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Democracy and the Provision of Human Rights in Nigeria: an Analysis of Human Rights Abuse

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Abstract

Democracy has been identified as government of the people by people and for the people. This implies that democracy is people oriented system of government. However, the practice of democracy in Nigeria has been characterized by a lot of challenges, especially human rights abuse. The essence of provision of human rights in a democratic system of government is to ensure that the principle of separation of powers, rule of law and people's inalienable rights are respected. Experience has shown that such is not the case in the Nigerian context of democracy. Presently, the political situation and unrest in the country that is marked by high level of insurgency, terrorism, banditry and all forms of criminality clearly show that human rights abuse is prevalent in Nigeria. These challenges are as a result of bad governance. To change the narrative, the study, which employs the method of critical analysis construes that Nigeria needs her own philosophy in order to ensure good governance, which will bring about respect for human rights; and that philosophy is epistemethics.

Keywords: *Democracy, epistemethics, governance, human rights and philosophy.*

Introduction

Bad governance has been identified as the major challenge that metamorphosed into human rights abuses in Africa, especially in Nigeria where the political class claims that the country is practicing democracy, but not so in reality. The outcome of 2022 primary elections of various political parties is indicating that the concept of Internal Parties Democracy which represents a level playing ground for membership failed to be in conformity with democratic principles. In a democratic state that is ruled by democratic precepts, the citizens' choice of policy and/or preference cannot be thwarted on the altar of nepotistic practice. How much candidates for electioneering campaign pay the delegates both in naira and in foreign currencies determines the outcome of elections and the flag bearers of some of the political parties. By implication, political office, leadership and governance have been commercialised, and that is why for some politicians, being elected into political office is a 'do or die affair' in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. It is not a politics of competition of ideas and capacity for leadership and governance, but that of whose pocket is fatter than the other. The most

disheartening aspect of this ugly situation is that even among the so called elites and the educated chunk of Nigerian politicians, money politics translated into vote buying holds sway. However, adherence to the rule of law and the principle of separation of powers are key to promoting fundamental human rights, and also very compatible and agreeable with democracy, yet unyielding in Nigerian context.

In a democratic government, it is the will of the citizens that prevail. The citizens yearn for leaders who are competent and capable of governing them, and who will in turn be accountable to them. In Nigeria, the reverse is the case in the sense that, voting and appointment into political offices are done based on ethnic, tribal and religious sentiments rather than competence, equity, fairness and justice. This position about Nigeria is corroborated when (Richard et al, 2010) write: “When it comes to appointment to various offices, the essential requirements are usually set aside. Competence of the individual is eased out or the ‘he is my brother’ syndrome.”

There are huge potentials for unprecedented development Africa in Nigeria, and to a larger extent but all these seemingly positive factors of socio-economic and political advancement had been undermined via corruptible tendencies and practices. Nigeria, and Africa to a larger extent but all these seemingly positive factors of socio-economic and political advancement had been undermined via corruptible tendencies and practices. Taking responsibility and being accountable are part of the hallmark of good governance. Often times, in Nigeria, people do not take responsibility. This is one of the banes of the 21st century Nigerian society where people are in abject poverty, suffering, dying of hunger and all manner of problems amidst abundance of wealth that would sufficiently take care of all even future generations. It is in a society like the present Nigeria where political leaders do not take responsibility and are not accountable to the citizens that the rule of law, fairness and justice (calcine - righteousness, which is supposed to regulate all human activities), have remained elusive. Most worrisomely, human rights abuses are in the top gear in Nigeria. Of all the killings and violation of peoples’ inalienable rights, the political leaders at various levels are not taking responsibility, yet Nigeria is under democratic rule. What an irony! The question is: how many people have been brought to justice as a result of insurgency, banditry, terrorism, and all forms of violation of human rights in Nigeria, at least, since the fourth republic?

The legislature, executive and judiciary do not seem to know that: “Through the enactment of laws and through the application of sanction when necessary, the state must

uphold and defend the rights of all citizens, maintain public order and tranquility and promote the common welfare” (Okpalaonwuka, 43). Today, some members of the upper and lower chambers from the six geopolitical zones are gradually becoming vocal, expressing that things are getting worse every day. The question is: where were they at least, for the past seven years? The fact remains that the good and wellbeing of the Nigerian citizens is not the reason for their late condemnation of all forms of social vices and violation of peoples’ inalienable rights. In the words of (Uchebuakpa, 4), “The members of House of Representatives and Senate are now being vocal in condemning high level of insurgency, banditry, terrorism, bad governance and human right abuses in Nigeria, because it is obvious to them that just as the citizens are not secured, they themselves are not safe either.” At the foundation of all these is that, there is no philosophy which Nigerians in particular and Africans in general can proudly call their own. *Epistemethics* is therefore proposed in this research as a viable and indispensable philosophy for the eradication of human rights abuses in Nigeria in particular and bad governance in Africa in general.

