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THE HERMENEUTICS OF ETHICS AND POLITICS FOR AN IDEAL NIGERIAN SOCIETY: A PRAGMATIC ARGUMENT FOR A CONTEMPORARY STATE

Barnabas E. Izegede¹ & Harry Iwegbu Onyekpe²

Department of Philosophy, University of Delta, Agbor, Nigeria^{1&2}

Corresponding Email: barnabas.izegede@unidel.edu.ng¹

Abstract

In anthropologico-socio hermeneutics, the essence of human existence is the pursuit of an ideal and organized society where man lives with his fellow human beings in a close social interaction. Man's pursuit of his inherent goals is founded on his nature as a social being created with gregarious quality. In pursuing an ideal society, man aims at building a social milieu where equality, justice, liberty, people participation in decision making process, personal development, social-economic security, cultural harmony, environmental friendliness among others, are obtainable. These factors that promote ideal society and its attendant effects like peaceful life, happiness and social security appear to be mirage in Nigeria's contemporary society. This is prompted by various hindrances to their realization. Such hindrances include tribalism, unfortunate bad political leaders, Injustice, ethnic politics, political apathy, misconception of globalization, among others. Using philosophical method of analysis, this paper will explore what an ideal society ought to be. It will also discuss the challenges of building an ideal society and how the implementation of ethics and politics can help build a contemporary ideal society.

Keywords: Ethics, Politics, Ideal Society, Distributive Justice and Nigerian Society.

Introduction

The quest for an ideal society has been one of the perennial concerns of moral philosophy and its core areas particularly political philosophy. The foundation of speculations on the problem of the state and the organization of human society was laid by Plato, an ancient Greek philosopher. The notion of ideal state (society) is extensively discussed by Plato in one of his dialogues, "The Republic", where he proceeds to formulate the concept of an ideal state where justice prevails, Idike, (2001:52). In the attainment of an ideal society where just man is found and ideal life realized, there is the utmost need to identify the place of ethics

and politics in building ideal contemporary society. Political philosophy is an extension or application of moral philosophy to the problem of political order, Blackstone, (1973:10).

Instructively, building of an ideal society is one of the major tasks of moral philosophy and politics. A society is a group of people with cultural identities such as language, dressing, norms, behaviours and tradition. It is an extension of family structure or an agglomeration of families. A society is a group of people with mutual agreements to pursue and achieve common goal. It is a group of human beings living together and working together for the satisfaction of their mutual wants, Idike (2001:14 -15).

An organized society often develops into a nation state or national state. A nation state could either be ethnic nation or civic nation. Ethnic nations are “those nations with common ethno-linguistic origins, ancestry, history, values, beliefs, culture and traditions, Jega, (2018:6). While ethnic nations originate out of ethno-linguistic factors, civic nations emerge out of pacts or agreement between two or more ethnic nation for merger. For instance, Nigeria is a civil nation created out of colonial amalgam. But whether ethno-linguistic or civic nations, the import of this study is to expose the concept of an ideal society, its challenges and the place of ethics and politics in building an ideal contemporary society. An ideal society is an organized community where positive values and desirable qualities are obtainable thereby promoting the happiness, the well-being and self-fulfillment of the aspiration of the members of the society. The essence of existence in the contemporary world is self-actualization and fulfillment of dreams and aspiration. The members of the society can only actualize their dreams and aspirations when there is enabling social and political environments to rely on. Such social and political atmosphere include among others:

- i. Equality: Equal rights, social, political and legal equality
- ii. Distributive justice: Fair, impartial and equal distribution of rights, privileges, benefits and burdens.
- iii. Democratization of ideas and decision-making process.
- iv. Human rights protection
- v. Social responsibilities through volunteerism, community service, and communitarianism etc.
- vi. Personal development
- vii. Cultural harmony in the midst cultural plurality
- viii. Environmental friendliness
- ix. Access to quality education
- x. Social and economic security, pension scheme, allowances for aged people and less privilege people.

