

Plato's Concept of Democracy and Contemporary Political Scenario in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Plato finds that the necessity for society and the state resides in human nature itself. No one is sufficient in himself; everyone needs the aid of others in order to live life worthy of man. Hence man must live with others in society in order to make use of them both materially and morally. So from the moment society arises out of necessity of meeting the needs of man, the members which make up society must be organised into different classes according to the diversity of works to be performed. This paper examines the Plato's ideal state and criticisms of democracy and tries to prove that it is relevant in Nigeria's present democratic scenario. The paper will show how significant they are to abate Nigerian democratic corruption and some of his suggestions for good governance could be utilized to address the problem of present day democracy in Nigeria.*

Keywords: Society, Democracy, good governance, Ideal State, Corruption.

1. INTRODUCTION

Plato has exerted a greater influence over human thought than any other individual with the possible exception of Aristotle. This is due both to the intrinsic vitality of his ideas and to the fact that he appeared at a comparatively early stage in Western philosophical culture. His ideas affect the intellectual climate of our day in two important ways: first, by entering into our Christian theology and contributing especially to its doctrine of the opposition between the spirit and the flesh; second, by entering into our scientific mentality. A philosopher in our day is considered a specialist in a field of knowledge distinct from that of science. Plato was a philosopher in a totally different sense. For him, philosophy was insight into the whole of truth, the study of reality in all its aspects; he was unaware of any barriers between this or that field of inquiry such as we erect today. Common sense ran into physics, physics into mathematics, mathematics into metaphysics; metaphysics, in its turn, led into ethics, politics, and religion. His whole aim was to devise a method of barring incompetence and knavery from public office, and of selecting and preparing the best to rule for the common good.

2. PLATO'S IDEA OF DEMOCRACY AND OUR TIME

Plato's genius is exhibited in the fact that he succeeded in eliciting from his observations of the Athenian state reflections on society and government that are true everywhere. Of course, the city of Athens was an exceptionally favourable field for a student seeking generalizations concerning social life. The history of Athens has all the sweep of a classical tragedy; it mirrors the rise and fall of a far-flung empire, a great sea-power, an

extremely prosperous commercial state, a thorough-going democracy, a community in which material prosperity went together with a magnificent culture, a culture in which art went together with science and both were overtopped by philosophy. Veit was apt to report that:

The Greek world view tended to diminish sin, human responsibility and individual worth....Greek society was generally morally decadent, one that institutionalised infanticide, slavery, war, oppression, prostitution, and homosexuality. Greek society for example did not just tolerate homosexuality, but promoted itⁱ

Plato's *Republic* was one of the notable Utopias in the history of thought. In giving a picture of the state he was depicting a universal essence, in other words he was drawing an ideal. When a friend objected that his conception of the state was unrealizable on earth, he replied that he is only offering an ideal to man:

No... but perhaps there is a pattern set up in the heavens for one who desires to see it and, seeing it, to find one in himself. But whether it exists anywhere or ever will exist is no matter; for this is the only commonwealth in whose politics he can ever take partⁱⁱ

Yes no ideal is ever realized, and yet no ideal needs, on that account, to be useless; it is the function of an ideal to be beyond realization and by this fact to inspire and guide human effort. However, Plato was not concerned with giving a beautiful picture of a fantastic state; in depicting an ideal

he was describing what the only genuine reality is for him. For example, a physiologist is not primarily concerned with cripples and invalids; he gives an account of the normal body and the laws of its functioning. So Plato is painting the image of society in its normal condition and of the moral principles which govern its operation.

Be it as it may, Plato comes in sharpest opposition with modern tendencies in his treatment of democracy. He favours aristocracy as against democracy. He detests democracy. This can be understood for, he lived his youth in the aftermath of the Sicilian expedition when the deficiencies of democracy were exposed in their nakedness. Moreover, the condemnation of Socrates to death by the jury of the Athenian public could not fail to impress him profoundly. Yet once more, his intuitive judgment stands against a background of a general theory. Democracy is a denial of the principle of qualification; it holds that every citizen has a right to participate in government; but a right must correspond to capacity, and Plato believes that the average person has neither the knowledge nor the native intelligence requisite for governance.