Conceptual Clarifications

Apart from the keywords, there are some other concepts one necessarily has to make reference to while reflecting on democracy and human rights abuses in Nigeria, which include but not limited to: education, governance, philosophy and politics. These will also form part of the concepts to be clarified.

Democracy: The word democracy comes from the Latin words, “demos”, meaning people and “kratos”, meaning power; so democracy can be thought of as “power of the people” (Cranston, 2003). Abraham Lincoln defines democracy as “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people (Cranston, 2003). This implies that, democracy is people oriented and citizens’ centered system of government.

Education: Etymologically, the word education is derived from the Latin word “educare” which means “to bring up”; and also another Latin word “educere” which means “to bring forth”. Education, therefore, means to bring up and to bring forth (Freire, 2000); that is, education means acquisition of knowledge and also the development of attitudes and skills. Education is an enlightening experience and purposeful activity which could be formal or informal or semi-formal directed at achieving certain aims, such as transmitting knowledge, or fostering skills and character traits. Though education is not synonymous with knowledge, one

cannot claim to be educated without gaining some knowledge. Education is synonymous with, but not limited to: tutoring, coaching and training.

Epistemethics: *Epistemethics* is a construct of two words namely: epistemology and ethics. These two concepts are also among the major branches of philosophy. Epistemology derives from two Greek words: *episteme* (knowledge) and *logos* (study or science of). Therefore, when these two concepts are joined together, it becomes ‘the study or science of knowledge’. As a branch of philosophy, epistemology is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge about reality. It also deals with the nature, forms, scope, limitations, and functions of knowledge. On the other hand, ethics derives from the Greek word *ethos* which means ‘custom or way of living’ ... “ethics is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with human conduct, more especially the behaviour of individuals in society. Ethics examines the rational justification for our moral judgments; it studies what is morally right or wrong, just or unjust” (Canadian Government, 2015). *Epistemethics* is a philosophy which holds that all knowledge, all education must be acquired for ‘service to humanity’. *Epistemethics* emphasises the functions of knowledge and the most important of all the functions of knowledge is advancement of the wellbeing of humanity. In that connection, when knowledge is employed against humanity, it is no longer knowledge; and the person who possesses such knowledge would be described as someone who went to school, but not educated. The educated person within the context of *epistemethics* is the person in whose life knowledge and good moral conduct are inseparable. When good moral behaviour is not practically demonstrated within the dynamics of personal and inter personal human relationships, it is not qualified to be knowledge (Uzoigwe, 124).

Governance: Governance refers to a process whereby elements in society wield power, authority and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life and social upliftment. Hyden elevates governance to an “umbrella concept to define an approach to comparative politics”, an approach that fills analytic gaps left by others.... he emphasises “the creative potential of politics, especially with the ability of leaders to rise above the existing structure of the ordinary, to change the rules of the game and to inspire others to partake in efforts to move society forward in new and productive directions” (Hyden, 2022). Governance encompasses the system by which an organization is controlled and operates, and the mechanisms by which it, and its people are held to account (Hyden, 2022).

Human Rights: Human rights are those basic rights citizens enjoy because they are human beings. Human rights can be interchangeably employed with inalienable rights which include, but not limited to: freedom to life, freedom of speech, freedom of religion (worship), freedom of association, and freedom of expression. All these fundamental human rights make for a smooth flow of the rule of law and the principles of separation of powers for which democracy is known. In such a situation, the supremacy of the constitution over and above all and equality of all citizens before the law is unnegotiable. In other words, human rights are “rights which all human beings have by virtue of their humanity, such as right to life, dignity of human person, personal liberty, fair hearing and freedom of thought, conscience and religion. They provide a common standard of behavior among the international community” (UDHR, 1948; Dada, 2012). They are natural, rational, inviolable, and unalterable, the deprivation of which could constitute a grave affront to one’s sense of justice (Cranston, 1973; Borokini, 1998). Rights, as defined, are generally understood as, “moral-political claims which by contemporary consensus, every human being has or is deemed to have upon his society or government,” claims which are recognized “as of right” and “not by love or grace or charity” (Damrosch et al, 2007; Henkin, 1997).