When these social, cultural, political, economic, and legal structures are in place in the society, then such society is in an ideal note. This pursuit has been the primordial concern of moral, social, political philosophy. In the modern society of today, these indices of measuring stability appear to have been eroded by attitudinal and institutional failures. Experience is clear that in terms of better society in Nigeria, that “yesterday is always better than today”.

Challenges of Building an Ideal Society in Nigeria

One of the major problems confronting building an ideal contemporary society in Nigeria has been institutional issues. Most of the Nigerian's superstructures are far from progressive reality existing on in their shadows and other time as basically utopic policies. The pursuit for equality and justice as postulates of ideal society cannot be attained in the environment of

injustice and tribalism as the case of Nigeria today. These invariably imply that these negative values have to be eliminated for an ideal society to be built. This would curb the notion of pursuing government policies and projects to favor one's community, religion, political party, social group or wrong ideology of "Us" versus "them" phenomenon, Jega, (2008:10). The political leadership of Post-independence Nigeria has been a problem of building an ideal Nigerian society. The standard of living in Nigeria is deteriorating on a daily basis as seen in the area of high rate unemployment, inflation, civil and industrial strike, poverty, corruption, disease, malnutrition, insecurity of lives and property among others appeared to be the only legacy the state is capable of passing from one generation to the other. Fayemi, 2007 as cited by Ochoja and Osusona (2021:141). Another major bane is Political leadership, is a central problem in building an ideal society for improved quality living because an ideal Society cannot be afraid in the absence of thorough management of the affairs of the country.

In multi-cultural and religious societies like Nigeria and other Communities of the world there are usually the problems of cultural differences and religious intolerance. These hinder steps towards building and ideal society. Nigeria as a plural society with multi-ethnicity, cultural diversity, and multi religious practices, continue to witness ethno-cultural and religious conflicts. Ethno- religious conflict is more pronounced in multi- ethnic, multi-religious and heterogeneous societies such as Nigeria, Turkey and Pakistan Alozie, (2018:333). Naturally, a society cannot be ideal in an atmosphere of rancor and conflict because peace and harmony foster development and nation building. Social injustice and economic inequalities are twin factors that have contributed to pose as hinderances to the building of an ideal society in Nigeria. Social injustice such as discrimination, prejudice, class distinction, and other forms of inequalities in the areas of wage discrimination, access to wealth and resources are high in Nigeria. These inequalities are not only experienced in the context of the north-south dichotomy. Statistically, whereas 95% of Jigawa state was classified as poor, only 20% of Bayelsa state was so classified. Similarly, while 85% of kwara state was classified as poor only 22 of Osun state was classified so (Soludo, 2007). Ethnic politics and conflicting political ideologies as obtainable in Nigeria today have far practical implications in obstructing Nigeria's march towards building an ideal society. Nigeria as a state is multi-ethnic and multi religious. Even within same state there exists ethnic disparities and domination. These often lead to ethnic politics. Nationally, there is North-south dichotomy in religion and politics. The North has always taken the leadership of Nigeria. According to Asia, as cited by Alozie, (2008:345) "the experience of June 12 1993 presidential election which Babangida's regime cancelled when it was clear that late chief MKO Abiola was leading in the released preliminary results is clear example". Also, there are no ideological uniformities among political parties. The same political parties of today operate with different programmes in its different controlled states. This is contrary to what was experienced during the second Republic where each political party used the same programs in any of its control States.