Politics is an art, it is a science. For instance, we demand that a doctor should be trained in medicine and a pilot in navigation, yet we permit any one to govern irrespective of his equipment. Government is a complicated function, the highest function of man, and one which must be mastered in order that it may be exercised responsibly. In addition, democracy affirms that all men are equal, but in fact, all men are not equal. Majority are incapable of ruling; of those that are, some are more capable than others. Instead of government by all, good as well as bad, stupid as well as intelligent, Plato advocates aristocracy which is government by the best, the reign of the philosophers. For Plato, aristocracy is the rule of reason. Let me note that we must not misunderstand Plato's meaning; aristocracy is not exploitation; it is not a condition in which the interests of the many are sacrificed to the interests of the few. In aristocracy, the interests of the group are paramount, and the rulers will be the servants of the community. They will indeed not be rulers but leaders. Aristocracy is a polity in which the interests of all are safeguarded by the exceptional intelligence of the few. Such a state will be like a family in which the head works for the good of its weaker members.

The word 'democracy' designates not only a form of government but a form of life, individual and social. Democracy in the individual is equality of all desires, failure to discriminate between the better and the worse, giving the lower an equal voice with the higher; it is the absence of standards. The democratic regime in the soul is one of genial license. The democratic man is not bad, he is both bad and good, or rather he is neither; he has no character, but only impulse. But we must keep in mind that every impulse,

whether good or bad, has its day, but its day is very short. So the life of the democratic individual is lacking all stability:

He lives through the day, indulging the appetite of the hour; and sometimes he is lapped in drink and strains of the flute; then he is for total abstinence, and tries to get thin; then, again, he is at gymnastics; sometimes idling and neglecting everything, then once more living the life of a philosopher; often he is at politics, and starts to his feet and says and does anything that may turn up; and if he is emulous of anyone who is a warrior, off he is in that direction or of men of business, once more in that. His life has neither order nor law and this distracted existence he terms joy and bliss and freedom; and so he goes onⁱⁱⁱ.

Plato's account applies to conditions in our day. From his perspective, a democratic man is dominated by two ideas, freedom and equality, as such he makes a shift from previous me; he has no hierarchy of values since the highest value is equality. He spends his money, labour and time on unnecessary pleasures quite as much as on necessary ones; but if he be fortunate, and not too much disordered in his wits, when years have elapsed and the heyday of passion is over, he re-admits into the city some part of the exiled virtues and does not wholly give himself up to their successors. In that case, he balances his pleasure and lives in a sort of equilibrium, putting the government of himself into the hands of the one which comes first and wins the turn and when he has had enough of that, then into the hands of another, he despises none of them but encourages them all.

Again from Plato's perspective, democratic man has so imbibed with the idea of equality that lacks the measures to govern himself. Instead he gives himself over to the strongest passion of the moment. But even then, the democratic man is blind to the fact he is ruled by passions rather than reason, confusing the two and unable to break out of an egalitarian mindset^{iv}. But on the other hand, it makes for the cult of the average, the gradual destruction of excellence. Moreover, by embracing freedom and equality, democratic man is forced to embrace relativism. If he recognises that something is evil or good that would instantly force him to arrange his life based on a hierarchy of values. That hierarchy would also apply then to political and social life. But without any hierarchy of values and given himself over to relativism, he is then ruled by the strongest passion of the moment^v.

In social life, democracy means that anyone is as good as anyone else in any respect; it is the denial of the expert, or rather the setting up of everyone as his own expert. Take our own times. If it is a problem affecting organic evolution, the man in the street or on the farm regards his opinion as of

equal importance with that of the biologist. Nowadays, the intellectual atmosphere is filled with the vapour of uncriticised and inexpert opinions. So, there are many men who will deem this the fairest of states. The present fear of leaders is unjustified; leaders are not rulers but guides; they play the function in democracy of upholding standards and formulating for the public its dumb and instinctive aspirations. No democracy is healthy unless it provides a mechanism for continuous self-criticism, in the shape either of a stable, though growing, and tradition or of a forceful personality. In the absence of such an agency, standards tend to weaken and institutions pander to the public instead of leading it; our press, our literature, our drama, sometimes our educational establishments give the public what they want, instead of raising the public from the level of their wants to the level of the ideals.