Philosophy: Philosophy derives from two Greek words: *philo* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom). When added together, it becomes *philosophia* (love of wisdom). Philosophy can also be defined as a rational and critical reasoning about man, God and the universe at large. As the root of all knowledge, philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems concerning matters such as the nature of knowledge, truth, justice, politics, culture, economics, medicine, the mind, security, language, among others (Blackburn, 2005). Philosophy critically analyses a plethora of human experiences and rationally espouse systems of thought about humanity.

Politics: Politics is a contestable concept. Among the broadest ways of defining politics is to understand it as a ‘social activity’ – an activity we engage in together with others, or one through which we engage others. Politics, in this sense, is ‘always a dialogue, and never a monologue’ (Heywood, 2013). Over the years, some people have identified politics as ‘a dirty game’. However, politics in itself is not a dirty game. It is the application of ungodliness and all forms of inhuman conduct in politics by some politicians that injects dirtiness in politics. Again, “The proper activity of political power is politics and it consists in the appropriate measures for the foundation preservation and increase on the common good by those responsible for it” (Messner, 2021). Politics is both public and private social activity with its

public and private concerns aimed at influencing others to think, behave and, in fact, go towards our direction in order to achieve some defined goals or at times not well defined goals.

Democratic System of Government

Democracy is a people-oriented system of government. But in reality there is no place where the people govern, nor indeed is it practicable for them to do so. For Karl Popper, it is the government and the ministries that govern the modern society. But at least any democratic government must be elected by the people and must submit itself to the approval of the people during elections to renew its mandate. The people can also decide to reject the government by voting in another government. That is why for (Popper, 1988) “democracy is the ability of the people to reject an unwanted government”. But for any society to be able to give the common man the ability to send home an unwanted government there must be a measure of egalitarianism in that society (Oguejiofor, 2004). The principle of egalitarianism is, therefore, the fulcrum or pedestal upon which any democratic society stands.

The beautiful picture painted above has been elusive in the African context of democracy with special reference to Nigeria. Egalitarianism is a system of government where peoples’ rights are respected simply because they are human beings. Sadly, Nigeria is not an egalitarian society. In Nigerian brand of democracy, people are not respected because they are human beings, rather because of their material possession and where they come from. That is why religious bigotry, ethnicity, clannishness and parochialism are the order of the day in almost all the sectors of leadership and governance of the country. One can now understand why I describe the Nigerian democracy as undemocratised democracy because no nation that chooses to practice democracy will succeed without strict adherence to, and true practice of the principles of social justice, equity and fairness, and even charity in their economic activities just as (Pope Pius XI, 1961) advocates that “... all forms of economic enterprise must be governed by the principles of social justice and charity”. The indispensability of justice and humanness in issues of democracy and human rights cannot be over-emphasised. Scholars are of the view that democracy is the best system of government, because it is highly representative and in fact, people oriented. In a democracy, the people (citizens) are the key players and active participants in determining the affairs of the state. The question is: “are the peoples’ will, choice, interest and decision considered in the Nigerian style of democracy”?

A Brief History of Democracy in Nigeria

The first republic in Nigeria began in 1963 with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as the first President and head of state, and Sir Abubakar Tafa Balewa as the Prime Minister and head of government. Democracy under the first republic was characterised by cacophony of voices following the elections of 1964, the coup of January 15, 1966 and counter coup of July 29 of the same year with Sir Tafa Balewa and Major General Aguiyi Ironsi losing their lives. Also, the civil war from 1967 to 1970 was a major setback in Nigeria's quest for democracy. General Yakubu Gowon became the military head of state for nearly a decade 1966-1975. After the bloodless coup of 1975 which ousted General Gowon, Brigadier General Murtala Mohammed took over the administration of Nigeria. General Murtala was assassinated in another coup in 1976 and Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo took over the same year and saw Nigeria's transition to 'democracy' three years later.

In the second republic, "Elections in July and August, 1979 saw Shehu Shagari become the first 'democratically-elected' president of Nigeria and a new constitution introduced an American-style presidential system, rejecting the British parliamentary model. But Shagari's government was characterized by extensive corruption, wastefulness, and a failure to thaw civil-war era ethnic and religious divisions in the country" (Hoffmann, 2021). There was another military coup in 1983 that brought in Major General Muhammadu Buhari as the leader of the military regime. According to Hoffmann, "Buhari's authoritarian leadership was unpopular and worsened by recession. His government was overthrown in August 1985 by General Ibrahim Babangida who promised to end military rule but would remain in power until 1993. He expanded a corrupt network mostly sustained by oil revenues which has been organized but still endures in Nigeria" (Hoffmann, 2021).