Political apathy and the lackadaisical attitudes of the people towards politics is alarming in Nigeria because of the attitudes of the political key players. This endangers move towards building an ideal society or state in contemporary time. The citizens are short of political education, public enlightenment and participation. These are fundamental in the building and sustenance of an ideal society because the society cannot be ideal when the people are not fully involved in decision-making process and other public affairs. The right to participation is a major political right of the citizens. All power belongs to the people or

power to the people, is the principle of the sovereignty of the people Idike (2001:38). Inculcating certain values like political culture and socialization into the mind of the citizens promote political consciousness. This is a major factor in building an ideal society where people lead quality life. Violation of environmental rights poses a problem to building an ideal Society. The term environment comes from environs which means “in circuit” and or “turning around in old French” Barbara, (1998:322). The environment is the natural surroundings of man that provides live support for him. But quite often, the human environment is negatively impacted through global warming, ozone depletion, waste disposal, bush burning, pollution, desert encroachment etc. Humans’ impacts on the environment violate the right of man to favorable or conducive environment. The Ecocentrists hold that we ought rather to regard nature with admiration and respect, because of the view that nature and natural being have intrinsic values. Barbara, (1998: 327). This is explainable in the inner happiness in man when he is in contact with natural vegetation, wildlife and aquatic creatures.

The misconception of the notion of globalization and international interdependency is chronic in Africa especially Nigeria. The advocacy for and practice of globalization or international economies has been on for decades. This ideological advocacy for international economic integration and corporation among the economies of the world have been supported by progressive intellectuals and theorists because of its numerous benefits on global space. But African states, including Nigeria, in particular, see globalization as capitalist ideology or new form of colonialism and invariably accept it with mixed feeling. Ideally, globalization means the rapid disappearance of geographical limitations for economic activities, capital movement, technology and goods. Babawale, (2003:65). Globalization if effectively implemented, fosters improved living for citizens, which is the goal of an ideal Society. The challenges of building an ideal society for the good of all are enormous and require the synergy of the individuals, corporate organizations and the state. This informs the idea of employing the roles of ethics and politics in building and sustaining an ideal society. Ethics on the one hand is concerned with the principles and values that guide the conduct of man and by extension cooperate organizations and states, politics on the other hand deals with the governance of man, his activities, policies and decision-making as it relates to power and authority within the human society. Ethics and politics in Plato's thoughts “are completely blended together because he holds that the universal abstract, good applies to both ethics and politics” Idike (2001:60).

The Hermeneutics Ethics in an Ideal Society

Ethics as a branch of philosophy is a key instrument in building an ideal society. It is guide towards good conduct achieved through instilling good behaviour and positive values, which create moral standards in the entire society. The word, ethics could stand for a branch of moral philosophy or philosophical thinking about morality and its problems. If every member of the society is ethical or morally conscious, the large society would be ideal for human living. One of the major barriers of building an ideal society is the negative attitude of the members of the society as manifested in bribery, corruption, tribalism, prejudice, prostitution, fraud, kidnapping, arson, destruction of public property and facilities. Members of the society involved in these negative values because of wrong character formation. Character is the aggregation of the personality characteristic traits of the individual comprising his cultural and religious attitudes. Character is developed gradually and important building and nurturing of moral concepts, conscience, religious values, or views and social attitudes and an essential aspect of personality development that necessarily

distinguish one person from the other. Udoya, (2017:124). When character is formed, attitude is generated and this influences the behavioral pattern of the members of the society. Character is therefore the totality of a man's behavior. These include ethical standards and positive values such as love, respect, humility, courage, honesty and discipline. They influence ideal state formation.

Ethics as a guide towards good conducts encourages responsible behaviours by pointing out the effects of any behavior and attitude, either actions or in actions civil responsibilities or duties of the member of the society are propagated and nurtured by ethics and ethical principles for the purpose of human interaction, social harmony and socialization. The members of the society are mentored by ethical principles to see the society as that of all and to pursue general goals as against individual goals. The inculcation of communitarian mentality into the members of the society by ethical principles foster their respect for an uploading of human rights. When the rights of the members of the society are respected and protected the society would be at peace, as violation of the rights of the citizens remains one of the major problems of the contemporary society. Ethics also help in building trust in the relationship between members of the society. When the problem of trust is eliminated from the society, there would be peaceful and harmonious coexistence between members of the society. This invariably leads to objective thinking and decision making. When the principles of Ethics are applied in decision making process and in the governance of the society, altruistic decision would be made and utilitarian principles of the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people in society will be pursued thereby reducing egoism. Ethics enhances moral value orientation in the society. As pointed out earlier, one of the major problems of the contemporary society is relative morality. The value system, attitudinal orientation and behavioural pattern of people in a place have profound impacts on the economic, political, and social development of their environment. Pate, (2018:146). Ethics re-orientates members of the society and change their value system, attitude and behavioural pattern for an improved society.

