *A Theory of Justice*, which was celebrated with a super magnificent enormous conference at Santa Clara. According to Joshua Cohen, a former student of Rawls, "Rawls' hopefulness has been shaken by the world; his feelings have soured" (Rogers 8). Even in light of these objections, intellectual descendants of Rawls maintain that his theories are too profound and strong to have any actual social impact.

The basic freedoms of thought, conscience, expression, and others are given primacy under Rawls' theory of liberty, which was discussed in the previous pages. The right to usurp what one has produced via individual abilities or to inherit or pass on one's belongings, however, is glaringly lacking from these fundamental freedoms. The difference principle provides an answer to the distributive justice query presented here, therefore according to Rawls, the absence of these liberties is neither an oversight nor a contradiction. Rawls has come under fire from Robert Nozick for not include the right to appropriate the rewards of one's labour in the list of fundamental liberties. The entitlement theory, which is linked to the difference principle, is another criticism levelled at Rawls.

According to Rawls, those who are more productive due to their inherent advantages are not entitled to higher compensation. The concept of difference is an agreement to view the results of inherent talent as a shared resource. It is said by Younkins that "in this view, an individual's natural endowments are not considered to be his own, but rather, the product of the society" (3). There are some truths regarding human skill that Rawls apparently overlooks

when he develops the difference principle. For example, he ignores the fact that skills are not a shared resource; the aptitude that one individual possesses has no bearing on the range of abilities that are available to another. My skills were not obtained at your expense, and one can choose to use the skills that nature has given them. People should accept the results of their decisions. People who work hard and make more money shouldn't have to pay for people who chose more leisure activities and have lower incomes. Therefore, there needs to be a suitable incentive for diligent workers. Failure to comply with this could lead to social injustice.

We have the impression that Rawls is attempting to normalize envy by the way he views natural endowments. In order to correct the disparities of natural distribution, the society should redistribute the benefits of natural endowments since they are its property. In his opinion, Rawls writes, "we see then that the difference principle represents, in effect, an agreement to regard the distribution of natural talents as a common asset and to share in the benefits of this distribution whatever it turns out to be" (101). It is for this reason that Youngkins is so outspoken on this subject, stating that "A practical implication of the difference principle is that the society must redistribute income up to the point where the wealth of the representative poorest individual, is maximized" (3). In other words, the state should redistribute money and tax the more advantaged until there is no longer any incentive for them to generate more.

Even if everyone started out in the same social position that they were believed to be in, their decisions would cause them to end up with various social positions, incomes, and amounts of wealth. Any effort at equalization or redistribution would give some people less than they deserve. How is this just? The legitimacy of Aristotle's consideration of distributive justice in *Nicomachean Ethics* appears to be a tactic used by Rawls. The milieu in which Aristotle wrote was statist, meaning that the state provided distributive justice. The wealth and money that the state has available to it must be distributed for the benefit of all. But how were they obtained by the state? Did it do so in a way that was unjust? Prior to discussing how we might structure our offer of violently expropriated goods, these questions must be addressed. In the economic sphere, there is no leftover from which we can divide without infringing on each person's rights to just entitlements following production and exchange of what is generated. According to Von-Mises, "there is no such thing as an appropriation of portions out of a stock of ownerless goods" in a society based on voluntary exchange. The goods were created as someone's possession. They must first be seized if one intends to distribute them (32).

The only concept with which we oppose the redistribution required by the difference principle is the notion of exclusive ownership of property as shown in the entitlement theory.

The main argument of Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, according to Magill, is that "distributive justice is satisfied whenever a person is entitled to his holdings" and that "only a minimal state, one which limits its functions to the common good and protection against crime is morally justifiable" (681). Anyim correctly challenges Nozick's notion of a minimal state, contending that only an expansive state can result in improved distribution of goods (95). Since legitimate entitlement, which is the subject of our concern, excludes property obtained through unfair methods, we are able to defend the entitlement theory against this criticism. According to the entitlement theory, (i) a person who purchases a holding in accordance with the principle of justice in acquisition is entitled to it; (ii) a person who purchases a holding from another party in accordance with the principle of justice in transfer is entitled to it; and (iii) no one is entitled to a holding other than by repeatedly applying the aforementioned principles "i" and "ii" above. A distribution is right if everyone is entitled to the holdings they currently have under the distribution, according to the entire distributive justice principle (Nozick 151).

According to Magill, the difference principle may make a good rule for distributing social goods if they "fell like manna from heaven." When the pie's contributions are known, however, it is not the proper model to choose how to divide it (682). There is no obligation on my part to share my food with those who are less fortunate if they are starving. You can try to take advantage of my kindness, but nobody has the right to take my food and divide it equally between us. Rawls was focused on rewarding brilliance and hard effort in addition to creating a safety net for the weak in a fashion that people would want to see. Nobody criticizes the wealth of well-known figures like Bill Gates, Michael Jordan, Christian Ronaldo, Tiger Woods, Wayne Rooney, Lionel Messi, Samuel Peters, and Christiano Ronaldo. The distinction of having written *A Theory of Justice* alone belongs to Rawls. We are forced to wonder if he would agree that this honour be distributed equitably among his Harvard University colleagues, let alone the individuals with the least access to higher education. Since he believes that our abilities or labor are not truly ours and that we do not deserve the results of our capabilities, they should be distributed to the least advantaged. Rawls may or may not approve of this arrangement, it is uncertain. We are not certain that Rawls would offer us the same freedom, despite the fact that it would be unfair to force him to accept it.

Who are the people who are truly the least fortunate, then? But who in Rawls' view has the least advantage, wonders Schaller? (172). According to *A Theory of Justice*, events outside a person's control shouldn't have a negative impact on their possibilities for the future. However, it is reasonable to query what Rawls means by a "low-skilled person". Why is the individual so unskilled? How low does "low" go? Is his lack of skill due to the effects of his

decisions? Who is in need? Despite what Rawls has demonstrated, these so-called least privileged individuals may actually be enjoying everything to which they are legally entitled. Contrarily, according to Nozick, the difference principle is inappropriate because it forbids a sizable class of actions that are not unjust, and this forbiddance results in unbearable restrictions on personal freedom. The difference principle does provide conditions under which those who are less endowed would be prepared to cooperate, but it does not provide conditions under which those who are endowed more highly would be prepared to cooperate (Magill 682). Also, Rawls' social justice has certain theoretical issues. Rawls makes it clear that the initial stance is just speculative.

According to Etuk, if this confession is intended to quell any criticisms of the utopian nature of the initial equality, then the criticism should be seen as muted. But in that situation, the idea of justice based on this clause is rendered meaningless (22). Since society is obviously involuntary and our participation in it is mainly out of our control, Rawls is correct when he states that "no society can, of course, be a scheme of cooperation which men enter into voluntarily in the literal sense" (13). After some time, though, Rawls begins to exhibit dropoutism, as evidenced by his claim that "a society satisfying the principle of justice as fairness comes as close as a society can be in a voluntary scheme" (223). Etuk supports this argument by stating that "the society that we call the state, which is heavily involved in any debate of justice, is not and never will be a voluntary plan. People cannot opt out of the state at will because they are born into it (23). Fairness, one of the important concepts of justice, is a characteristic of a well-ordered society of justice and is widely acknowledged by everybody. According to Vaggallis, "Rawls has been changing his understanding of justice as fairness ever since the publication of *A Theory of Justice*. He understands that the explanation of stability provided in Rawls' Theory is incompatible with the kind of stability that would be required in a democratic society that is characterized by a pluralism of plausible but complete moral perspectives (13).

Rawls learns that his Theory of Justice is contradictory. In addition, he learns that although the liberal society is intended to accommodate a wide variety of value systems, the arguments he makes in support of it would only ever be persuasive to people who share a certain set of values (Rogers 21). This demonstrates that a just and fair society with good order is an unattainable ideal for a democracy. Rawls' Political Liberalism, in which he imagines it is conceivable for people with divergent but reasonable opinions to form a "overlapping consensus" in which justice as fairness is the account, that is, most consistent with their opinions, is focused on the acknowledgment of this truth. One of Rawls' supporters, Peffer,

claims that "Rawls' implicit assumption that all major groups within democratic societies can actually reach a consensus on his theory of justice or any other is almost laughable" (304). It is unclear whether justice as fairness would be able to come to an agreement with other points of view. Would utilitarians, for instance, ever accept a consensus that justice and fairness overlap? Now let's talk about the relevancy issue.

The Implication of Rawls' Veil Theory for Social Justice in Nigeria

Any society must prioritize social justice, especially one as diverse and complex as Nigeria. The Veil of Ignorance thesis by John Rawls is examined in this paper in relation to social justice in Nigeria. The Veil of Ignorance is a thought experiment put up by eminent political philosopher John Rawls to identify universally applicable standards of justice. This theory's central tenet is that people need to make decisions on societal institutions and structures independent of their own social standing, wealth, ethnicity, or employment. Understanding the current situation of social justice in Nigeria is vital before exploring the implications of Rawls' theory. The nation faces a number of issues linked to prejudice, poverty, inequality, and corruption. Different racial, religious, and socioeconomic groups continue to experience differences in access to political representation, economic opportunity, and healthcare. As a result, a sizable percentage of the populace is marginalized and lacks the resources necessary to properly contribute to the growth of the country.

Nigerian society is culturally diverse, or divided along ethnic lines, as a result of historical conditions. This is due to the fact that the state of Nigeria is one of those states that was created and is still maintained by the political will of an outside force. This explains why the majority (if not all) of people are considered Annang, Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba before they are required to act as a Nigerian, for example. We cannot dispute the fact that a society with majority and minority ethnic groups is inevitably unjust without a systematic implementation of social justice. But there is a more crucial query: how will this transition be effected if it is true that minority ethnic groups must go beyond the bounds of justice? Is it through acts of violence like seizing hostages, suicide bombers, and oil well explosions? Or will real social change be brought about using peaceful means appropriate for beings endowed with reason and dignity? How can we strike a balance between our desire to achieve our objectives and the appropriate methods to use? How do we prevent the paradoxes that occur when the cause is equally repugnant as the outcome or when the remedy is equally dreadful as the condition?

Many philosophers, including Aristotle, Machiavelli, Nietzsche, Hobbes, Marx, etc., have spent a lot of time recently attempting to explain the justification for using unfair and

immoral methods to address social issues, but it is Rawls who has made it abundantly clear that any compelling political thesis must be founded in morality. Rawls has successfully positioned himself as a steadfast supporter of liberal capitalism by claiming that the capitalist system is unjust because of the cruel ways in which the poor within it are exploited for the benefit of the rich. Omoregbe has made it apparent that Rawls' social justice "tries to take callousness, heartlessness, and indifference to the plight of the poor, out of capitalism and thereby make it more morally acceptable," as stated in his statement. Its premise is that because of social injustice, it is morally preferable to avoid taking any actions that will increase the poor's precarious situation. In fact, no social arrangement or change should be permitted unless it will enhance the situation of the underprivileged" (152).

The investigation of the Nigerian context's potential for using Rawls' Veil of Ignorance theory forms the core of this paper. I'll examine particular social justice problems that are pervasive throughout the nation, like access to healthcare, education, and employment prospects. We can determine how this philosophical approach may result in more equitable and inclusive policies by taking into account the opinions of all members of society, particularly those who are marginalized and underrepresented. The following outline some of the implications of Rawls' veil theory for social justice in Nigeria:

- i. Reducing Socioeconomic Inequalities: In Nigeria, there are significant differences in wealth, income, and access to basic services. The use of Rawls' Veil of Ignorance theory can result in regulations that work to close the wealth gap and give all citizens the same opportunities, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Nigeria can progress toward a more egalitarian society by giving the needs of the least fortunate priority.
- ii. Improving Access to Education: Social mobility is strongly influenced by one's ability to access a high-quality education. Regardless of their social or economic status, every child in Nigeria should have access to a comprehensive education, according to Rawls' philosophy. By supporting education, we can end the cycle of poverty and give the next generation the tools they need to fully contribute to the growth of our nation.
- iii. Improving Healthcare Infrastructure and Services: There are considerable healthcare inequities in Nigeria, as many rural and underserved communities lack access to adequate medical facilities and services. In Rawls' Veil of Ignorance, he exhorts decision-makers to create healthcare plans that put citizens' health and wellbeing first, ensuring fair access to healthcare across the country.
- iv. Fostering Economic Inclusion and Opportunities: According to Rawls' theory, all citizens, not just the wealthy few, should profit from the establishment of an economic

system. Nigeria may encourage economic inclusion and reduce poverty through fostering entrepreneurship in underserved groups and encouraging the establishment of microenterprises.

- v. Promoting Political Representation and Participation: In a multicultural country like Nigeria, political representation is essential to guaranteeing that all opinions are heard and taken into account. In order to promote a more inclusive and representative democracy, Rawls' theory advocates for policies that encourage all citizens, especially women, racial minorities, and marginalized groups, to participate in politics.

This component of the study investigates observable lessons from Rawls' theory of justice that can improve Nigeria's socioeconomic and political landscape. The foundation of this is the goals of this work, along with the notion that credible lessons would contribute to a body of veritable inputs for national reform and corpus knowledge at the same time. Elijah John claims:

Applying Rawls' thesis to modern Nigerian society has a better likelihood of success. There would be tremendous advantages from that. His idea, for example, can correctly eliminate the temptation to abuse political influence for financial gain, familial obligations, and racial or regional interests. A dismal judgment on Nigeria's political system is the twin yoke of inept management and corruption, which can be categorized as one enduring culture around the world. As a result, Rawls' theory has given the world, including Nigeria, the tools it needs to put an end to the issue of poor leadership and unchecked treasury looting by politicians and other public officials. The current state of the world economy has been significantly impacted by this unfavorable and frightening prospect for a long time, but Rawls' proposal has the power to save it (18).

First, accepting the idea of liberty is the first step in establishing an egalitarian society in Nigeria. Therefore, assuring the upholding of those that establish an even playing field for all citizens and in the conduct of the political and economical activities of the nation-state should go beyond mere rhetoric about enshrining equal rights in the constitution. A new firmament of shared sense of equality in every aspect of National life, and more importantly, before the eyes of the laws of the land, if even treatment is entrenched, would disorient the perception of the average Nigerian masses, which seems not to suggest an existence of 'we-feeling' mindset or consciousness. It has been noted that social prejudice based on economic or political class standing is more likely to undergo a decreasing trend and perhaps lose its psychological hold on the majority of Nigerians.

How to organize herself more democratically has always been the world's greatest socio-political dilemma. This is true since Nigerian politics have historically been in turmoil due to the obstinacy and dominance of its leaders. And one of the issues with democracy in Nigeria is not its establishment but rather its upkeep. Nigeria's post-independence political

history, for instance, has demonstrated that democracy cannot flourish there unless Nigerians are prepared and willing to adhere by certain recognized standards and values. Therefore, it is now more important than ever to use Rawls' political concept in a suitable way. The incumbency factor, which is nothing more than a cover for abuse of authority, is another crucial issue that has severely undermined Nigeria's attempts at governance. Through a good understanding of Rawls' social justice, this problem can be resolved. In this situation, a single-term plan for Nigerian leaders may be crafted, as well as a scenario in which a body rather than an individual would be granted executive powers and immunity (John 365).