3. PLATO DIVIDES THE SOCIAL ORGANISM INTO THREE CLASSES

There are three classes of people within the society corresponding to three elements within the individual. Each kind has its appropriate role to play within the state.

The Producers: Provide necessities of life and all material and economic needs of the state – goods and services. These include such groups as farmers, shoe makers, carpenters and general labourers. It also includes shopkeepers, importers and bankers.

Second group, The Guardians: They are concerned with the welfare of society as a whole and protect it from both external and internal enemies. But eventually, those trained to be guardians will be divided into two further groups based on their abilities. They correspond to our police and military personnel, as well as other federal agents and administrators that- support and enforce the policies of the rulers.

Third group, Philosophers: The third and the highest group retains this title of the guardians and its members are ultimate rulers of the state. They are a select group, distinguished by their intelligence and philosophical wisdom. Their job is to establish the policies and laws within society. Since the producers are concerned with material acquisition and physical comfort, they correspond to the appetitive part of the soul the philosophers.

It is a division of society upon the basis of function; the first class rules, the second protects the state, the third provides for its physical needs. Two features stand out in Plato's conception. First, that leadership is in the hands of the intelligent group, the producing class being allowed the least power of any. Modern society often tends to reverse this order and to establish the business group as dominant, as the one which sets the tone and pulls the strings in politics and in

the other spheres of life. Second, there are class-distinctions in Plato's *republic*, based, be it noted, on the principle of function and not on any hereditary principle. We have today the viewpoint that any man may begin in a log-cabin and end up as a governor of a state or the president of the nation; this Plato's notion is a conception which we must cherish. Nevertheless, Plato's social philosophy supplies a useful check to whatever temptation there may be to carry our contemporary viewpoint to an extreme. For Plato, every individual has a natural orbit which prescribes the boundaries of his career; today many an individual is rendered unhappy by continually trying to rise to a more commanding position than the one in which he finds himself and so to rise into a sphere beyond his abilities. An apprentice must become a shop keeper, the shop keeper must become a professional man, the professional man must become a manufacturer or a political chief. In this viewpoint, there lurks a false standard of values. According to Plato, a man can realize his function as a human being and become happy no matter the rank of his position, provided it is socially useful. The ideal of boundless ambition means that man moves continually from function to function and from position to position without catching root at any point and without ever enjoying the fruits of his labour. The business man must keep on making more money and the official must keep on being promoted to a 'higher' rank. But this fitful restless change makes for shallowness. A "person can go further and achieve higher standard than he or she would be able to do if attempting to work in many different occupations"^{vi}. Taking bearing from here, we can conclude that all the necessary tasks within society are equally important. Culture develops through concentration, and in that atmosphere of leisure which enables the mind to dwell upon and explore all the possibilities of its environment and of itself. In effect, "specialisation allows for better result for all parties"^{vii}. But the n Plato believes that some tasks and occupations are qualitatively higher than others. These qualitatively different tasks are grounded in the abilities of each person which are qualitatively different. Hence, in a good society/just society, each person does what he or she is most capable of and that means that there is a concurrence between high ranking tasks and high ranking abilities, and between mediocre tasks and mediocre abilities. By and large, "the harmonious interplay between the classes and the professional functions is what characterizes the just state"^{viii}

In all, Plato's State is eminently aristocratic. "Its direction is confided to a few philosophers who, granted the Platonic identification of wisdom and virtue, are also the best and hence worthy of directing others"^{ix}.

4. PHILOSOPHER KING

Plato's age coincided with the age of reason in Greece, the epoch when the Greeks were getting away from myth, magic

and superstition and advancing to the uses and rigors of reason. Plato is naturally confident in the power of reason to get at the truth and is certainly over-enthusiastic in his expectations from its use. Not only did he think that there is a final truth, he believed that the philosopher could discover it; going further, he was convinced that the philosophers could agree among themselves on what the truth is.