The Hermeneutics Politics in an Ideal Society

Politics in Plato's view is blended with ethics but Aristotle the greatest political philosopher of the classical era, gives politics an independent existence from ethics. In his treatise on the science and act of governance (politics), he addresses some ideas for building an ideal state (society). The modern States is the manifestation of political power that has been progressively depersonalized, formalized and rationalized; the state is the medium through which political order is integrated into a comprehensive social order. Chesterman, Ignatieff, Thakur, (2005:2). The state is the creation of man and political power. The society is an association of human being formed to promote good life. The society is a collection of citizens and the citizens are those who possess political powers. When the members of the society participate in the function of juror and legislator, the society is regarded to be on an ideal lane. Politics advocates for the existence and practice of rule of law in the State (society). Rule of law is an ingredient of the society as it holds that the sovereignty of the rule of law must be placed above every form of personal authority. The study and understanding of democratic institutions, governance and culture are deeply rooted in politics. The understanding of the theories and practices of political concepts are the bedrock of an idea society. The role of politics in building an ideal society cannot be overemphasized bearing in mind that its scope is multifaceted ranging from political concepts and theories, political history, political philosophy, political economy and

comparative politics. The various areas of politics are instrumental in ensuring a smooth society.

According to Aristotle, "since politics uses the rest of the sciences and since again, it legislates what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good for man. (McKeon as cited by Seth and Dublin, 2006). The pursuit of justice and equality is also extended to the province of the functions of politics. Justice advocates for equality. It is instructive to note that whether Justice is understood from democrats or oligarchs point of view, it remains a doctrine of equality either in a distributive or corrective form. The practice of Justice enhances legitimacy of governance and sincerity of purpose in the society as it ensures proper allocation of resources for the good of all. The provision of public good and service for the members of the civil society is the duty of government formed through politics. An ideal society is felt when the government in power provides adequate essential services and goods for the people. This promotes significant change in the quality of life of the members of the society thereby attaining the status of social progress and its attendant ideal living. Politics provide political education and enlightenment for the members of the large society. When the members of the society are enlightened, they participate in decision making process. The involvement of members of the society in the decision process of their social, political and economic affairs indicate a height of ideal society. The sovereignty of the people manifests in their involvement in public issues as a feature of a legitimate system. This makes the government responsive and accountable which are among the hallmark of an ideal society. Responsive and accountable leadership are bedrocks for building an ideal Society; and are fundamental features of democratic governance. Democratic governance "provides platform for rapid change in the socio-economic and political status of nation and the citizens" Oni as cited by Alozie, (2018:351).

Conclusion

For Nigerian's polity to thrive and enjoy stability, a service driven leadership and critical thinking orientation is required. As this paper observes corruption and ethno-religious politics are some of the major problems in Nigerian polity. Nigerian leadership must have Philosophers as their rulers as Plato recommended in his Republic. In placing high intellectual capacity as the greatest parameter for quality leadership which of course, is found within the class of philosophers, Plato said, unless philosophers become kings, the society cannot progress developmentally. Plato's philosopher king postulation signifies the import of critical thinking as a requisite for quality leadership even in a democratic setting. This paper therefore recommends the establishment of some institutions like Nigerian Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies (NIPS) together with other activities designed for leadership capacity building.

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