As a result, the previously restricted political space would no longer be plagued by the phenomenon of money politics, in which wealthy politicians use their wealth to persuade voters to support them over their rivals. Additionally, party politics would no longer manifest an unequal chance of success and the majority of minority ethnic groups would no longer be marginalized from running for high-level political positions. Similar to this, ethnic discrimination in political and social circles is a trend noted by Non-Indigene Congress (NICO), a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Nigeria that also campaigned against the practice of discriminating against non-indigene of a state during recruitment exercises in some states of the federation. These disparate economic opportunities favour the nouveau riche but against the less fortunate citizens, as it appears, and engender further social inequality.

Along with racial and ethnic factors, political office holders (both elected and appointed) are heavily influenced by religious emotion and social institutions, which makes it harder to apply equal rights principles objectively. It is clear that religion has been significantly influencing how voters perceive the electioneering process and the acceptability of candidates based on religious sentiment. It also betrayed the spirit of secularity expressed in the country's constitution, portraying the political class as circumscribing the constitutional provisions aimed at ensuring an egalitarian society to fester ethnic, religious, and similar dividing elements to their advantage. This obscured the electorates' right senses of choosing political leaders at polls based on merit or competence. Therefore, equality status would remain almost inert, exist only in theory, turn into a mirage, and be elusive in practice unless the anti-equality tendencies are strategically and consciously removed from the spirit, letter, and operations of Nigeria's constitution, which set guidelines for the citizens' rights in both social and political platforms.

There is a higher demand for the political leadership class to pay close attention to issues of social and economic inequality, which are based on the need for equitable access to social institutions tasked with managing and allocating the nation's resources. If feasible, it is necessary to get rid of or at least downplay annihilating characteristics like the "sit-tight"

mentality, authoritarian governance, and all types of immoral leadership behaviors that undermine good governance in Nigeria. Additionally, in order to present a patriotic public figure image before the entire populace, the leadership of the political institutions must rise to the challenge of purging themselves of all racial, religious, party, sectional, or primitive emotion. It is possible to make policy decisions and executions that reflect public expectations, particularly those of the least fortunate, when one has this kind of a neutral mindset. Additionally, the idea of the 'veil of ignorance' qualities may be put into practice, at least to a decent level. Similar to this, the Nigerian people should use every platform at their disposal to express their concerns and inform the political leadership class of their demands, while civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) raise public awareness of the needs of the less advantaged groups. In this regard, it is necessary to investigate the print, electronic, and social media outlets to air grievances or concerns while the general public uses their voting power and right to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction at the polls and demands transparent and accountable leadership from the heads of political institutions.

To achieve distributive justice in Nigeria, it is crucial to protect the political and social institutions against abuse. Given the dire effects of bad leadership on the nation's political and socioeconomic development, strengthening institutional legal frameworks and simultaneously promoting social reformations to buck the bad trends seem non-negotiable. Negative stories about failures and vices in national management are sufficient justification for stepping up efforts to create strong sociopolitical institutions and install capable individuals in positions of authority. Citizens must take the initiative in this regard to reverse the aforementioned farce and carry out the mandate, as stated by Uwazurike in the following words: "The task of the present democratic dispensation must then not be lost sight of - the need to re-take the state in Nigeria, re-Africanise it, and make it the property of the people" (63). The wellbeing of the people must be the top priority. The Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO) and private companies should not only mobilize the citizens but also intensify and deepen advocacy for fair distribution of benefits to grow business and its sustainability with a view to engendering a conducive environment and enacting business-friendly policies as a complementary effort to the citizens' drive towards an activating a progressive institution. Erin criticized Rawls for leaving out non-governmental organizations and private businesses from his list of social institutions and stakeholders, even though these groups are crucial to the development of a peaceful and healthy coexistence political system in Nigeria.

It is possible to address the injustices committed by some leaders using Rawls' social justice because, "in a society where certain basic rights are granted to certain privileged people;

it is not expected that those social goods and rights be extended to everyone in the society" (John 364). But Rawls has amply demonstrated that it is morally acceptable for society to redistribute social assets for the benefit of everyone without necessarily abusing the process or without enabling the exercise to become a flagrant violation of any form of rights owed to specific privileged persons. Furthermore, Rawls has demonstrated the intrinsic importance of the re-distribution principle to society as a whole since it will be transformed into strong moral obligations like generosity and liberality. Overall, Rawls' social justice is an honest and admirable attempt to use a modified version of capitalism to better the condition of the less fortunate. Any competent individual would find Rawls' theory to be both just and commendable due to the objectivity of his principles. A significant contribution to the core issue of socio-political philosophy, namely the viability of justice in a political environment, is Rawls' stance on the marriage of morality and politics.

Conclusion

The Veil of Ignorance thesis by John Rawls has significant implications for social justice in Nigeria and offers a potential approach to resolving the nation's urgent problems with inequality, poverty, and marginalization. We have looked at how Rawls' conceptual framework might act as a moral compass to direct citizens, civil society organizations, and policymakers in the search of a more equitable and inclusive society for all Nigerians throughout this study. The Veil of Ignorance theory by Rawls places a strong focus on fairness and impartiality. The theory promotes empathy and consideration for the predicament of the most vulnerable members of society by encouraging people to make judgments about societal structures and policies without taking into account their own social position, money, or privilege. Adopting such a strategy in Nigeria, a country with a variety of cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, can significantly improve social cohesion and lessen the entrenched divisions that impede progress.

It may result in more equal outcomes to apply Rawls' theory to specific social justice problems in Nigeria, like healthcare, economic opportunity, and political representation. The nation may take steps toward tearing down institutional barriers and building a more inclusive and participative society by prioritizing the needs of marginalized communities and making sure their voices are heard. However, there are difficulties to take into account when using Rawls' Veil of Ignorance in Nigeria, just as with any philosophical theory. Political realities, historical legacies, and cultural norms may have an impact on whether or not a fully abstract view of justice may be adopted. To ensure the theory's applicability and efficacy in the Nigerian

setting, careful and context-sensitive adaptation is necessary. However, examining Rawls' Veil of Ignorance theory provides insightful information and provokes important discussions regarding social justice in Nigeria. It challenges participants to consider current practices and structures that support inequality and to picture a world where everyone's well-being is valued above all else. This conceptual framework can be used by policymakers to create more inclusive and equitable policies that strengthen the weaker segments of society and reduce gaps between them.

In conclusion, the Veil of Ignorance thesis by Rawls has illuminating and exciting implications for social justice in Nigeria. Embracing the values of justice, impartiality, and empathy can help create a more harmonious and equitable society. Nigeria can use the power of Rawls' philosophy to build a more just and compassionate society where everyone has the chance to prosper and contribute to the advancement of the country as a whole by acknowledging the diversity of Nigeria and carefully examining the particular challenges it faces. Nigeria may get closer to achieving its goal of a peaceful, inclusive society that lifts all citizens by working together and adhering to the ideals of social justice.

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JOHN LOCKE'S CONCEPT OF THE STATE AND THE FUTURE OF NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

This paper examines the application of John Locke's political philosophy to the context of Nigerian democracy, analyzing the implications of Locke's concept of the state for the future trajectory of democratic governance in Nigeria. Nigerian democracy grapples with numerous challenges, including electoral irregularities, political instability, ethnic and religious tensions, corruption, governance failures and chief amongst them; weak institutions. These issues undermine the legitimacy of the government, erode public trust in democratic institutions, and hinder the realization of democratic ideals such as freedom, equality, and justice. Addressing these problems is essential for the sustainability and progress of Nigerian democracy. This work holds significant importance for academics, policymakers, civil society organizations, and citizens interested in understanding and improving Nigerian democracy. Using the philosophical methods of analysis, it examines John Locke's political philosophy in the context of Nigerian democracy. It contributes to knowledge by offering valuable insights into how foundational principles of democracy according to John Locke can inform reforms, policies, and actions aimed at strengthening democratic institutions in Nigeria. Despite the challenges, the paper expresses optimism for the future of Nigerian democracy, emphasizing the potential for reform and inclusivity to advance democratic governance and uphold the principles of freedom, equality, and justice. Ultimately, it underscores the significance of applying Locke's principles to Nigerian democracy as a means to achieve a more prosperous, stable, and inclusive society for all Nigerians.

Keywords: John Locke, The State, Democracy, Nigerian Democracy.

Introduction

John Locke, a big figure in the history of political philosophy, laid the groundwork for modern democratic governance with his seminal work on the concept of the state. His ideas, articulated in works such as *Two Treatises of Government*, continue to reverberate across political areas, offering profound insights into the nature of political authority, the rights of individuals, and the principles of just governance. In the context of Nigeria, a nation grappling with the complexities of democracy amidst diverse social, economic, and political challenges, Locke's theories hold particular relevance. By examining Locke's concept of the state and its implications for the future of Nigerian democracy, we can discern valuable lessons and guiding principles to navigate the country's democratic trajectory.

Locke's political philosophy is rooted in fundamental principles that resonate with the aspirations of democratic societies worldwide. His conception of the state of nature, social contract, natural rights, and limited government offers a framework for understanding the origins of political authority and the rights and responsibilities of both rulers and citizens. In Nigeria, where the transition to democratic governance has been marked by periods of instability, authoritarianism, and struggles for power, Locke's ideas provide a theoretical anchor for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the existing democratic framework and charting a course towards a more inclusive, responsive, and accountable system of governance.

The future of Nigerian democracy hinges on the extent to which it upholds the principles espoused by Locke – principles such as the protection of individual rights, the consent of the governed, the rule of law, and the accountability of those in power. As Nigeria grapples with challenges such as political corruption, ethnic and religious tensions, socioeconomic inequality, and security threats, the application of Locke's concepts can offer a roadmap for addressing these issues and building a more resilient and prosperous democratic society.

This work explores John Locke's concept of the state in depth, examining its key tenets and implications for Nigerian democracy. It delves into how Locke's ideas align with the principles and practices of democratic governance in Nigeria, analyzing areas of convergence and divergence. Furthermore, it assesses the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for Nigerian democracy and consider how a deeper understanding of Locke's political philosophy can inform efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, promote civic participation, protect human rights, and foster inclusive development. It is imperative to note that the success or failure of democracy in countries is tied to the ability of the state to deliver on the expectations of the citizens. These expectations which Locke rightly pointed out in his social contract theory include enforceable rule of law, security of property and inviolable contracts, an impartial judicial system and a set of values that legitimize and validate fair play in governance and creating an enabling environment for citizen participation in politics. The propensity of government to provide these expectations of the citizens is a function of strong institutions. Therefore, the prevalence of weak institutions will lead to democratic deficits as witnessed in our country Nigeria.

Ultimately, by critically engaging with Locke's theories and their application to the Nigerian context, this work aims to contribute to ongoing debates about the future of

democracy in Nigeria and the broader quest for political legitimacy, social justice, and democratic renewal in the 21st century.

The State

The concept of a "state" is fundamental to understanding modern political organization and governance. A state typically refers to a sovereign political entity with defined geographical boundaries, a permanent population, a government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states (Joseph, 2013). However, the definition and characteristics of a state have evolved over time, shaped by historical, cultural, and philosophical factors.

The idea of a state has its roots in ancient civilizations, where organized political structures emerged to manage collective affairs and resources. Early states, such as those in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and the Indus Valley, were characterized by centralized authority, hierarchical social structures, and complex bureaucracies. These states exercised control over territory, administered justice, and provided for the defense and welfare of their subjects.

The concept of the state underwent significant transformations throughout history, particularly during the medieval and early modern periods in Europe. Feudalism, characterized by decentralized political authority and allegiance to local lords, gave way to the rise of nation-states, which consolidated power under a centralized monarch or government. The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 is often cited as a crucial milestone in the development of the modern state system, as it established the principle of state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs (Osaghae, 1998).

A state has defined geographical boundaries over which it exercises control and sovereignty. These boundaries may be established through historical agreements, conquests, or treaties. One of the primary functions of the state is to ensure internal security and maintain law and order within its territory. This includes the provision of a legal framework, law enforcement agencies, and defense forces to protect against internal and external threats. The state is responsible for safeguarding the rights and liberties of its citizens, including freedom of speech, assembly, and religion. This may involve the establishment of constitutional protections, independent judiciary systems, and mechanisms for redressal of grievances (Obi-Ani, 2014).

States are often tasked with providing essential public goods and services, such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and social welfare programs. This involves resource

allocation, policy formulation, and service delivery to meet the needs of the population. States play a crucial role in regulating economic activity through policies, laws, and institutions aimed at promoting growth, ensuring fair competition, and addressing market failures. This includes measures such as taxation, trade regulations, and consumer protection laws.

Despite its importance, the concept of the state is not without controversy and challenges. The rise of globalization has challenged the traditional notion of state sovereignty, as transnational actors and supranational institutions exert influence beyond national borders. Issues such as economic interdependence, migration, and environmental degradation require collective action that transcends national boundaries (Nwolise, 2016). Many states grapple with internal divisions based on ethnicity, religion, language, or culture, which can undermine national unity and stability. Managing diversity and promoting inclusive governance are ongoing challenges for multi-ethnic states.

Some states prioritize state security over individual rights and liberties, leading to authoritarianism, censorship, and human rights abuses. Balancing the need for security with respect for human rights remains a contentious issue in many parts of the world. The inability of some states to effectively govern their territories and provide for their populations has led to the emergence of failed states or fragile states. These states often experience political instability, conflict, and humanitarian crises, posing challenges for regional and international security.

2.2 Democracy

Democracy as a word has no generally accepted definition; this is because it is being used in different ways that provoke either good or bad feelings. Democracy is a form of government that empowers the people to participate in decision-making processes, either directly or through elected representatives. It is often described as a system of governance in which political power is vested in the hands of the people, who exercise it either directly or through elected representatives. John Dewey (2001:p91) says, "Democracy is more than a form of government, it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience". The concept of democracy has deep historical roots and has undergone various interpretations and implementations throughout history. In this extensive exploration, we'll delve into the principles, types, historical evolution, challenges, and significance of democracy.

Democracy is founded on the principle of popular sovereignty, meaning that ultimate authority resides with the people. In a democratic system, political leaders derive their

legitimacy from the consent of the governed. Democracy promotes political equality by ensuring that all citizens have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, gender, or other characteristics. While democracy operates on the principle of majority rule, it also recognizes the importance of protecting the rights and interests of minority groups. This balance is essential for safeguarding individual liberties and preventing the tyranny of the majority.

Njoku (2002:p161) says, “Democracy' can be used in various ways; hence the ambiguity of the word 'democracy' is reflected in its, use to describe very different political systems. One hears of the 'people's democracies of the communist world', 'Democracies of the free world'; it was said that Hitler described Nazism as 'true democracy’” .