He believes that a good society is only possible if the people in power are good and live by the light of philosophical reason. And this is expanded into the whole of his political philosophy. For sure, if you want to know whether you need open-heart surgery, you would not put it to a democratic vote among your friends, your banker, or your mechanic. Instead, you would seek the wisdom of physicians who are experts on the matter. Similarly, when it comes to formulating the policies and laws that govern the state, the democratic majority represents those least likely to make an informed decision. If we are concerned with the health of the state, we should similarly seek out those who have the necessary wisdom to govern. There are experts that must have a vision of the good. They must have to know what constitutes true knowledge. Just as a navigator must understand the stars and be able to use them to guide a ship through the vast ocean, so our political rulers must be able to navigate the ship of state by means of a vision of forms and good. But the question is: who else would these political navigators be but those with philosophical wisdom? Yes statesmanship is a science and an art; one must have lived for it and been long prepared. Only philosopher king is prepared to guide a nation. Hence the Plato's stand:

Unless either philosophers become kings in their countries or those who are now called kings and rulers come to be sufficiently inspired with a - genuine desire for wisdom, unless that is to say, political power and philosophy meet together...there can be no rest from troubles... for states, nor yet, as I believe, for all mankind; nor can this commonwealth which we have imagined ever till then see the light of the day and grow to its full stature^x

By philosophy, Plato means an active culture, wisdom that mixes with the concrete busyness of life; he does not mean a closeted and impractical metaphysician. However, one might almost say that it is the nature of philosophers (as opposed to scientists) to disagree among themselves. We doubt that there is such a thing as a final truth, or if there is, whether any human being can attain it. Plato seems to lay down an orthodox doctrine for all statesmen and one which is forever fixed. It is no defence to argue that Plato was thinking of a Utopian state, not a realizable one; for we doubt that his ideal state is really ideal, really Utopian. We are in favour of a political form in which there is room for perpetual change

and nothing is taken as absolute or absolutely fixed. It has often been urged against philosophers that, in contrast to scientists, they fail to reach unanimity of opinion. But though scientists agree on a theory (more or less) at any one time, they change their views, from epoch to epoch. All scientific theories of the past have undergone modification, and no scientist expects the present theories to remain unaltered in the future; scientific hypotheses are always subject to correction. A clear case in point is the position of an American philosopher of science and a physicist who argued in his book *'The Structure of Scientific Revolution'* that scientific theories were social constructions, and not different from other types of knowledge; that the practices that define a scientific discipline at certain point in time called paradigms are also culturally based. So "there is successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution is the usual developmental pattern of mature science"^{xi} On the other hand, though at no one time is there unanimity among philosophers on any theory, there are several doctrines which are bound to have a good number of devoted followers at all times. However, what Plato meant by insisting that philosophers should become kings or kings philosophers is that when they gained philosophical knowledge, it will empower them to rule and rule correctly. An English philosopher and scientist of modern epoch concurs with Plato when he opines that, "knowledge is power and man's capacity to act in proportion to his knowledge"^{xii}. Being critical, rational, logical, systematic and coherent in thinking qualifies one to be a philosopher. When one possesses these qualities, he stands a better chance of making valid judgements. This is because; a philosopher possesses rationality, which makes him critical about himself and his environment. On the other hand, a king is the one who has power and authority to rule. Hence, when we place the two words side by side, we can define a philosopher-king as a ruler with rationality. With his rationality, he is able to ask questions and make objective inquires about what is happening around him. He is capable of doing these because he has been subjected into serious academic work within a considerable period of time. Consequently, he has gained knowledge through education, thus he is able to understand the difference between the visible and intelligible world, between the realm of opinion and the realm of knowledge, between appearance and reality. This knowledge broadens the Philosopher-kings vision of the world, life and its problems, frees it from bias and prejudices and enlarge their perception of the world around them, because philosophy trains human minds to remove bias and prejudices. On the whole what Plato was saying is "unless political power and philosophy be united in the same person...there will be no deliverance for cities nor for the human race"^{xiii}

5. INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY

The state by Plato is an ethico-religious organism which must care for the material good of citizens and above all lead them to attainment of ideal virtue ()' Plato's social philosophy revolves around two foci; first, the doctrine that society is an organic whole; second, that society is a hierarchical whole, with higher and lower levels. The individual has no being apart from the community; there is no such thing as the good of the individual in distinction from that of the group. The unit is the group; and ethics is part of politics. The soul of individual person is a miniature structure of society and society could be viewed as the individual person projected on a larger screen. Moreover, "the relationship between the two is deeper than that of simply having a parallel structure"^{xiv} Plato believes that "it is impossible to live the good life or to be fulfilled individual apart from state"^{xv}

To be a citizen of a state did not merely imply in the Greek view, the payment of taxes and the possession of a vote: it implied a direct and active co-operation in all the functions of civil and military life. A citizen was normally a soldier, judge and member of the governing assembly; and all his public duties, he performed not by deputy, but in person; the gods of the city were his gods, it festivals he must attend. The city-State of the Greek was therefore a community persons who know one another; it was not only politically self-governed, it facilitated also a large measure of social discussion"^{xvi}.