Democracy is based on the rule of law, which means that government actions are constrained by legal principles, constitutional provisions, and institutional checks and balances. No individual or institution is above the law in a democratic system. Democracies prioritize the protection of civil liberties and human rights, including freedom of speech, assembly, religion, and the right to a fair trial. These rights are essential for fostering a vibrant public sphere and ensuring the dignity and autonomy of individuals.

The concept of democracy originated in ancient Greece, particularly in Athens, where citizens participated directly in decision-making through assemblies and councils. However, this form of democracy was limited to a small portion of the population, excluding women, slaves, and non-citizens. The idea of democracy experienced a revival during the Enlightenment period in Europe, with philosophers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Montesquieu advocating for popular sovereignty, individual rights, and constitutional government (Njoku, 2002).

The modern democratic movements emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries, fueled by social, economic, and political upheavals such as the American and French Revolutions. These movements led to the establishment of democratic republics and constitutional monarchies in Europe and the Americas. The 20th century witnessed the spread of democracy across the globe, albeit with varying degrees of success and consolidation. The end of colonialism, the collapse of totalitarian regimes, and the spread of liberal ideals contributed to the expansion of democratic governance in many regions.

Despite its widespread acceptance and appeal, democracy faces various challenges and criticisms: Some democracies experience the erosion of democratic norms and institutions,

characterized by political polarization, attacks on press freedom, manipulation of electoral processes, and concentration of power. In many democracies, there is a perceived gap between formal democratic institutions and the actual exercise of political power. Issues such as voter apathy, political elitism, and inequalities in political participation contribute to a sense of democratic deficit.

Democracies face the risk of majority tyranny, where the interests and rights of minority groups are disregarded in favor of the preferences of the majority. Safeguarding minority rights and promoting inclusive decision-making processes are ongoing challenges. Despite its imperfections and challenges, democracy remains one of the most widely embraced forms of government for several reasons. But then, in a rough sense, Richard (1951: p303) defines democracy "as a government by persons who are freely chosen by and responsible to be governed"

Democracy provides a mechanism for the peaceful transfer of power, political accountability, and responsiveness to the needs and preferences of the people. Elected leaders are accountable to citizens through regular elections and institutional checks and balances. Democracies prioritize the protection of individual rights and freedoms, providing legal and institutional safeguards against arbitrary rule and oppression. Civil liberties, rule of law, and independent judiciary systems are essential features of democratic governance.

A Brief Biography of John Locke.

John Locke, an eminent figure of the Enlightenment era, lived a remarkable life that profoundly influenced political philosophy, epistemology, and the development of modern liberal thought. Born on August 29, 1632, in Wrington, Somerset, England, Locke's life spanned a period of significant historical events, intellectual ferment, and political upheavals. In this extensive exploration, we'll delve into the key moments, ideas, and legacy of John Locke's lifetime.

John Locke was born into a Puritan family, which played a significant role in shaping his upbringing and values. His father, also named John Locke, was a country lawyer and small landowner. Locke received his early education at the Westminster School and later attended Christ Church, Oxford, where he studied philosophy, natural sciences, and medicine. At Oxford, he was exposed to the works of prominent thinkers such as Francis Bacon and René Descartes, whose ideas would influence his own philosophical development (Goldstein, 2006: p.260).

Locke is best known for his empiricist philosophy, which asserts that knowledge is derived from sensory experience and observation of the external world. His seminal work, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1689), laid the groundwork for modern empiricism and epistemology. Locke's political philosophy, articulated in works such as "Two Treatises of Government" (1689), is based on the concept of the social contract, wherein individuals voluntarily enter into a political society and consent to be governed by a legitimate authority. He argued for the natural rights of life, liberty, and property, which form the basis of legitimate government.

Locke was a staunch advocate of religious toleration and freedom of conscience, as evidenced in his "Letter Concerning Toleration" (1689). He argued against religious coercion and persecution, advocating for a separation of church and state and the right of individuals to practice their faith without interference. After completing his studies at Oxford, Locke pursued a career in medicine and briefly served as a personal physician to Anthony Ashley Cooper, later the Earl of Shaftesbury. This association shaped Locke's political views and influence his involvement in English politics (Becker, 1922, p.27).

Locke's involvement in political affairs during the tumultuous years of the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution led to his exile to the Netherlands in 1683. He returned to England following the ascension of William III to the throne in 1688, where he continued to engage in political and philosophical discourse. Throughout his lifetime, Locke produced a vast body of work encompassing philosophy, politics, economics, education, and religion. In addition to his major works, he wrote numerous essays, letters, and treatises on a wide range of topics.

Locke's ideas exerted a profound influence on the Enlightenment thinkers and the intellectual currents of his time. His emphasis on reason, individual rights, and limited government laid the groundwork for liberal democracy and the principles of modern constitutionalism. John Locke's legacy extends far beyond his lifetime, shaping the course of Western thought and influencing the development of democratic governance, human rights, and liberal values. His ideas continue to resonate in contemporary debates on issues such as freedom, equality, and the role of government in society.

Locke's Concept of the State

John Locke, one of the most prominent figures in the history of political philosophy, articulated his concept of the state in his seminal works, particularly "Two Treatises of Government" and

"The Second Treatise of Civil Government." Locke's ideas profoundly influenced the development of modern political thought, including the foundations of democratic governance. His concept of the state encompasses various key elements, including the state of nature, natural rights, the social contract, and the role of government.

Locke's concept of the state of nature posits a hypothetical condition in which individuals exist before the establishment of civil society and government. Unlike Thomas Hobbes, who characterized the state of nature as a state of war and perpetual conflict, Locke envisioned it as a state of equality, freedom, and mutual respect. In the state of nature, individuals possess natural rights, including the rights to life, liberty, and property. However, this state lacks a central authority to enforce these rights and resolve disputes, leading to potential conflicts (Locke, 1995: p.5).

Central to Locke's political philosophy is the concept of natural rights, which are inherent and inalienable rights that individuals possess by virtue of their humanity. These rights include the right to life, liberty, and property. According to Locke, individuals enter into civil society and form a government to better secure and protect these natural rights. The government's primary purpose is to safeguard the fundamental liberties of its citizens and ensure justice and order within society.

Locke proposed the idea of the social contract as the foundation of legitimate political authority. According to Locke, individuals voluntarily enter into a social contract with one another to establish civil society and create a government. This social contract is based on mutual consent and agreement among free and equal individuals (Locke, 1995: p.8). In entering into the social contract, individuals relinquish some of their natural rights to the government in exchange for the protection of their remaining rights and the establishment of a system of laws and justice.

Locke's conception of government is based on the principle of limited government and popular sovereignty. He argued that the government's authority is derived from the consent of the governed, and its legitimacy depends on its ability to protect the natural rights of its citizens. Locke advocated for a government with specific functions, including the protection of property rights, the maintenance of law and order, the provision of public goods, and the defense of the common good (Nwabueze, 1993, p.206). However, Locke also emphasized the importance of checks and balances and the separation of powers to prevent the abuse of governmental authority.

Additionally, Locke asserted that individuals retain the right to revolt against a government that violates its obligations and infringes upon their natural rights. This right to revolution serves as a crucial safeguard against tyranny and oppression, empowering citizens to resist unjust rule and establish a new government that upholds the principles of the social contract.

Locke on Liberal Democracy

Locke's conception of liberal democracy is made manifest in the following assertion: For if anyone shall claim a power to lay and levy taxes on the people by his own authority, and without such consent of the people, he thereby invades the fundamental law of property and subvert the end of government (99) The import of the above statement is that Locke was a liberal; in fact he is acclaimed to be the founder of philosophical liberalism.

Central to Locke's analysis and understanding of democracy is the question of people right and people power. Both appear to have been most deeply conceived in Locke. Modern democratic culture places emphasis on civil and political rights of the citizenry. The highest embodiment of such right is the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights which have now become the basis of the constitution of modern democracies.

Modern democracy in Locke's view in many cases assumes in principle, if not in practice, that representatives must be answerable to their constituents. There is no doubt that the principle of popular sovereignty has its highest conception in Locke. To him, political responsibility goes far beyond mere reporting to including the actual interest that is served. In Locke's estimation, the recognition of the basic rights of the citizenry is one of the hallmarks of democracy. It can be stated that popular sovereignty or popular participation is meaningful only to the extent that the people actually enjoy these fundamental rights (Grant, 1987).

In the Lockean perspective, democratic equality implies "one man one vote," irrespective of differences in wealth, religion, intelligence, etc. It also connotes the equal right and opportunity of all citizens to hold political office. Based on the element of political equality of all is the principle of popular sovereignty, the notion that ultimate political power or sovereignty rests with the mass of the people. democratic regime should also respect certain basic freedoms for its citizens. Among these are: freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of conscience, freedom of assembly and freedom from arbitrary arrest (144).

Locke's definition underlines the cardinal contents of liberal democracy. It may however be noted that he has provided what may be regarded as a summation of the varied conceptions of liberal democracy and an outline of its major elements. In Locke's observation, it has been noted that democracy is a remarkably difficult form of government to create and sustain, that it is not only a form of government but also a way of life, and that the ideals of democracy are yet to be fully realized in any real state (146). Consequently, the work of democratization must be viewed as an ongoing process and democrats everywhere are to be involved in struggles to consolidate and extend the realization of democratic principles.

The Challenges of Nigerian Democracy

Nigeria, located in West Africa, is the most populous country on the continent and has a diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious landscape. Since gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1960, Nigeria has experienced a tumultuous political history characterized by military coups, authoritarian rule, and periods of democratic governance (Toyin, and Heaton, 2008).

Nigeria's transition to democracy began in 1999 following years of military dictatorship. The Fourth Republic, established with the adoption of a new constitution, marked a return to civilian rule and multi-party democracy. Since then, Nigeria has held several presidential and parliamentary elections, albeit with some irregularities and challenges.

Despite progress towards democratic governance, Nigeria faces numerous challenges to democratic consolidation. These include weak institutions, electoral malpractice, political violence, socio-economic inequalities, ethno-religious tensions, and widespread corruption. These challenges pose significant obstacles to the realization of democratic principles and the protection of citizens' rights.

Perhaps one of the most pervasive and damaging challenges to Nigerian democracy is weak and ineffective institutions. A weak institution depicts a state of decline or powerlessness of government agencies to effectively discharge some of the fundamental responsibilities of state such as the maintenance of law and order and the protection of its territorial integrity. (Usman, 2015: p11). Some of the manifestations of institutional weakness are losing control of territory or the sole power of using physical force therein, the crisis of legitimacy in which some part of the state seeks disintegration, inability to provide basic services to the citizens etc.

In a multicultural and religiously balkanized society like Nigeria, the basic yardstick for measuring the effectiveness of the government lies in its capability to develop an institutional framework that can facilitate the harmonious existence of the citizens through the integrative process of representative governance, sound judicial system and effective law enforcement agency. However, the Nigerian government was established on a fragile legitimacy by the diarchic British colonial administrative system under which existed a relatively weak central authority with more autonomous regions in terms of administration which invariably confer on the independent Nigerian state. The colonial legacy of relatively strong regional and local ethnic authorities and weak central institutions in which the institutional mechanism for central coordination are either not fully internalized or weakly internalized, hence the Nigerian central authority appear grossly ineffective to exercise substantial control over the entire geographical enclaves which, therefore paved the way for the perpetuation of violence and conflicts (Usman, 2015: p11). Put differently, the contemporary Nigerian state has some of the regular attributes of institutional weakness such as central government incapacitation that it has minimal practical control over a lot of its territory; non-procurement of basic services; pervasive incidence of corruption and criminality; displacement of citizens due to crisis and threat of secession, prostitution and sharp economic decline.

Thus, the Nigerian state as it is constituted today depicts a picture typical of a failed state in terms of institutional framework and central regulative capacity (Onuoha, 2011:p89). For instance, despite over five decades of political independence, the country is still tinkering here and there in search of legitimacy and loyalty from its citizens amidst serious threats of secessionism and separatism and insurgency. (Falola, 2009:p1). Political conflicts has become rampant in the Nigerian system which in many cases transform into violent confrontation among citizens or between the citizens and the government. Although politics as conceptualized by scholars is a process that generates conflict due to the fact that it involves how values are authoritatively dispensed among competing groups in the society, thus political conflicts are inevitable in human society, especially in a multi-cultural state like Nigeria. Conflicts escalate when institutional mechanisms established by the state fail in their responsibility to prevent a simple conflict from leading to violence as in the Nigerian situation. For instance, several cases of inter-ethnic and religious clashes as well as the increase of ethnic militias and terrorist organizations such as MASSOB, IPOB, Boko Haram, were all anchored on the lackadaisical attitude of Nigerian central government to respond adequately to issues that serve as the cause of grievances which led to the eruption of violence or the emergency of

militants. The prevalence of structurally weak institutions of governance in Nigeria has made it very difficult to translate the national economic potentials to realistic sustainable development. Corruption has infiltrated virtually every aspect of Nigerian society, from politics and government to business and law enforcement. This widespread corruption undermines the rule of law, erodes public trust in institutions, and distorts the allocation of resources (Egwu, 2001). Efforts to combat corruption have been hampered by weak enforcement mechanisms, lack of political will, and entrenched vested interests.

Nigeria is a diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups and a roughly equal split between Muslims and Christians. Ethnic and religious tensions have often been exploited for political gain, leading to conflicts, violence, and divisions within society. The competition for political power along ethnic and religious lines has fueled mistrust and hindered national cohesion. Bridging these divisions and fostering a sense of common identity remains a significant challenge for Nigerian democracy.

Electoral malpractice, including voter intimidation, ballot rigging, and vote-buying, has been a recurring challenge in Nigerian elections. Despite reforms aimed at improving the electoral process, elections continue to be marred by irregularities and fraud, undermining the credibility and legitimacy of democratic outcomes. Ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections remains a critical challenge for Nigerian democracy.

Nigeria faces significant security challenges, including insurgency, terrorism, banditry, and communal violence. Boko Haram in the northeast, militancy in the Niger Delta, and clashes between herders and farmers in the Middle Belt have claimed thousands of lives and displaced millions of people (Fagbadebo, 2010). Insecurity not only undermines the safety and well-being of citizens but also disrupts economic activities and exacerbates social tensions, posing a threat to democratic governance.

Despite being Africa's largest economy, Nigeria grapples with high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Economic mismanagement, dependence on oil revenues, and inadequate social welfare programs have perpetuated poverty and marginalization, particularly in rural areas and among vulnerable populations. Economic inequality undermines social cohesion, fuels resentment, and breeds instability, posing a challenge to democratic governance.

Nigeria has a large youth population, with young people constituting a significant portion of the electorate. However, youth unemployment and underemployment remain

widespread, leading to disenchantment, frustration, and alienation from the political process. The marginalization of youth voices undermines democratic legitimacy and stability, as young people seek alternative avenues to express their grievances and aspirations.

Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from government, civil society, and the international community. It entails strengthening democratic institutions, promoting transparency and accountability, fostering inclusive governance, addressing socio-economic inequalities, and building trust among diverse ethnic and religious groups. While the road ahead may be challenging, overcoming these obstacles is essential for the consolidation and advancement of Nigerian democracy.

Duties of Government and Citizens in a Democratic State

In Locke's understanding, a liberal democratic government has some well defined rights as well as duties which it owes its citizenry in the civil order. In one part of the Locke's theory, the individual and his rights figure as ultimate principles; in another society itself plays this part. In Locke's estimation, there is nothing which adequately explains how both can be absolute. Sabine and Thorson confirmed that the expression which Locke most commonly used to emphasize the rights and duties of a liberal democratic governance is the preservation of the "life, liberty, and estate (of citizens)" (487).

To Locke, social contract entails a surrender of only the right to self defense and the right to adjudicate and punish. All other rights are the preserve of the citizen. They are inalienable and we may list as many as we care and lay claim to them. Such would cover all the social and political rights, as well as the fundamental rights of property and security of the life and person of the citizen. These are sacrosanct; and non of his contemporaries, except Rousseau, can lay claim to have gone further than Locke.

According to Locke, if a government is not for the people's good, or it does not depend on their consent or if it exceeds its authority, such a government can legitimately be overthrown. Locke was not an anarchist, distrusting political authority but he was conscious of the dangers that it posed. Thus, political authority was a trust, and if the terms of the trust were violated, the community has the right to take remedial measures in order to preserve itself. Little wonder that "The compulsion to constitute a civil society was to protect and preserve freedom and to enlarge it" (200).

Locke defended personal independence and freedom as fundamental human rights. Everyone has an equal right to one's natural freedom, without being subjected to the will or

authority of any other man. Locke clarified that the laws of nature were those that reason dictated. In Locke's understanding, "absolute political power (is) illegitimate" (199).

8.0 Application of Locke's Idea to Nigerian Democracy

Nigeria, as a country with a diverse population and a complex political system, can benefit significantly from applying John Locke's concept of the state to its democratic governance framework. By examining how Locke's principles align with the realities of Nigerian democracy, we can gain insights into how the country can address challenges and strengthen its democratic institutions.

Locke's emphasis on the protection of natural rights, including life, liberty, and property, resonates deeply with the principles of Nigerian democracy. In Nigeria, ensuring the protection of citizens' rights is essential for fostering a society based on justice, equality, and respect for human dignity (Ojo, 2013). This involves upholding the rule of law, safeguarding individual freedoms, and combating human rights abuses, such as extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and infringements on freedom of expression.

Locke advocated for a limited government with specific functions aimed at protecting citizens' rights and promoting the common good. In the Nigerian context, limiting government powers is crucial for preventing abuses of authority, corruption, and impunity. This necessitates robust checks and balances, separation of powers, and effective oversight mechanisms to hold public officials accountable and ensure transparency, integrity, and efficiency in governance.

Central to Locke's theory of the social contract is the idea that government derives its legitimacy from the consent of the governed. In Nigeria, ensuring the consent of the governed involves promoting free and fair elections, fostering civic participation, and respecting the will of the people (Ikelegbe, 2001). Strengthening democratic institutions, electoral processes, and political accountability mechanisms is essential for building trust and legitimacy in Nigeria's democracy.

While the idea of the right to revolution is contentious, Locke's theory underscores the importance of peaceful mechanisms for addressing grievances and effecting change in democratic societies. In Nigeria, citizens' right to dissent, protest, and advocate for political reform is essential for promoting accountability, transparency, and responsiveness in governance. Upholding freedom of assembly, association, and expression is crucial for safeguarding democratic principles and ensuring citizens' voices are heard (Onuoha, 2010).

However, applying John Locke's concept of the state to Nigerian democracy offers valuable insights into how the country can strengthen its democratic governance framework. By prioritizing the protection of rights, limiting government powers, ensuring the consent of the governed, and respecting citizens' right to dissent, Nigeria can advance its democratic aspirations and build a more inclusive, accountable, and prosperous society.

Evaluation

The examination of John Locke's concept of the state in the context of Nigerian democracy reveals both challenges and opportunities for the country's democratic future. Abraham Lincoln a onetime president of the United States of America did define democracy as "the government of the people by the people for the people." Raphael (1976:p87) commenting on this says; "The essential idea of a democratic government is government by the people. Strictly speaking, government by all the people should mean unanimous decisions. But this, of course, is impossible in political matters. Democracy in practice has to mean 'following the view of the majority perhaps Lincoln's addition of 'for the people' means, that the decisive view, which for practical purposes must be that of the majority, should seek to serve the interests of all even though it does not have the agreement of all; otherwise there is the danger, that majority rule may become tyranny"

Locke's political philosophy, rooted in principles of natural rights, limited government, consent of the governed, and the right to revolution, provides a theoretical framework for assessing democratic governance and guiding efforts towards reform and progress.

Improving Nigerian democracy requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses its numerous challenges while capitalizing on its strengths. Building strong and independent institutions is crucial for the functioning of democracy. This includes the judiciary, legislature, electoral commission, and law enforcement agencies. Efforts should focus on enhancing their capacity, professionalism, and autonomy to ensure they can effectively perform their roles as checks and balances on executive power.

Tackling corruption is essential for restoring trust in government institutions and promoting accountability. This requires implementing anti-corruption measures such as enforcing existing laws, prosecuting corrupt officials, enhancing transparency in public procurement processes, and promoting a culture of integrity in both the public and private sectors (Suberu, 2001).

Upholding the rule of law is fundamental for safeguarding citizens' rights and ensuring equal treatment under the law. This involves strengthening legal frameworks, protecting judicial independence, and ensuring timely and impartial access to justice for all citizens, regardless of their status or background.

Electoral integrity is vital for the legitimacy of democratic governance. To achieve this, electoral reforms should be implemented to enhance transparency, prevent voter fraud, and ensure equal participation of all political parties and candidates. Independent election monitoring and robust enforcement of electoral laws are essential to building trust in the electoral process.

Fostering national unity and social cohesion requires proactive measures to bridge ethnic and religious divides. Alexander (2012:p205) sees "National consciousness as a strong patriotic feeling to one's own country. It is the feeling of self-sacrificing love for and pride in one's country". This includes promoting inter-ethnic and interreligious dialogue, implementing policies that promote inclusivity and equal opportunities for all groups, and addressing grievances through peaceful and democratic means.

Empowering the youth through education, skills training, and economic opportunities is essential for the future of Nigerian democracy. Education, as we know, has a social function in the life of every mind that opens to embrace it. It gives the sense of direction and development to young minds who take part in the social life of any group they belong in the society beginning from the family.

Investing in quality education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship programs can equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to participate meaningfully in civic life and contribute to the country's development. John Dewey (2001) says, "Any education given by a group tends to socialize its members, but the quality and value of socialization depends upon the habit and aims of the group." (87) This explanation from Dewey is true because the way many Nigerians behave even after receiving such civic education differs from one who receives such from a developed nation like the United States of America.

Economic prosperity and social welfare are integral to democratic stability. Policies aimed at promoting inclusive economic growth, reducing poverty and inequality, and expanding access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure can help address socio-economic disparities and improve the well-being of all citizens.

Active citizen participation is essential for holding government officials accountable and shaping public policies that reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. According to Catherine Broom (2017:p3)," Active citizenship refers to youth's social, political, or civic actions in their societies or nations, and civic engagement refers to interest and participation in civic, political, or social activities, such as voting, volunteering, or joining a civic group. When youth engage in civic, political, and social processes through multiple means, they are empowered"

Encouraging civic engagement through advocacy, community organizing, and grassroots initiatives can help strengthen democratic governance and promote citizen empowerment. The government should make sure that citizens enjoy the benefits of a democratic society. Nigerian is known as a democratic society, yet we are not practicing democracy. Bernard Crick (2002:p92), reminds us that "good governance should be democratic, in both an institutional and a social sense, but also include individual liberties, human rights, economic progress and social injustice - which is something more than equality of political rights"

Civil society organizations and a free and independent media play a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance. Supporting the work of civil society groups, protecting press freedom, and ensuring access to unbiased and accurate information are essential for promoting an informed and engaged citizenry.

Leadership accountability is crucial for the success of democracy. Elected officials must be held accountable for their actions through mechanisms such as regular elections, transparency in government decision-making, and public scrutiny of their performance (Ojo, 2013). Political parties should also prioritize meritocracy and integrity in candidate selection processes.

In summary, the way forward for a better Nigerian democracy requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders – government, civil society, the private sector, and citizens themselves. By addressing the root causes of its challenges and implementing comprehensive reforms, Nigeria can realize its democratic potential and build a more inclusive, prosperous, and resilient society for future generations.

10.0 Conclusion

Nigeria's democratic journey has been marked by a complex combination of successes and setbacks. While significant strides have been made in transitioning from military rule to democratic governance, persistent challenges such as weak institutions which has given birth to corruption, human rights abuses, electoral irregularities, and social inequality continue to undermine the country's democratic institutions and processes. Against this backdrop, Locke's concepts offer valuable insights into areas where reforms are needed to strengthen the foundations of Nigerian democracy and ensure its sustainability in the long run.

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AN EXAMINATION OF JOHN LOCKE'S NOTION OF REPRESENTATIVE REALISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

This work seeks to examine Locke's notion of representative realism and what implication it can have for the development of artificial intelligence. Locke argues that our knowledge come from one source; experience, and that we have no knowledge of the nature of things themselves but we are acquainted with the ideas they produce in us. This theory is known as representative realism. This work seeks to know the implications such ideas can have for artificial intelligence. Using the analytic and critical methods to examine this problem, this work concludes that there are many implications of Locke's idea for artificial intelligence: AI cannot know things in themselves but through the data that is feed by humans. What representation realism is to Locke is what knowledge representation is to artificial intelligence.

Keywords: John Locke, Representative realism, Artificial Intelligence

Introduction

John Locke was born in 1632. Locke's father was an attorney who served as clerk to the Justices of the Peace in Chew Magna. In 1647, Locke attended Westminster School in London, and after graduation he was admitted to Christ church Oxford. A contemporary of his said that Locke was "a man of turbulent spirit, clamorous and never contented" part of the problem was that Locke found stodgy scholasticism that still pervaded the Oxford of his day to be "perplexed with obscure terms and useless questions." While the lectures of his teachers perplexed him, his private reading of Descartes attracted him to philosophy. Locke no doubt found kindred spirit in Descartes, for they were both disillusioned with their education. (Lawhead, 279). Locke was awarded a bachelor's degree in February 1656 and a master's degree in June 1658. He obtained a bachelor of medicine in February 1675, having studied the subject extensively during his time at Oxford and, in addition to Lower, worked with such noted scientists and thinkers as Robert Boyle, Thomas Willis and Robert Hooke. In 1666, he met Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Ashley, who had come to Oxford seeking treatment for a liver infection. Ashley was impressed with Locke and persuaded him to become part of his retinue. John locked in died in 1708. Locke was part of the Royal Society in England, which formed during his lifetime around the years 1660 until his death in 1704. The stated purpose of the society was to collect all the information about the natural world through observation and experimentation. This method of doing science of the Royal Society influenced Locke's account of the mind being a blank slate, and knowledge being based on empirical experience. Locke was a close friend of

Robert Boyle, who was a founding member of the society, and he would have been very much influenced by the activities of the society during his lifetime. Locke's association with educated and influential scientists also helped to form his goals, writing on the theory of knowledge, probability, etc. John Locke's epistemological views are based on several key themes in his theory of knowledge. These include the origins of human knowledge, the scope of knowledge, certainty, and the limits of knowledge. Locke views knowledge as based upon experience, rather than intuition or forms of innate knowledge. He proposed that all knowledge, including mathematics and geometry, is based on empirical grounds. Locke's *Essay* is an inquiry into the understanding, knowledge and the nature of reality. Locke's concern in epistemology include what knowledge is, the nature of the human mind, what sorts of things there are in the world and how we can come to have accurate knowledge of them. Locke's specific interest is to determine the origin, extent and certainty of human knowledge, that is, he is seeking to establish the limits of human understanding. Locke's work was influenced by the new philosophy of the scientific revolution and the development of the mechanical model of science, as well as by the writings of Descartes and Bacon. Locke positions himself then as both an heir to the Cartesian intellectual tradition and advocate of the new experimental and scientific approach to natural philosophy. Locke's great epistemological contribution to philosophy is a conception of human knowledge suitable for the experimental science of his day, one that in natural philosophy will replace the old, Aristotelian conception (Kochiras).

Locke's empiricism can be seen as a step forward in the development of the modern scientific world view. Modern science bases its conclusions on empirical observation and always remains open to rejecting or revising a scientific theory based on further observations. Locke would have us do the same. He argues that the only way of learning about the natural world is to rely on experience and, further, that any general conclusions we draw from our limited observations will be uncertain (Priselac). Locke in his medical studies was to come into contact with the emerging sciences and particularly the work of Robert Boyle. A contemporary of Newton, Boyle had not only become the founder of modern chemistry but had stumbled upon what was to become the corpuscularian hypothesis, which was to hold a strong place in the scientific theories of the time and subsequently affect many philosophers including Locke himself. The corpuscularian hypothesis was essentially a theory concerning matter and stated that a piece of matter was not infinitely divisible but was instead made up of smaller and smaller particles until it could not be divided any further, this was the corpuscle. The pure corpuscularian theory stated that there was no such thing as empty space and all movement of

bodies was a result of the material particles impacting upon one another and transferring motion between each other. Locke's theory of knowledge is written on the assumption of the truth of the corpuscularian hypothesis.

The initial context of Locke's work is therefore of an assumption that there is a real physical world that we can in fact come to know about. This context is of extreme importance to Locke's epistemology as it bounds the problems to be overcome and the aims of the epistemological methods. In Locke's point of view, epistemology is an inquiry into the possibility of a science of nature. Locke divides his account of knowledge into three parts, and in each part there is a knowledge which is related to the science of nature. The three parts are the extent of human knowledge, the degrees of knowledge, and the grounds of probability. For Locke, the first part is very important to explain the quality of human knowledge compared to the knowledge of things. Locke thinks that we need to have a "theory of knowledge". This is really important compared to the theory itself. Locke said that "It is obvious thing that knowledge is not certain by the agreement it has with reality" (515).

Locke's For Analyzing Ideas

It was Locke's belief that before we go ahead to start making comments about the world around us: of God and soul and material things, whatever be the enquiry, it was his belief that an understanding of the understanding and its operations be first understood. The understanding of the human mind and its limitations became the subject of Locke's inquiry. In the book *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke tells us what inspired him; five or six friends meeting at my chamber, and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand, by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course; and that before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with. (10). from what we can tell, the discussion apparently concerned morality and religion. It became clear to Locke that he and his friends were attempting to construct the top floor of the edifice of knowledge without first attending to the foundations. He realised that first one had to examine the ground work of human understanding and then see if it could support enquiry at the higher level of human concern (God and ethics). (Lawhead, 2002, p280).