Every action of any importance is a public function and a public trust. Plato must not be taken as standing for a social good over and above the good of the individual for the state is a community of persons and its good is their good. A social good by itself is as much of an abstraction as a merely individual good. Society and individual exist in reciprocal dependence.

6. PROPERTY AND FAMILY

The doctrine of the social organism leads Plato to some drastic conceptions regarding property and the family. He insists that there must be no private property for the guardians of the state; they constitute a unity and private property is a denial of this unity. There should be no 'mine' and 'thine' in the common family which is the group. Possession of wealth must be divorced from possession of political power. His emphasis on Property and Family with regard to leaders compels quotation:

In the first place, none of them should have any property beyond what is absolutely necessary;

neither should they have a private house, with bars and bolts, closed against anyone who has a mind to enter; their provisions should be only such as are required by trained warriors, who are men of temperance and courage; their agreement is to receive from the citizens a fixed rate of pay, enough to meet the expenses of the year, and no more; and they will have common meals and live together, like soldiers in the camp. Gold and silver we will tell them that they have from God; the diviner metal is within them, and they have therefore no need of that earthly dross which passes under the name of gold, and ought not to pollute the divine by earthly admixture, for that commoner metal has been the source of many unholy deeds....but should they ever acquire homes or lands or moneys of their own, they will become housekeepers and husbandmen instead guardians; enemies and tyrants instead of allies of other citizens; hating and being hated, plotting and being plotted against, they will pass through life in much greater terror of internal than external enemies; and the hour of ruin, both to themselves and to the rest of the State, will be at hand"^{xvii}

With this it may be seen that we have in Plato's *Republic* what is perhaps the first formulation of the ideal of communism, and a defence of it not on economic but on moral grounds. It is more like the communism of the monastic orders among the early Christians, for Plato is opposed not only to the privacy of property but to its material quality.

The state will be in charge of production in the sphere both of physical goods and of life. It will regulate marriages and the breeding of children. Here, we have a remarkable foreshadowing of modern theories of eugenics; there will be selective breeding as with animals, and bad specimens of humanity will be ruthlessly destroyed at birth. There will be no individual families because there is only the one family of the state. The latter will control mating among the sexes, and when children are born, they will be brought up by the state. Thus, both the breeding and the rearing of children will be in the hands of the community. There will not be that atmosphere of seclusion in the relations of parents with one another and with their children which constitutes the institution of the family. The child will know neither its father nor its mother; it will recognize the state alone as its parent. The implications of the principle that the social group is an organism are carried out by Plato in the most rigid and uncompromising fashion.

7. PLATO AND CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRACY

Sure, we may say that Plato believed in government by the elite, while we believe in government by the common man; surely this is a substantial, not a linguistic, difference. Well,

it certainly would be, provided it was true that our democracy is genuinely a form of popular government. All this bears more detailed scrutiny. In the first place, the Athenian form of government was direct democracy; ours is indirect, it is representative democracy. As citizens, we do not have the right to go on the floor of the National and State Assemblies and speak and vote there; we choose representatives to do this job for us. Ours is a government by the people only in the sense that we choose our rulers; not in the sense that we do the ruling ourselves. This is not to deny that the right to appoint – and also to dis-appoint our rulers is a most vital prerogative of the common citizen. In Athens, every one took part in the discussions in the *boule* (the senate in the ancient Greece); every citizen could make speeches there and could vote. In the second place, when the Athenians had occasion to elect officers, whether generals or magistrates, they did so by lot; of course, today we do not leave such matters to chance. We may not have a government by the elite but we do have a civil service, increasingly independent of political pressures, for which men have to qualify by meeting well-defined requirements.