It was Locke's belief then, that before we inquire about anything, that we understood what can be known, how it can be know, and the limits of what can be known. In the age that produced thinkers such as Boyle, Sydenham, Huygenius and Newton, Locke sees himself as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge. (13). Locke's task will be to inquire into the origin and extent of human knowledge and be contented with what we can know. For Locke, he thinks what we can know is enough to serve us in this life. So his method was simple, he sets himself three tasks; First, I shall inquire into the original of those ideas, notions, or whatever else you please to call them, which a man observes, and is conscious to himself he has in his mind; and the ways whereby the understanding comes to be furnished with them. Secondly, I shall endeavour to show what knowledge the understanding hath by those ideas; and the certainty, evidence, and extent of it. Thirdly, I shall make some inquiry into the nature and grounds of faith or opinion: whereby I mean that assent which we give to any proposition as true, of whose truth yet we have no certain knowledge. And here we shall have occasion to examine the reasons and degrees of assent. (23). Locke's description of his project shows he shared Descartes's thirst for certainty. However, Locke tempered it with a humbleness and lowering of expectations that would become a trademark of empiricism tradition. (Lawhead, 280). Through this method, Locke beliefs we can find out what the human mind can know with certainty and what it can only guess about. Understanding what the human mind can know with certainty keeps us from making bold claims about things it cannot know. That there are things the human mind can not know with certainty should not bring despair. Our capacity to know is suited to our state and concerns.

For Locke too, knowledge of our mental capacity cures sceptism and idleness. As Locke puts it; It will be no excuse to an idle and untoward servant, who would not attend his business by candle light, to plead that he had not broad sunshine. The Candle that is set up in us shines bright enough for all our purposes. (24) When we know our own strength, we shall the better know what to undertake with hopes of success; and when we have well surveyed the powers of our own minds, and made some estimate what we may expect from them, we shall not be inclined either to sit still, and not set our thoughts on work at all, in despair of knowing anything; nor on the other side, question everything, and disclaim all knowledge, because some things are not to be understood. (25).

Critique of Innate Ideas

Locke carries out his task of finding out the origin and extent of human knowledge by first criticising a doctrine that has grown from Plato to Descartes; the notion that there are certain knowledge which the mind holds that are innate. This kind of ideas or knowledge do not come from experience but are naturally imprinted into the mind at birth. The great divide in Early Modern epistemology is rationalism versus empiricism. The Continental Rationalists believe that we are born with innate ideas or innate knowledge, and they emphasize what we can know through reasoning. By contrast, Locke and other British Empiricists believe that all of our ideas come from experience, and they are more skeptical about what reason can tell us about the world; instead, they think we must rely on experience and empirical observation (Nathan Rockwood). For Locke; It is an established opinion amongst some men, that there are in the understanding certain innate principles; some primary notions, characters, as it were stamped upon the mind of man; which the soul receives in its very first being, and brings into the world with it. (27). It is this theory that Locke wants to demolish before setting up his own theory of knowledge. Proponents of the innate idea theory insist that certain principles like the law of identity A is A , and the law of non-contradiction are universal, thus, innate in nature. Locke does not think these principles are innate and even if they are universal does not prove that they are innate. Locke claimed that that line of argument has no force. He held that all ideas (except those that are “trifling”) can be explained in terms of experience. Instead of attacking the doctrine of innate ideas directly, however, his strategy was to refute it by showing that it is explanatorily and hence dispensable (Priselac). For Locke, children and Idiots are not aware of such principles so those principles can not be said to be innate.

For Locke, if an idea is innate, the mind should always be aware of it. He thus criticises those who suppose that innate ideas can exist in the mind without the mind being aware of it. First, it is evident, that all children and idiots have not the least apprehension or thought of them. And the want of that is enough to destroy that universal assent which must needs be the necessary concomitant of all innate truths: it seeming to me near a contradiction to say, that there are truths imprinted on the soul, which it perceives or understands not: imprinting, if it signify anything, being nothing else but the making certain truths to be perceived. For to imprint anything on the mind without the mind’s perceiving it, seems to me hardly intelligible. If therefore children and idiots have souls, have minds, with those impressions upon them, they must unavoidably perceive them (29). Concerning knowledge of the universals and particulars, Locke was even more radical. He believed that the mind has knowledge of particular things

first before having knowledge of universals. The process the mind comes to know universal or general truth is that the senses at first let in particular ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet, and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them. Afterwards, the mind proceeding further, abstracts them, and by degrees learns the use of general names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language, the materials about which to exercise its discursive faculty. And the use of reason becomes daily more visible, as these materials that give it employment increase. But though the having of general ideas and the use of general words and reason usually grow together, yet I see not how this any way proves them innate. (35) Plato, one of the proponents of innate idea, argued that knowledge is a recollection. This will mean, they are ideas in the mind or in our memory that is brought to our awareness by recollection. Locke criticises this idea. For him, whatever comes to exist as a memory must have come through experience.

Ideas and their Origin

To carry out his project, Locke gave the word 'Idea' a unique definition. Idea for Locke is whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks, I have used it to express whatever is meant by phantasm, notion, species, or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking; and I could not avoid frequently using it. I presume it will be easily granted me, that there are such ideas in men's minds: every one is conscious of them in himself; and men's words and actions will satisfy him that they are in others. Idea for Locke will be the image in our mind that represents the object outside our mind. The football, the cup, the person, or child we see, does not exist in our mind; these things exist independently and outside our minds. We do however, carry images of them with us in our mind, these images representing these external objects is what Locke calls ideas. These ideas are the building block of the knowledge we have of things. So the question comes up, how do we come about ideas of things? How does the mind come to possess these ideas seeing they are not innate as Locke will have us believe? It is at this point that Locke introduces his theory of the blank slate to answer these questions. He started:

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: how comes it to be furnished?... To this I answer, in one word, from experience. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which

supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring. (87).

The mind is empty at birth, and for Locke, whatever idea we find in it must have come there through one route: experience. This experience is of two kind: sensation and reflection. All ideas come from experience and through sensation or experience. The metaphor of the blank slate to describe the mind is significant to Locke's epistemology as a whole. For Lawhead, Locke and his fellow empiricist were attempting to emulate Newton's science of physical particles by discovering the laws that govern the motion of mental particle. For Locke, there is a direct relationship between his own "physics" of the mind and Newtonian physics. (282). He envisions the infant consciousness as a formless intelligence, originally devoid of innate knowledge—or, therefore, any natural evil—that receives information and learns to process it purely by the inscription of sensory input (Pinker, 5). So we come to know things through sensation and reflection. Through sensation we come by those ideas we have of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities and through reflection or the operation of our minds, we get the idea of And such are perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and all the different actings of our own minds (88). It is through these methods we get all our simple ideas according to Locke. Locke then put forth a challenge and ask anyone to show him any one idea that does not come through these two sources. Let any one examine his own thoughts, and thoroughly search into his understanding; and then let him tell me, whether all the original ideas he has there, are any other than of the objects of his senses, or of the operations of his mind, considered as objects of his reflection. (88).

The combination of simple ideas by the operation of the mind produces complex ideas. We do not just experience simple ideas like the color white, we experience things like beauty, man, an army, gratitude etc. Locke says it is through the combination of simple ideas by the mind that we are able to experience them. He calls it complex ideas. The three operations the mind conducts to produce complex ideas are compounding, relating, and abstraction. Simple ideas, whether they are ideas of perception or ideas of reflection, may be combined or repeated to produce “compound ideas,” as when the compound idea of an apple is produced by bringing together simple ideas of a certain colour, texture, odour, and figure. Abstract ideas are created when ideas taken from particular beings become general representatives of all of the same kind (Stroll). Locke also identified the three degrees of knowledge available to the human mind;

intuitive knowledge, demonstrative knowledge and Sensitive knowledge. The intuitive knowledge is the most certain form of knowledge because it leaves no room for doubt. For Locke, the mind is presently filled with the clear light of it. Types of intuitive knowledge will be three is more than two, triangles are not circles etc. Locke stated that the different clearness of our knowledge seems to me to lie in the different way of perception the mind has of the agreement or disagreement of any of its ideas. For if we will reflect on our own ways of thinking, we will find, that sometimes the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas immediately by themselves, without the intervention of any other: and this I think we may call intuitive knowledge (520).

The second degree of knowledge is demonstrative knowledge here, the connection between ideas is not immediate but is established by forming a chain of logical steps as mathematical proof. Demonstrative knowledge gives us certainty, if we are careful in forming each link in the logical chain. Here, the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of any ideas, but not immediately. Though wherever the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of any of its ideas, there be certain knowledge; yet it does not always happen, that the mind sees that agreement or disagreement, which there is between them, even where it is discoverable; and in that case remains in ignorance, and at most gets no further than a probable conjecture. ... In this case then, when the mind cannot so bring its ideas together as by their immediate comparison, and as it were juxta-position or application one to another, to perceive their agreement or disagreement, it is fain, by the intervention of other ideas, (one or more, as it happens) to discover the agreement or disagreement which it searches; and this is that which we call reasoning (521) However, since it is possible to make a mistake in our reasoning process, this form of knowledge is not quite so "clear and bright, not the assent so ready, as in intuitive knowledge. (Lawhead, 285). The third degree of knowledge is what Locke calls Sensitive knowledge. This is knowledge about the external world. Knowledge of the external world is not achieved through thinking about the definitions of our terms or comparing ideas that we have already acquired. Knowledge of the external world doesn't rest on any proof of the external world. Instead, knowledge of the external world is achieved in sensory experience. It is through the entrance of an idea into our mind through the senses that we have knowledge of the external world. (Internet Encyclopedia of philosophy) Locke writes, "'Tis therefore the actual receiving of ideas from without that gives us notice of the existence of other things and makes us know that something doth exist at that time without us which causes

that idea in us...” (624). Locke thinks the degree of knowledge is less certain than intuitive and demonstrative knowledge.

Artificial Intelligence

In the section about Artificial Intelligence, we are going to discuss three issues; artificial intelligence, knowledge representation and machine learning. Artificial intelligence (AI) can be described as a field of computer science devoted to the development of systems that carry out tasks that would require human intelligence when performed by human beings. AI is characterized by its problem-solving ability. At the very least, the field seeks to automate tasks that would have been performed by human using their intelligence to accomplish the same task. AI researchers are thus interested in moving techniques and symbolic manipulation toward the development of systems capable of learning and independent action. Artificial intelligence (AI) systems strive to have the similar abilities as human beings. For the major part, these abilities center around intelligent behavior in complex environments. The intelligence of human beings is often characterized by higher-level cognitive functions like language, learning, reasoning, and problem-solving. This is the function that AI attempts to match or surpass and is relevant to logical systems. These higher level cognitive functions are preceded by perception, which includes the acquisition of sensori-motor skills. Artificial intelligence can be defined in four ways; Acting humanly: When a computer acts like a human, it best reflects the Turing test, in which the computer succeeds when differentiation between the computer and a human isn't possible. You see it employed for technologies such as natural language processing, knowledge representation, automated reasoning, and machine learning (all four of which must be present to pass the test). The original Turing Test didn't include any physical contact. The newer, Total Turing Test does include physical contact in the form of perceptual ability interrogation, which means that the computer must also employ both computer vision and robotics to succeed. Modern techniques include the idea of achieving the goal rather than mimicking humans completely.

Thinking humanly: When a computer thinks as a human, it performs tasks that require intelligence (as contrasted with rote procedures) from a human to succeed, such as driving a car. To determine whether a program thinks like a human, you must have some method of determining how humans think, which the cognitive modeling approach defines. This model relies on three techniques: Introspection: Detecting and documenting the techniques used to achieve goals by monitoring one's own thought processes. Psychological testing: Observing a

person's behavior and adding it to a database of similar behaviors from other persons given a similar set of circumstances, goals, resources, and environmental conditions (among other things). Brain imaging: Monitoring brain activity directly through various mechanical means, such as Computerized Axial Tomography (CAT), Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), and Magneto encephalography (MEG). Thinking rationally: Studying how humans think using some standard enables the creation of guidelines that describe typical human behaviors. A person is considered rational when following these behaviors within certain levels of deviation. A computer that thinks rationally relies on the recorded behaviors to create a guide as to how to interact with an environment based on the data at hand. The goal of this approach is to solve problems logically, when possible. (Mueller and Massaron, 12) In many cases, this approach would enable the creation of a baseline technique for solving a problem, which would then be modified to actually solve the problem. In other words, the solving of a problem in principle is often different from solving it in practice, but you still need a starting point. Acting rationally: Studying how humans act in given situations under specific constraints enables you to determine which techniques are both efficient and effective. A computer that acts rationally relies on the recorded actions to interact with an environment based on conditions, environmental factors, and existing data. As with rational thought, rational acts depend on a solution in principle, which may not prove useful in practice. However, rational acts do provide a baseline upon which a computer can begin negotiating the successful completion of a goal (127).

Artificial intelligence can also be classified under four groups according to Arend Hintze, these are; Reactive machines: The machines you see beating humans at chess or playing on game shows are examples of reactive machines. A reactive machine has no memory or experience upon which to base a decision. Instead, it relies on pure computational power and smart algorithms to recreate every decision every time. This is an example of a weak AI used for a specific purpose. Limited memory: A self-driving car or autonomous robot can't afford the time to make every decision from scratch. These machines rely on a small amount of memory to provide experiential knowledge of various situations. When the machine sees the same situation, it can rely on experience to reduce reaction time and to provide more resources for making new decisions that haven't yet been made. This is an example of the current level of strong AI. Theory of mind: A machine that can assess both its required goals and the potential goals of other entities in the same environment has a kind of understanding that is feasible to some extent today, but not in any commercial form. However, for self-driving cars to become

truly autonomous, this level of AI must be fully developed. A self-driving car would not only need to know that it must go from one point to another, but also intuit the potentially conflicting goals of drivers around it and react accordingly. Self-awareness: This is the sort of AI that you see in movies. However, it requires technologies that aren't even remotely possible now because such a machine would have a sense of both self and consciousness. In addition, instead of merely intuiting the goals of others based on environment and other entity reactions, this type of machine would be able to infer the intent of others based on experiential knowledge.(Arend Hintze).

Knowledge Representation

The definition of knowledge representation has been a major topic of discussion over the years. It can be seen as a method to encode some form of information about the world which is used in symbolic inference about the world. Knowledge representation is a field that focuses on the design of symbolic information to make it usable for inference. This may seem abstract and difficult to interpret. Essentially, knowledge representation is the encoding of machine-readable information in order to make an inference from that information. (Brachman & Levesque, 2004) believe that "At its heart, knowledge representation is all about representing the world in a fashion that is usefully communicable to intelligent agents." The definition of knowledge representation encompasses more than just a single method to encode information. It involves research in diverse areas such as philosophy and logic, cognitive psychology, linguistics, and computer science. Work in this field is motivated by a basic belief that the encoded information is to be used for some form of inference about the world. This has led to considerable work on the study of various forms of reasoning and the development of efficient algorithms to automate that reasoning from encoded knowledge. knowledge that is common to any two intelligent systems can be represented independently of the particularities of the systems and in which each such system can proceed to acquire the remaining knowledge in a way that is determined by the information so far and the desired new information. Knowledge representation is a fundamental concept in artificial intelligence (AI) that involves creating models and structures to represent information and knowledge in a way that intelligent systems can use. The goal of knowledge representation is to enable machines to reason about the world like humans, by capturing and encoding knowledge in a format that can be easily processed and utilized by AI systems. (Gupta) It also assumes that the information to be reasoned about is complex and the reasoning processes and the conclusions drawn are to be useful in some real-world task or decision, often in the presence of incomplete or uncertain information. All

of these notions have implications on the design of both the knowledge representation formalism and the reasoning methods that will use it. Knowledge representation hypothesis seems to have originated with the philosopher Leibniz (1646-1716):

There is little doubt, however, that Leibniz' ideas, which far outstripped in detail and understanding any earlier hints, were his own spontaneous creation. "While I was yet a boy with a knowledge only of common logic, and without instruction in mathematics, the thought came to me, I know not by what instinct, that an analysis of ideas could be devised, whence in some combinatory way, truths could arise and be estimated as though by numbers" (*Elementa Rationis*). He was thereafter constantly occupied with such notions and attempted to contrive an alphabet of thought, or *characteristica universalis*, which would represent ideas in a logical way, not things in a pictorial way, and would be mechanical in operation, unambiguous, and nonquantitative. (*The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 4, p. 538)

A central goal of research is that computers must somehow come to "know" a good deal of what every human being knows about the world and about the organisms, natural or artificial, that inhabit it. This body of knowledge indefinite, no doubt, in its boundaries---goes by the name "common sense." The problem we face is how to impart such knowledge to a robot. That is, how do we design a robot with a reasoning capacity sufficiently powerful and fruitful that when provided with some body of this knowledge, the robot will be able to generate enough of the rest to intelligently adapt to and exploit its environment? (David Israel, 37) Just as there is a calculus of arithmetic, where numerical expressions are formally manipulated in a value-preserving way, so might there be a calculus of thought, where propositional expressions could be formally manipulated in a truth-preserving way. This agrees remarkably well with most current views of KR within AI. Many AI systems represent knowledge as explicitly as possible, and (relatively) declaratively, in some formal language. The term knowledge-based system (or KBS) is currently popular in AI. (Levesque, 225) knowledge representation simply has to do with writing down, in some language or communicative medium, descriptions or pictures that correspond in some salient way to the world or a state of the world.

In artificial intelligence (AI) we are concerned with writing down descriptions of the world in which an intelligent machine might be embedded in such a way that the machine can come to new conclusions about its world by manipulating these symbolic representations (257). But for scholars like Davis and Shrobe (1993) knowledge representation can best be understood

in terms of five distinct roles that it plays, each crucial to the task at hand. First, a knowledge representation is most fundamentally a surrogate, a substitute for the thing itself that is used to enable an entity to determine consequences by thinking rather than acting, that is, by reasoning about the world rather than taking action in it. Second, it is a set of ontological commitments, that is, an answer to the question, In what terms should I think about the world? Third, it is a fragmentary theory of intelligent reasoning expressed in terms of three components: (1) the representation's fundamental conception of intelligent reasoning, (2) the set of inferences that the representation sanctions, and (3) the set of inferences that it recommends. Fourth, it is a medium for pragmatically efficient computation, that is, the computational environment in which thinking is accomplished. One contribution to this pragmatic efficiency is supplied by the guidance that a representation provides for organizing information to facilitate making the recommended inferences. Fifth, it is a medium of human expression, that is, a language in which we say things about the world. Understanding the roles and acknowledging their diversity has several useful consequences. First, each role requires something slightly different from a representation; each accordingly leads to an interesting and different set of properties that we want a representation to have. Second, we believe the roles provide a framework that is useful for characterizing a wide variety of representations. We suggest that the fundamental mind set of a representation can be captured by understanding how it views each of the roles and that doing so reveals essential similarities and differences. Third, we believe that some previous disagreements about representation are usefully disentangled when all five roles are given appropriate consideration. (17) Gupta identified five different approach to knowledge representation in AI. They are; Logical representation: This involves representing knowledge in a symbolic logic or rule-based system, which uses formal languages to express and infer new knowledge.

Semantic networks: This involves representing knowledge through nodes and links, where nodes represent concepts or objects, and links represent their relationships. Frames: This approach involves representing knowledge in the form of structures called frames, which capture the properties and attributes of objects or concepts and the relationships between them. Ontologies: This involves representing knowledge in the form of a formal, explicit specification of the concepts, properties, and relationships between them within a particular domain. Neural networks: This involves representing knowledge in the form of patterns or connections between nodes in a network, which can be used to learn and infer new knowledge from data. In AI, various types of knowledge` are used for different purposes. Here are some

of the main types of knowledge in AI: Declarative Knowledge: This knowledge can be expressed in a declarative form, such as facts, rules, or propositions. It is also called descriptive knowledge and is expressed in declarative sentences. It is often represented using logic-based representations such as knowledge graphs or ontologies. Example: The capital of France is Paris. This statement represents declarative knowledge because it is a fact that can be explicitly stated and written down. It is not based on personal experience or practical skills, but rather on an established piece of information that can be easily communicated to others. Procedural Knowledge: This knowledge is used to perform specific tasks or actions and is often represented using algorithms or programming languages. It is responsible for knowing how to do something. It includes rules, strategies, procedures, agendas, etc. Example: How to change a flat tire on a car, including the steps of loosening the lug nuts, jacking up the car, removing the tire, and replacing it with a spare. This is a practical skill that involves specific techniques and steps that must be followed to successfully change a tire. Meta-knowledge: This is knowledge about knowledge and is often used to reason about and improve the performance of AI systems. Example: To remember new information, it is helpful to use strategies such as repetition, visualization, and elaboration. This statement represents metaknowledge because it is knowledge about how to learn and remember new information, rather than knowledge about a specific fact or concept. It acknowledges that some specific techniques and strategies can be used to enhance memory and learning, and encourages the use of these techniques to improve learning outcomes.

Heuristic Knowledge: Heuristics are based on past experiences or domain knowledge and are often used in decision-making processes to guide an AI system toward a solution. Heuristic knowledge is a type of knowledge in AI that refers to rules of thumb or strategies that are used to solve problems quickly and efficiently, but only sometimes optimally. Heuristics are often used when there is too much complexity or uncertainty in a problem to use an exact algorithm or solution. Example: When packing for a trip, it is helpful to make a list of essential items, pack versatile clothing items that can be mixed and matched, and leave room in the suitcase for any souvenirs or purchases. This statement represents heuristic knowledge because it is a practical set of rules of thumb that can be used to guide decision-making in a specific situation (packing for a trip). Structural Knowledge: This is knowledge about the structure of a problem or system and is often used to help AI systems decompose complex problems into simpler sub problems that can be solved more easily. It is the basic knowledge of problem-solving. It also describes relationships between concepts such as kind of, part of, and grouping

of something. Example: In the field of biology, living organisms can be classified into different taxonomic groups based on shared characteristics. These taxonomic groups include domains, kingdoms, phyla, classes, orders, families, genera, and species. This statement represents structural knowledge because it describes the hierarchical structure of the taxonomic classification system used in biology. It acknowledges that there are specific levels of organization within this system and that each level has its unique characteristics and relationships to other levels.

Machine Learning

With reference to artificial intelligence, there is a conflicting view among professionals whether machine learning must simulate human behaviour or it should be concerned about outcomes which affect the real problem and avoid human-like simulation. The current dominance in the field makes strong the latter view. But machine learning has been used successfully to simulate certain limited behaviours, like in game playing. "A computer program is said to learn from experience E with respect to some class of tasks T and performance measure P , if its performance at tasks in T , as measured by P , improves with experience E ." As per the definition, if a machine learning algorithm is already trained with data on how to perform a certain task and its performance can be measured as either right or wrong, its performance improves with time. The central idea behind machine learning is that you can represent reality by using a mathematical function that the algorithm doesn't know in advance, but which it can guess after seeing some data. You can express reality and all its challenging complexity in terms of unknown mathematical functions that machine learning algorithms find and make available. This concept is the core idea for all kinds of machine learning algorithms. Learning in machine learning is purely mathematical, and it ends by associating certain inputs to certain outputs. It has nothing to do with understanding what the algorithm has learned (data analysis builds understanding to a certain extent), thus the learning process is often described as training because the algorithm is trained to match the correct answer (the output) to every question offered (the input). In spite of lacking deliberate understanding and being simply a mathematical process, machine learning can prove useful in many tasks. It provides the AI application the power of doing the most rational thing given a certain context when learning occurs by using the right data. (Mueller and Massaron, 127)

Machine learning uses a variety of algorithms that iteratively learn from data to improve, describe data, and predict outcomes. As the algorithms ingest training data, it is then

possible to produce more precise models based on that data. A machine learning model is the output generated when you train your machine learning algorithm with data. After training, when you provide a model with an input, you will be given an output. For example, a predictive algorithm will create a predictive model. Then, when you provide the predictive model with data, you will receive a prediction based on the data that trained the model. Machine learning is now essential for creating analytics models. (Judith Hurwitz and Daniel Kirsch, 4)

John Locke's epistemology and Artificial Intelligence The Lockian tabula rasa informs the work of English cryptanalyst and mathematician Alan Turing (1912-1954), who is widely considered the father of theoretical computer science. Turing's postwar writings on artificial intelligence are the founding manuscripts of the modern field, and it is through his work that the tabula rasa enters the computational vocabulary. In a 1950 issue of *Mind*, he wrote: Instead of trying to produce a programme to simulate the adult mind, why not rather try to produce one which simulates the child's? If this were then subjected to an appropriate course of education one would obtain the adult brain. Presumably the child brain is something like a notebook as one buys it from the stationer's. Rather little mechanism, and lots of blank sheets. (Turing 19)

Important in Turing's notion of the tabula rasa is his distinction of mechanism from information: the empty and innocent consciousness he describes possesses no innate knowledge written across its pages, but it does require some minor mechanism to bind them together. The tabula rasa denotes emptiness charged with potential. It is a latent intelligence, a promising void, a machine awaiting its ghost. It has made a long journey through various disciplines and movements in Western thought: the concept originated in philosophy, then wove through various notions of human nature to psychology, where its impact on theories of knowledge and learning brought it ultimately to computer science by way of artificial intelligence (AI).

Evidently, Locke's notion of an idea is a far cry from the neural networks and pattern manipulations that are often used in AI models today. But an understanding of these models is largely mathematical and mechanistic, and Locke's clear classification of sorts can provide grounding and direction to the implementation and replication of these models into the various sorts of ideas. We might also note that as a foundational theory of modern soft and hard sciences is that all material should be observable and repeatable, and a system for forming ideas from such material should be methodical and provide clear direction; something which can be criticized as not occurring in many AI models today. Furthermore, understanding how these different classes of ideas are formed is indeed relevant to developing computer models for idea

formation, for at the very least we believe that our machine should be able to replicate a similar process, even if the end result is far from identical. Locke also suggests a certain progression of complexity in the formation of ideas, where he states that simple ideas are unifacted and cannot be changed, and it is only by various combinations of simple ideas and mental operations upon them that complex ideas are formed. This too shows a correspondence to the formation of data structures and algorithms to manipulate them in computer science. Locke has a very particular definition of an idea as 'whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks'. This is a very broad term, but he narrows it down by separating between three different types of ideas: sensation (which includes perception and the immediate objects of the senses), reflection (the perceiving of the operations of the mind), and finally simple modes, substances, and relations which are formed by the combining of the other two types, and various operations applied to them. Locke's intention of classifying different levels of abstraction and complexity of ideas is decidedly methodical and scientific, showing a clear semblance to the categorizations and classifications that occur within the modern hard sciences and particularly computer science. We have chosen to ground our exploration of artificial intelligence in the philosophy of John Locke, for a most specific reason: Locke's epistemology, unlike many others, explicitly outlines the processes of knowledge formation, something crucial when exploring how intelligence processes information. According to Locke, all knowledge is based on human experience and is built upon two basic types of material: the perceptions that come via the five senses from the world around us (which form the basis of empirical knowledge), and material that is 'reflected' from the operations of the mind, which serves as the source of abstract and complex ideas. Locke's epistemology is called representative realism in today's terminology. Representative realism claims that the mind is directly acquainted only with its own ideas, but that these ideas are caused by and represent objects external to the mind. (Lawhead, 284) we can also see the same notion applied in the field of knowledge representation in artificial intelligence

Summary/Conclusion

An idea, in Locke's understanding, is "whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks". With pen poised at the starting line to write *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke confesses "I thought that the first step towards satisfying several enquiries the mind of man was very apt to run into, was, to take a survey of our own understandings, examine our own powers, and see to what things they were adapted". Such few words reveal that Locke requires a clear tactical distinction between perception and thought,

some system which could classify the different 'work' of the mind while awake. This desired distinction can be seen in his classification of simple and complex ideas. The most general definition of an idea is a perception of external objects in the mind which can be represent to one's self so that there is a likeness of the perception in perception. This is, the understanding of an idea is an active thing and ideas are the 'bricks and mortar' from which the mind creates all the rest of knowledge. Locke provides an account of the mind's activities using the analogy of a 'dark room' which we find ourselves in when we begin to understand: 'with only some faint and glimmering idea, knowledge is the putting together ideas so as to form a 'larger'. Knowledge relates to the correctness of the connections and the 'largeness' of the structure compared to the original simple ideas, 'when it leads the mind into all the parts of the complex, and views there the several simple ones'. Requiring a precise notation of significant differences between the things which merely happen to be in the mind as mental acts and are soon forgotten, and those things which are the objects of reflection and are available at some time in the future, Locke comes to classify ideas as 'nothing but a representation of [an object] it to a person's mind. This led to a full classification of memory as a 'power to revive perceptions in our minds' and an attempt to categorize the experience of all forms of thinking, such as comparing, reasoning, and the like. Locke introduced the concept of the “tabula rasa” or blank slate, arguing that knowledge comes from experience, the potential of artificial intelligence to learn and adapt, and also the importance of the environment and experiences in shaping AI’s “knowledge” and abilities can be seen to be in line with Locke’s epistemology.