8. SEPARATION OF POWER

In short, we demand the expert for certain branches of government, as Plato did for all. In the third place, we have the separation of political powers into the executive, legislative and judicial. The purpose of such separation is to prevent absolute democracy, such as that of the Athenians. Each of the three powers serves to check the other two. Consider our judiciary, as represented by the Supreme Court, and consider our written Constitution on which the Court presumably relies for its judgments. The Constitution is relatively fixed in the sense that it takes great time and effort to change it. Thus, the Constitution represents a set of quasi-fixed principles by which the decisions of the legislature are judged. Is it too fanciful to suggest that our Supreme Court operating on the basis of the Constitution has some analogy to Plato's ideal of reflection, of reason as criticizing impulsive thought and passing decision? When we sum up the various essential peculiarities of our government in Nigeria, it becomes clear that what Plato is criticizing in democracy is not quite different from our form of government.

9. PLATO'S IDEAL STATE AND DEMOCRACY

Plato has a very dismal view of democracy for in such a state "liberating and free speech is everywhere; anyone is allowed to do what he likes"^{xviii}. Instead of the country being run by those who are most competent, democratic public "will promote and honour anyone who merely call himself peoples friends"^{xix}.

According to Plato, each of the various forms of government tends to shape its citizens after its own image. By making an idol out of equality and failing to recognise distinctions between people's abilities, "a democratic government will encourage a personal stance towards life in which people

will believe that "one appetite is as good as another and must have their equal rights"^{xx}. So he believes that democracy is unstable both as a political system and organisational principle of the soul, for we treat every interest and desire equally, then there will be war between them for supremacy. As different factions lobby for their interests, the ruler will give heed to wherever voice is the loudest and will gratify the masses at the expense of the rich. Therefore, as tensions mount, the people will rally around the leader who promises to champion their interest and will anoint him with their power. But to consolidate his power, he will need to suppress all who might challenge it. They encourage the proud, intelligent and the rich. Soon the state will degenerate into despotism and a tyranny. In seeking to gratify their lust for money and pleasure, the people will have given themselves over to an unprincipled ruler whose only goal is power. Similarly, "the democratic individual who gives free reign to all his passions instead of ranking them from better to worse will find himself the victim of one master passion"^{xxi}. Also "democracy as a political ideal and personality type will lead to political and psychological bondage"^{xxii}. But is not Plato's ideal state totalitarian like that of the Soviets? By totalitarianism I mean the kind of state which has control over and even absorbs the totality of a man's being (not merely his property). Measured by this definition, Plato's ideal state cannot be said to be totalitarian. Certainly within the state, each citizen had a particular function: one man to rule, another to be a soldier, another to be a worker. But, Plato does not reduce the man to his function; the human being is more than the citizen. Here, Plato's differentiation of the inner city from the outer city has special relevance. The state has control only over the latter, over the external, institutional arrangements and relations of human beings. But the individual himself controls the inner city, makes his own judgments as to what is right for himself and for his personal relations with his fellowmen. To conclude, Plato's ideal state does not absorb the totality of man's being and so is far from being totalitarian. The state controls not the person but man as an organ with a particular function and in his formalized external relations to the community.

10. PLATO'S VIEW OF DEMOCRACY AND NIGERIAN POLITICS

Plato's solution to the political problem of his time is still very relevance in today's Nigeria. Tom Griffith remark supports this view when he says: "Plato, a great thinker and philosopher par excellence was fully enmeshed in the controversies of his time, both political and intellectual...had he been less of his time he would not, perhaps lived so fully on our page"^{xxiii}. We must note right way that the communism in Plato's Ideal State is impracticable for a capitalist country like Nigeria where the distinguishing characteristics of politicians are powerful instincts of acquisition and competition. A great majority of our leaders are sick with the fever of combative possession. They hunger and thirst not after righteousness, nor after honour but after multiplication

of endless possessions. Our political and social problem continues as far as individuals consider self interest more than that of the society at large. The carrion cry for good leadership in Nigeria will continue to be a dream unless most of us turn round and place higher premium on the higher status of the society than on individuals. Any leader who should be qualified be a good leader is the one who does not have the interest of few so-called important personalities in mind, but the good of the general public. He contributes to social upliftment because the social status of any society grows or declines, depending on the contributions of her citizens to either building up or destroying the social pride. Plato's wisdom challenges and condemns Nigeria when it insists that men engrossed in the pursuit of money are unfit to rule the state. His entire plan rested on the hope that if guardians rule well and live simply, the economic man will be willing to let them monopolise administration if they let him monopolise luxury.