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LOCKE'S CONCEPT OF THE RULE OF LAW AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper entitled, "Locke's concept of the rule of law and the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria" is an attempt to apply John Locke's theory and principle of the rule of law to the Nigeria political environment as a way of sustaining her democratic system. One of the foremost political challenges in Nigeria has been her form of practice of democracy. Nigeria's form and practice of democracy appears to be a deviation from the objective standard of democracy. Most political office holders in Nigeria arrive at the corridors of power through avenues devoid of generally accepted standard of democratic principle. It is in Nigeria that one gets to hear and see that power is actually taken and not given as provided by the principles of democracy. John Locke in his political theory presented the principle of consent and the rule of law as the bedrock of democracy. Consequently, any civil government that deviates from the provisions of the rule of law, stands the risk of dissolution. However, the reverse is the case in the Nigeria socio-political space. Therefore, this work makes use of analytical method in philosophy to analyze John Locke's concept of the rule of law and examines the democratic practice in Nigeria. It equally investigates the shortcomings in the practice of democracy in Nigeria and places it side by side with Locke's principle of the rule of law. The study discovered that what is practiced in Nigeria falls short, and is far different from the standard of democracy generally known as the government of the people, by the people and for the people; a people centered government. Finally, this paper recommends Locke's principle of the rule of law to the Nigerian society as a panacea for her unsustainable democracy. Democracy is people-oriented. Once a nation misses this target, the glory of that nation automatically starts decaying and subsequently fades away, and the result is seen in the gross suffering of the citizens. The paper concludes that Nigerian politicians and office holders should eschew selfishness and pursue that which would contribute positively to the commonwealth.

Keywords: Rule of Law, Law, Democracy, Sustainability.

1.0 Introduction

The Rule of Law is a term that is often used but difficult to give a specific definition. It is frequently said to mean the government of law and by law, and not men, nor the Sovereign who is subject to the law under the rule of law. The implication here is that the law is supreme under the rule of law, while both the government and the governed alike are subject to the law which is supreme under the concept of the rule of law. What does "a government of law, not men imply"? Are laws not made by men and women in their roles as legislators? Do men and women not enforce the law as law enforcement officers or interpret the law as judges? And do

all of us not choose to follow, or not to follow, the law as we go about our daily lives? How does the rule of law exist independently from the people who make it, interpret it, and live it? The simple answer to these questions and as Locke sees it, is that the rule of law cannot ever be entirely separated from the people who make up our government and our society. The rule of law is more of a governmental, political cum administrative ideology that we strive to achieve, but sometimes fail to live up to, due to power corruption and quest for totalitarianism, despotism and dictatorship in governance. The earlier interpretations of the rule of law were derived from the theories formulated by legal philosophers, each formulation stressing the subordination of the ruler to rules of law either enacted or accepted and upheld by the community and its law.

Locke's concept of the rule of law encompasses the equality of all citizens, whether in government or amongst the governed, the fundamental rights of all citizens of any given state and above all, the independency of the judicature, though he did not go to this extent. The Rule of Law consists of a number of principles of a formal and procedural character, addressing the way in which a community is governed. The formal principles concern the generality, clarity, publicity, stability and prospect of the norms that govern a society. On some accounts, the Rule of Law also comprises certain substantive ideals like a presumption of innocence for ordinary citizens, human dignity, general liberty, and respect for private property rights amongst several others. Some legal philosophers insist, as a matter of analytic clarity, that the Rule of Law in particular must be distinguished from democracy, human rights, and social justice. They confine the focus of the Rule of Law to formal and procedural aspects of governmental institutions, without regard to the content of the policies they implement. But the point is controversial.

For Locke, the ultimate aim of the rule of law is the defense of citizens' rights and particularly the preservation of property rights of all the members of society as much as possible. Indeed, Locke's concept of the rule of law is the super-structure and life blood of every commendable democracy and as such, a sine qua non for the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria. At the wake of democracy in 1999, marking the third republic, Nigerians became happy with high hopes, heralding the advent of the long expected dividends of democracy. This is actually where the problem lies, because what Nigerians got and are still getting was and is the direct opposite of what they expected, the politics of the end justifies the means became the order of the day, corruption is seen everywhere in all the sectors: executive, national assembly, military, police, navy, custom, immigration, judiciary, government ministries, educational

institutions and so on. The level of high handedness, bribery and corruption inherent in these parastatals, is quite alarming and unimaginable. Survival of the fittest took over the justice system; leaders maltreat and manipulate the whole nation, state and local government as the case may be, sit tight syndrome is seen here and there, most leaders do not want to relinquish power, politicians clamor for second term and a possible third term even when it is crystal clear to them and all that they performed far below average in their first term. This work seeks to look at these democratic practices in Nigeria, placing it side by side Locke's concept of the rule of law. Consequently, the scope of this work would be situated within the confines of John Locke's Concept of the rule of law and Nigerian democracy. The work would be philosophical in nature; hence it would adopt the philosophical method of exposition as its modus operandi. This research work seeks to situate its headache on the nature and characteristics of the type of democracy practiced in Nigeria, showcasing its successes if there is and its obvious failures and makes a recommendation on how best to practice democracy in the light of John Locke's political theory, so as to effectively and adequately deliver the dividends of democracy in Nigerian society. In a nutshell, it is intended to portray Locke's concept of the rule of law as a sine qua none for the sustainability of democracy and good governance in Nigeria.

2.0 The Concept of the Rule of Law

The concept of the Rule of Law is a doctrine of great antiquity and quite dynamic in nature, and is not capable of any exact definition. However, this does not mean that there is no agreement on the basic values which the concept represents. The Rule of Law constitutes a number of principles of a formal and procedural character, addressing the pattern in which a state is governed. It describes the supreme authority of the law over governmental actions and ordinary citizens' behaviour and suggests a situation where both the government and the governed are bound by the law, and equally submit to its supremacy and comply with its procedure(s). The Rule of law prohibits discriminatory, tyrannical and arbitrary rule, while it also promotes freedom, fraternity, equality, accountability, justice, equity and fairness in governance, and is certain, regular and predictable. The Rule of Law is a term that is often used but difficult to give a specific definition. It is frequently said to mean the government of law and by law, and not men, nor the Sovereign who is subject to the law under the rule of law. The implication here is that the law is supreme under the rule of law, while both the government and the governed alike are subject to the law which is supreme under the concept of the rule of law. The earlier interpretations of the rule of law were derived from the theories formulated by

legal philosophers, each formulation stressing the subordination of the ruler to rules of law either enacted or accepted and upheld by the community and its law.

3.0 A Biographical Sketch of John Locke

John Locke was an English philosopher who lived between 1632-1704. He was born on August 29, 1632, in Wrington, a village in the English county of Somerset. His father was a country lawyer and military man who had served as a captain during the English civil war. Both of his parents were Puritans and as such, Locke was raised that way. Because of his father's connections and allegiance to the English government, Locke received an outstanding education. John Locke went to Westminster School and then Christ Church, University of Oxford. At Oxford, he studied medicine, which would play a central role in his life. In 1647 he enrolled at Westminster School in London, where he earned the distinct honor of being named a King's Scholar, a privilege that went to only selected number of boys and that paved the way for Locke to attend Christ Church, Oxford in 1652. At Christ Church, perhaps Oxford's most prestigious school, Locke immersed himself in logic and metaphysics, as well as the classical languages. After graduating in 1656, he returned to Christ Church two years later for a Master of Arts, which led in just a few short years to Locke taking on tutorial work at the college.

In 1668 Locke was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. He graduated with a bachelor's of medicine in 1674. Early in his medical studies, Locke met Lord Ashley, who was to become Earl of Shaftsbury. The two grew close and Shaftsbury eventually persuaded Locke to move to London and become his personal physician. As Shaftsbury's stature grew, so did Locke's responsibilities. He assisted in his business and political matters, and after Shaftsbury was made chancellor, Locke became his secretary of presentations. Shaftsbury's influence on Locke's professional career and his political thoughts cannot be understated. As one of the founders of the Whig party, which pushed for constitutional monarchy and stood in opposition to the dominant Tories, Shaftsbury imparted an outlook on rule and government that never left Locke.

Locke became a highly influential philosopher, writing about such topics as political philosophy, epistemology, and education. Locke's writings helped found modern Western philosophy. His works lie at the foundation of modern philosophical empiricism and political liberalism. He was an influential philosopher whose writings had a significant impact on Western philosophy. In Locke's landmark, *Two Treatises of Government*, he put forth his revolutionary ideas concerning the natural rights of man and the social contract. Both concepts not only stirred waves in England but also impacted the intellectual underpinnings that formed

the later American and French revolutions. As England fell under a cloud of possible revolution, Locke became a target of the government. While historical research has pointed to his lack of involvement in the incident, Locke was forced to leave England in 1683 due to a failed assassination attempt of King Charles II and his brother, or what later came to be known as the Rye House Plot. Exiled in Holland, Locke composed "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," another groundbreaking work of intellectual might that spanned four books and took on the task of examining the nature of human knowledge. Just like his Two Treatises, the Essay was published after Locke's return to England in 1688. His arrival back in his homeland had come in the aftermath of the dramatic departure of King James II, who had fled the country, allowing the Whigs to rise to power. Later called the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the event forever changed English government, moving the balance of power from the throne to Parliament. It also set Locke up to be a hero to many in his native country.

In addition to his Essay and Two Treatises, Locke's return to England also saw him publish additional work, including A Letter Concerning Toleration, The Reasonableness of Christianity and Some Thoughts Concerning Education. As a hero to the Whig party, Locke remained connected to governmental affairs in his advanced years. He helped steer the resurrection of the Board of Trade, which oversaw England's new territories in North America. Locke served as one of the body's key members. Long afflicted with delicate health, Locke died on October 28, 1704, in Essex, where he had resided over the last decade of his life. Years after his death, we are still gauging his impact on Western thought. His theories concerning the separation of Church and State, religious freedom, and liberty, not only influenced European thinkers such as the French Enlightenment writer, Voltaire but shaped the thinking of America's founders, from Alexander Hamilton to Thomas Jefferson.

3.1 The Concept Of The Rule Of Law In John Locke's Political Theory

John Locke the English Philosopher is known as the "father of liberalism". The ultimate aim of the rule of law for Locke is the defense of citizens' rights and particularly the preservation of property rights of all the members of society as much as possible. He emphasized the importance of governance through "established standing laws, promulgated and known to the People". He contrasted this with rule by "Extemporary Arbitrary Decrees". Today, the term "arbitrary" can mean many different things. Sometimes it means "oppressive". But when Locke distinguished the rule of settled standing laws from arbitrary decrees, it was not the oppressive sense of "arbitrary" that he had in mind. In Locke's context, something is

arbitrary because it is extemporary: there is no notice of it; the ruler just figures it out as he goes along. It is the arbitrariness of unpredictability, not knowing what you can rely on, being subject, according to Locke, to someone's sudden thoughts, or unrestrained, and till that moment unknown, abrupt wills without having any measures set down which may moderate and justify their actions. Absolute arbitrary power, or governing without settled standing laws, cannot go with the ends of society and government. Men would not quit the freedom of the state of Nature for, and tie themselves up under, were it not to preserve their lives, liberties, and fortunes and by stated rules of right and property to secure their peace and quiet. Whatever form the commonwealth is under, the ruling power ought to govern by declared and received laws, and not by extemporary dictates and undetermined resolutions, for then mankind will be in a far worse condition than in the state of Nature. For all the power the government has, being only for the good of the society, as it ought not to be arbitrary and at pleasure, so it ought to be exercised by established and promulgated laws, that both the people may know their duty, and be safe and secured within the limits of the law, and the rulers, too, kept within their due bonds (Locke 1690;p135) .

Under Locke's legal philosophy the government derived its legitimacy from popular consents and people delegate to the government the power to make, execute and enforce laws towards the common good of the state and entire citizenry. In his view, the laws are to be made by a parliament that is distinct from the executive, and enacted to enable the ordinary citizens determine the extent of their duties and rights within the ambit of the law. The judicature was however, absent in Locke's postulation.

John Locke's political thought is well represented in his two treatises of government, the first was actually a response to Robert Filmer. It was a critique of the absolutist position while the second treatise presents Locke's own preferred theoretical alternative which is a limited government based on popular consent.

The first treatise as earlier stated is a response to Sir Robert Filmer's view of authority and government in his work Patriach. Filmer actually projected that divine authority is the first and the origin of power and authority, but he ended up proposing and supporting what could be summarized as political absolutism. He buttressed his understanding of absolutism on a reading of the biblical account of creation. In his interpretation of the Old Testament, he justified patriarchal kingship and then subsequently applied such argument to the monarchies of his own day. Adam's position in the creation, his political authority over other humans and

his sovereignty which for Filmer was transferred to their earthly princes, supported his position of absolutism. John Locke dismissed Filmer's absolutism as worthless and argues that: There is no evidence that Adam possessed a divinely granted royal authority. If he had it: there is no evidence that his heirs had it. If they did, the right of succession was not determined, and even if there were a divinely determined order of succession, all knowledge of it has long since perished (Locke 1983;p66). Another important point Locke attacked here was Filmer's view that 'men are not naturally free' and the rejection of the existence of a state of nature, basing his argument that in the state of nature, men are naturally free and equal. Nevertheless, we are much concerned about John Locke's second treatise of government, because it embodies John Locke's most constructive contribution to political theory.

The second treatise was an effort by John Locke to examine what political power is and what it should be. What he implies by political power is the right to make and enforce laws. The laws implied here are basically concerned with the appropriation, regulation and preservation of property and again with the issue of central defense of the nation. The magnitude of political power is best examined by how one arrives at the corridor of power. John Locke enunciated this by stipulating a process through which one ought to arrive at power, from the state of nature, moving on to the formulation of social contract then the civil government. John Locke made effort to project a legitimate political authority not anchored on a religious belief but on a practical consensual agreement of members of the society who without coercion and with free will decide to form a political society.

Contrary to the view of Thomas Hobbes which stipulated that the state of nature is a state of war of all against all, John Locke sees the state of nature as "men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth with authority to judge between them." Again Locke views the state of nature as "a state of perfected freedom to order their actions and disposed of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature." (1983;p4). In this state of nature, all the powers and jurisdictions is equal and reciprocal, because the idea is that all human beings are from the same biological species. He differs from Hobbes by denying that this state of nature he tries to project is not characterized by war of all against all, nevertheless he added that "though this is a state of liberty, man has not liberty to destroy himself, or so much as any creature in his possession" (1983;p5). Reason is for John Locke, what guides and informs the state of nature. Reason is the fundamental point in the state of nature. John Locke however added another clause to this type of state of nature, he is of the opinion that when man violates this law of reason, man thus puts himself in a state

of war which is unfortunately embedded with enmity, fight and destruction with others, and thus makes himself pugnacious to humanity. Locke submitted thus “everyman hath the right to punish the offender and be executioner of the law of nature” (1983;p49). Be that as it may, Locke observed that greed and confusion might set in, in executing the punishment by each individual in the society, and by implication, war and anarchy may set in. So, to avoid this state of war, man made effort to leave the state of nature out of their own volition and freewill, and form a political society, thus submitting their natural rights of self-defense, rectification of injustice and so on to a common, central public authority.