Hence, society is good in the thinking of Plato when the people who rule and those they rule have common and genuine goal of uplifting the society instead of individual selfish interest. Only the genuine leader can rule justly and give everyone his or her due considerations. He was trying to reduce the gap between the highest and the lowest paid civil servants. He will through overboard religious and ethnic dimensions of appointments and holds onto meritocracy akin to Plato's ideal state. He will jettison every act of godfatherism in politics. Also he will abandon unjust discriminating method of allocating national resources but hold to justice as taught by Plato. Moreover, borrowing from Plato, he will relegate favourism and nepotism which major form of corruption and ensure that women in manner of Plato are given equal opportunity since they are naturally important to any human society that have interest of the whole citizens. Thus Plato was very emphatic when he said that there will be no progress, peace and tranquillity until philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers. In that case, his advice can be applied to Nigerian political scenario – Nigerian leaders should be philosophers.

His write-up cherishes the great contribution of this noble man- Plato; who was a outstanding figure of his time and has continued to live in the pages of all through the ages. His idea and political teachings gave rise to great men and women of various ingenuities who arose at the most difficult time to arrest the turbulent political situations.

11. CONCLUSION

The entire political and ethical teaching of Plato may be misconstrued by seeing him as the precursor of present-day socialism and communism. He denied the family and the right to property to two classes in the state because these classes must be completely freed from the shackles of material goods and intent on attaining a high grade of spirituality. On the contrary, socialism and communism of the present day deny private property and would abolish the institution of the family for thoroughly materialistic purpose,

that is, to make possible greater material prosperity. His *Republic* was meant as a panacea to Athenian political quagmire, which could apply to an situation similar to that of Athens, including Nigeria. Thus this paper is very optimistic that some Plato's ideas could be of good help to salvage the present Nigerian political corruption which looks almost intractable. For if our leaders are elected on the bases of education, wisdom rather than wealth, power, ethnicity and our politicians show interest in promoting the benefits of the citizens rather being engrossed in emassing wealth as advocated by Plato for his ideal state, Nigerian political senario would be better and healthier. Infact, if Plato's teaching on governance of state, political participation, harmony, virtue, selfless devotion of the rulers, the fulfillment of assigned duties are put in place in the current Nigerian politics, they can help Nigeria to achieve harmony, political stability, equality, social justice, development and maintainance of our hard-earned democracy.

12. ENDNOTE

ⁱ Veit G.C., Postmodern Time (Wheaton IL, Crossway Bks, 1994), pp. 30-31.

ⁱⁱ The Republic, 9.592.

ⁱⁱⁱ BK VIII, the Republic

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Gunnar S & Nils G, A History of Western Thought, (Routledge, London, 2001), p.57.

^{vii} Ibid..

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Carmin M, A History of Philosophy, (St. Anthony Guild Press, New Jersey, 1964). P.64.

^x Rep.5.473.

^{xi} Kuhn T., The Structure of Scientific Revolution, (Chicago, 1970), p. 12.

^{xii} Anowai E.; The Dynamics of Philosophy and Science, (Fab Anieh, Awka, 2017), p.32.

^{xiii} Thilly F., A History of Philosophy (New York, 1948),p.72.

^{xiv} Lawhead W., The Voyage of Discovery: A historical Introduction to Philosophy, 2nd ed,(USA, 2002), p. 61.

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} Appadorai, A., The Substance of Politics, (Oxford University Press, 1978).p.117.

^{xvii} Rep. .416-17.

^{xviii} Ibid., 8. 558b.

^{xix} Ibid., 8.558 b.

^{xx} Ibid., 8.561c.

^{xxi} Lawhead , pp. 62-63.

^{xxii} Ibid.

^{xxiii} Plato The Republic, transl. by Tom.(United Kingdom: University Press 2000), p. xxii