The social contract for John Locke actually constituted the introduction of the state or what one can call the political society construed as a way out for the shortcomings of the state of nature. The state is an arrangement that makes for the submission of the personal right of reasoning of the individual and the right of protecting life and property given to the individual by the state of nature. Thomas Lloyd captured this in his reflection in these words, “so to accept that a state has authority is to accept that you have a moral obligation to obey it.” (1998;p54) Thus Locke submitted that “the only way whereby any one divest himself of his natural liberty is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe and peaceful living” (1998;p54). Social contract theory does not rhyme very well with the Leviathan propounded by Thomas Hobbes, in the social contract setting. Contracting parties do not forgo their liberty totally and live in servitude as was stipulated by Hobbes. What it entails is that the contracting parties forgo their right of demanding for justice as they deem fit and thus hand the right over to a legislative power for common good. Thus people’s lives, property and freedom are adequately secured. Political society for John Locke emerged when people decided to come together and be ruled by the decision of the majority.

Basically people unite together so as to ensure the adequate protection of lives and property. What Locke had in mind when he was speaking about property were: lives, liberty/freedom and estates. Brandishing the state of nature as an ugly situation, he enumerated some major objectives of forming a civil government. This could be summarized in the following three points.

- a. Instituting a common law by common consent, to determine right and wrong.
- b. Electing a known and indifferent judge with authority to deter all differences according to stipulated laws.

c. Instituting an executive power to carry out right judgments. With this working optimally, the common good of the people ought to be met. However, the government which is constituted by the people has onerous task to fulfill by the different arms of government for the purpose of peace, safety and public good of the people. The legislative sees to the public good by deciding how the forces of society shall be utilized. The legislative differ from the executive, the executive is in charge of administering the law and executing the law, thus Wiser opined that “the task of administering the law and overseeing the punishment of those who disobey should be delegated to the executive” (Locke 1983; p107). The power of the executive should always be under check by the legislative. It is the onus of the legislative to establish laws and principles that would guide the actions of the executive. A very important aspect of this is that the government can be dissolved if the trust placed upon them becomes obviously questioned. What this means is that the government is and should be people oriented. It is based on the amount of trust that people placed on them. Pertinent to note here is that the relationship existing between the government and the society is fiduciary rather than a contract form. If the legislative power betrays its trust, it may be removed and the power devolved into the hands of those that gave it, who may place it in a new place, where they shall think best for their safety and security. John Locke posited two types of dissolution, namely: dissolution from within and dissolution as overturning from without. Other reasons why a government could be dissolved could be when “a prince sets up his own arbitrary will of the society, declared by the legislative, then the legislative is changed” (Locke 1983;p7). Again, the government is also dissolved “when the prince hinders the legislative from assembling in its due time or from acting freely, pursuant to those ends for which it was constituted” (Locke 1983;p107) Dissolution can also occur, “when by the arbitrary power of the prince, the electorate or ways of election are altered, without the consent and contrary to the common interest of the people; there also, the legislative is altered. A government may also be dissolved when “the delivery also of the people into the subjection of a foreign power, either by the prince, or by the legislative” (Locke 1983;p107). Finally, and most importantly, as it affects Nigeria, a government should be dissolved when “he who has the supreme executive power neglects and abandons that charge, so that the laws already made can no longer be put in executive” (Locke 1983;p107).

4.0 Democracy in Nigeria

Nigeria and her democracy have been shaky since the inception of this system of government. A lot has claimed that the problem with Nigeria was the long military rule, but a calculation from when the military handed over to the civilian since the year 1999 till date is almost twenty-five years which is equal to two and a half decades, thus one would begin to wonder, what actually is the problem with Nigeria, is it the problem of leadership, or the problem of followership, is it the problem of attitude, or the problem of poor school curriculum, is it the problem of selfishness or people's hate for the mother land, in summarizing all these, one could say that it is basically "Institution" borrowing the word of Acemoglu and Robinson, let's get to know what they meant by this "countries differ in their economic success because of their different institutions, the rules influencing how the economy works, and the incentives that motivate people" (2015;p29). Basically Nigeria got it wrong because of the kind of institutions they build; the fundamental problem here is attitude. Democracy is supposed to be based on the sovereignty of the people, so it should as a matter of fact be people oriented and people driven, but the reverse is the case. Eugene Anowai thus noted that: The pillars of democracy are sovereignty of the people, government based upon consent of the governed, majority rule, minority rights, guarantee of basic human rights, free and fair election, equality of law, due process of law, constitutional limits on government, socio-economic and political pluralism, values of tolerance" (2015;p64). It is quite pertinent to note at this point that these pillars of democracy have been recklessly neglected and that is why Nigerian democracy is in deep mess and in serious crisis. The leaders today have turned into elected dictators, with zero respect and regard for the rule of law; one begins to wonder if what Nigeria practices is another form of democracy. Theophilus Okere defined democracy as "a government where the people are perceived to be indeed the primary beneficiaries of the services of the elected"(2015;p20). But what is seen is the direct opposite. It is in Nigeria that a governor can push the salaries of civil servant for one or two years to a foreign account abroad, and after having been charged by a competent court of jurisdiction, would end up getting settled with a ministerial position. Most of the elections that usually bring in politicians to power in Nigeria are highly questionable and regrettably, it gets worse by the day. In a true democratic setting, election forms the basic means by which candidates assume power, consequently, election should be a sacred event; it should be seen and treated as a serious and sensitive affair, but what is seen is gross rigging, massive shooting, threats of baboon, fight and blood, taking power by force, and the worst part of it is that the body saddled with the responsibility of conducting free and fair election is also trapped in this mess, such that one begins to question the independency attached

to the nomenclature of INEC. Truth be told, the Independency of INEC is in principle and not in practice. The worst part now is that the Nigerian security agencies now join hands with politicians in election malpractice, even some academics who are usually recruited for ad-hoc purpose of conducting elections are not left out in the rape of democracy, thus Theophilus Okere sees this kind of attitude as gross corruption, he describes it as “corruption both of the leaders and of the led is one virus that has infected our body politics.”(2015; p. 202). To state how bad the concept of democracy has gone in Nigeria, Okere concluded that “so as things stand in Nigeria one can sum up the situation as Not Yet Democracy”(2015;p202). Talking about infrastructures and social amenities in Nigeria is like literally pouring water on top of a stone, the dividends of democracy has indeed eluded Nigeria for decades. The roads are very bad, there are no constant supplies of good table water, most Nigerians have resorted to sinking private water boreholes in search of water resources, sad to note here is that Nigeria is still yet to research on the adverse effect of this proliferation of boreholes being constructed almost within an interval of twenty to forty meters. The security agencies have indeed failed in their responsibilities, people pay double tax as regards security in Nigeria, after paying tax as a civil servant for instance at source, one still under compulsion pays what is now termed “vigilante security fee.” This is what should be the primary responsibility of government through agencies like the military, police, civil defense and so forth. Power or electric is usually what drives production everywhere in the world, the case of Nigeria is quite different, people get to pay through their nose for the epileptic power supply we witness here, and still provide themselves with private sources of power supply. The recent increase in electricity tariff is quite unbearable. This has regrettably made most companies to stop operation and go into extinction and or moribund. Expanding it further would have made one to see why Nigeria would not grow and become stable with her economy. Because production is difficult in Nigeria, Nigeria imports almost all the products they consume, and worthy to state here is that importation is a killer of economy; it depletes the foreign reserve of the nation and enriches the purchasing power and ability of the currency of the exporting country. Talking about government housing scheme in Nigeria would be like asking a blind man colour of the item before him. The few housing scheme that has been executed in Nigeria were either haphazardly done or where designed to scam the populace. The government has virtually failed in all her responsibilities. A cursory look at the Nigeria judiciary system would rather leave one activating his or her lachrymals gland. The executive does not give pride of place to the system and have zero respect for the rule of law, recall that a law is the combination of the working document that binds a group of people. So speaking differently, the law is the voice of the people. Sad to

observe that the apex law outfit in Nigeria stands as a stooge to the office of the president. The various people representing the populace are also part of Nigerian's poor democratic system. Senators and members of Representatives collect constituency allowance and convert same to private property and that is why Nigeria is where she is. Education in Nigeria is on the fast pedestal of decline, because the government of Nigeria has blatantly refused to budget more value annually on education, that is why you see things get worse on daily basis, because the word education means to lead one out of darkness. Due to this, strike actions by the University staff, Labour Unions and others have become a normal event carried out almost every month of the year without significant achievement or response by government. Human right and social justice has no more place in the hearts of most Nigerians. People at the helm of affairs use their position to convict and jail their political opponents. On the various Nigerian roads, the police and the military has vowed to keep on embarrassing citizens with every amount of impunity, causing more problem than they are charged to curb. Inter-party wars are taken to the extreme. Once one does not belong to the party; one is perceived as an enemy and thus is fought with every amount of energy and facility available. These make one to ask, which way, Nigeria?

5.0 Locke's Concept of the Rule of Law as a Panacea for the Sustenance of Democracy in Nigeria

In this section, having looked at Locke's concept of the rule of law and democracy in Nigeria, we shall attempt to marry the two ideas. The aim of Locke's rule of law has been seen to be the defense of citizens' rights and particularly the preservation of property rights of all the members of society. First, the state is an arrangement that makes for the submission of the personal right of reasoning of the individual and the right of protecting life and property given to the individual by the state of nature. The sovereignty lies with the people and is clearly expressed in the common law they have. The sovereignty does not lie with the few elected leaders. Thus, Nigerian leaders should see the right they have to lead as one truly belonging to the people and only given on trust to them. The people and not the few elected leaders have the highest authority.

Locke's theory is centered on the people's consent through the social contract. The authority of the people is expressed in the common law that they give consent to. In a democratic government, citizens' consent plays a crucial role in legitimizing the authority of the government and ensuring that power is held accountable to the people. This makes for popular sovereignty. Here the citizens' consent is the foundation of the popular sovereignty,

which holds that the people are ultimate source of political power. Consent also makes for legitimacy where the people legitimize the government's authority, making its actions and decisions acceptable to the people. Citizens' consent ensures that the government is accountable to the people, as citizens can withdraw their consent through elections, protests, or other forms of expression. In a representative democracy, the supremacy of the law that comes by the consent of the people makes for a proper representation of the people. This balanced representation in turn encourages the participation of the people in the political process, fostering engagement and involvement in the decision-making process. The consciousness of the fact of the consent of the people in Nigeria political system will bring untold benefits and dividend of democracy.

Thus, the law being the voice of the people should be supreme. Whatever form the commonwealth is under, the ruling power ought to govern by declared and received laws, and not by extemporary dictates and undetermined resolutions, for then mankind will be in a far worse condition than in the state of Nature. For all the power the government has, being only for the good of the society, as it ought not to be arbitrary and at pleasure, so it ought to be exercised by established and promulgated laws, that both the people may know their duty, and be safe and secured within the limits of the law, and the rulers, too, kept within their due bonds.

One of the pillars of true democracy is periodic elections. Locke's theory of the rule of law detests absolute rulership. Periodic elections hold a vital place in a democratic government, serving several essential functions. Regular or periodic elections ensure that the elected leaders or officials remain accountable to the people, as citizens can vote them out of office if they fail to live up to expectations. Periodic allow citizens to choose representatives who reflect their interests, values, and beliefs ensuring the tempo of the social contract. Periodic elections encourage policy renewal and accommodate the changing public opinion. As new government officials come on board, new ideas and policies surface as they may see things from perspectives different from the previous officials. These new policies in most cases accommodate and reflect the changing public opinions and desires ensuring that governmental policies adapt to evolving societal needs which is ever dynamic. Aside from the regular elections, the election process should be free and fair so as to truly reflect the minds of the citizens. Electoral malpractices which manifest in election rigging, vote-buying, use of thugs, threatening of opponents and other forms of electoral manipulations undermine the integrity of elections. Following free, fair and periodic elections, democracy in Nigeria can be sustained because it will actually express the will of the people.

Locke in his theory emphasizes separation of power. He talked about the executive, the legislature and the federative powers. The executive to enforce the laws, the legislative arm formulates the laws while the federating arm takes care of the foreign relations, each arm serving as a check to the other. Though in the Nigerian democratic system, the roles may not be truly the same, but the emphasis is that so much power should not be concentrated in a sector. It is no secret that one of the challenges bedeviling democracy in Nigeria is the dominance of the executive arm. The executive branch often overpowers the legislative and judicial branches, threatening checks and balances. This problem equally enhances weak institutions. Ineffective and insufficient institutions, such as the judiciary and electoral commission, struggle to perform their roles. However following Locke's theory of the rule of law and separation of power, each arm should serve as a check to the other for true democracy. This way, the excesses in the Nigerian political system can be curbed.

Talking about the natural resources found on the shores Nigeria, following Locke's concept, they should be used for the common good of the citizens. This will even bring to rest the crisis that is manifesting in different forms on daily basis. In summary, if every person in Nigeria both the government and the governed submits to the rule of law as given by Locke, democracy will be sustained in Nigeria.

To clearly put things in perspective, the origin of the challenges facing the rule of law and democratic system in Nigeria and Africa as a continent must be pointed out and critically looked at even though it is not the proper task of this work. I believe that further researches could be done to tackle the problem. The major challenge is that democracy is an alien system of governance to Nigeria and Africa at large. The Nigerian indigenous system of governance is monarchy-cum-theocracy. A monarchical system of government is a form of government where a single person, typically a king or queen, holds supreme power and authority over a territory. The monarch's position is usually hereditary, and passed down from generation to generation in the royal family. The monarchical system is characterized by absolute power, hereditary succession, centralized power, limited citizen participation, traditional legitimacy and symbolic role residing in the monarch. These features are in some way contradictory to democracy and it must be noted that they worked so well for African societies, Nigeria inclusive. It is worthy of note here, that the monarchical system both in Nigeria and in other nations of the world have evolved over the years, and many modern monarchies have incorporated democratic elements, such as constitutional limits on power and symbolic roles. Examples of monarchs in Nigeria are the Okuku of Annang, Obong of Ibibio and Efik, Chiefs of the Igbo and Yoruba, and Emirs

of Hausa-Fulani. As earlier stated, this form of government is indigenous to the Nigerian society, deep in the blood of the citizens and it served the best interests of the people. Its features and operations do not really tally with democracy. Therefore to bring democratic system to bear in Nigeria would naturally face challenges of acceptance and practice.

6.0 Conclusion

All these issues and many more are the reasons why men gather together to form a civil government. When one gives up his life for fending for himself and defending his private property, one expects that the function and the submission would be adequately treated, but the opposite exists in Nigeria. When the role of the government has been seen to be absent, there should certainly be mayhem in the polis/city or state if you like. The reason why people gave up their power to a supposed civil government is for a general protection of their life and property, but in a case where the government has obviously reneged in her duty, then the purpose is defeated and John Locke stipulated dissolution of the state. From every indication, Nigeria is very close to the brink of disaster and dissolution is what the clock ticks, if the current Nigerian leaders do not brace up and live up to their responsibilities, then a revolution might be an unavoidable impending danger and this as it were, would not fetch anybody anything good. The people who are supposed to be the rulers according to the definition of democracy, people who are supposed to be at the center of democracy, are now at the receiving end. Consequently, the democracy in Nigeria has been very faulty and on the brink of collapse if conscious effort is not made by the government to go back to the drawing board.

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