In the third republic, Ernest Shonekan became the leader of an interim government after General Babangida annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential election, which the majority of Nigerians believed would have ushered in 'the very first true democracy' in the country in the sense that, the elections represented the peoples' will and choice. Unfortunately, "Babangida refused to recognize the outcome of the free and fair elections held in June 1993. He imprisoned the elected president Moshood Kashimawo Abiola and stymied the creation of a full-fledged third republic. But he struggled to contain domestic pro-democracy demands before creating an interim government council later that year which was then quickly replaced by a new military ruler General Sani Abacha" (Hoffmann, 2021). It is important to note that after General Sani Abacha's death in 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar took over and began a transition

military government and oversaw the return to the ‘so called democracy’ with an election in April 1999.

The fourth republic in Nigeria began with the election that brought in the former military head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo to the presidency on May 29, 1999 under the platform of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). In the words of (Pini Jason, 1999), “Our elections are flawed not just because politicians rig elections but largely because the Nigeria police aid rigging for the party in power”. After contemplating all that was happening, I warned in an article: *Come October, We Shall All Be Losers!* The result of that election included the return of the military in December 1983. What we have today... is the aftermath of the 2003 electoral malpractices.

What about the abduction of a sitting governor, Dr. Chris Ngige, in Anambra State in a ‘democratic government’? As it were, “The impunity displayed in Anambra, aided to the hilt by the police has convinced everybody that democracy under a federal system is a huge joke unless there are state police. The president imposes his will all over the federation with the police. All the argument about possible abuse of state police by the Governors today falls on its face in the light of gross abuse by the President Obasanjo of the unitary federal police. All lovers of true federalism must now renew the agitation for state and local government police!” (BenEzenwa, 2008). The concerns raised by Jason are as true as it is the situation today where all forms of impunity and violation of peoples’ inalienable rights are on the increase on daily basis under the so called democratic rule.

In the dynamics of democracy, equity, fairness, justice, purposeful, progressive, people oriented and Godly-leadership and politics as well as good governance, there necessarily has to be a viable philosophy that grounds them. In America, for instance, that philosophy is pragmatism. Americans carefully drafted pragmatism as a philosophy that guides their democracy and it is working for them. Nigeria is said to have embraced democracy since 1999 after long period of military rule and its dictatorship. Sadly, the fact remains that democracy has not been practiced in Nigeria in reality. Democracy in Nigeria could be likened to what David Hume would describe as a figment of imagination in his theory of knowledge. The kind of democracy that is practiced in Nigeria from Obasanjo administration 1999 to 2007, Yar’Adua/Jonathan administration 2007 to 2011, and Jonathan administration 2011 to 2015 is an undemocratised-democracy or a theoretical/paper democracy. Going further about the so called democratic dispensations in Nigeria, (Lawson, 2022) writes: “Between 2015 and 2022 of APC administration, Nigerians have witnessed military dictatorship, tyrannical and

autocratic government, nepotism and totalitarianism put together.” The question is: How can rule of law which enables human rights to thrive function in such a society depicted above?

Taking 2007 elections as a case study, (Jason, 1999) expressing displeasure over the activities of the President of the nation down to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the electoral umpire who should have ordinarily been an impartial judge expresses: “So disappointingly but not surprisingly his (the Mr. President’s) plans and projections together with his ilk came to pass in 2007 general elections. No thanks to INEC...led by Maurice Iwu, who compiled and read out results that PDP has again had a landslide victory, from state to federal constituencies, even in parts where opposition theretofore was wielding strong influence”.

The situation was not different from 2015 till date because, “...the Attahiru Jega and subsequently, Yakubu Mamood led INEC did not do anything differently. The APC administration, of course, has not done anything better than the PDP administration” (Yusuf, 2022). These men and women of the political class in Nigeria are the same set of politicians with the same mindset, orientation and ideology; their crisscrossing from one political party to another notwithstanding. This must have been the reason why (Maier, 2002) like Chinua Achebe blame the leaders for the lopsidedness in the country when he says that, “In Nigeria the blame for its lost generation falls squarely on the shoulders of its people’s leaders...”

Human Rights Abuse in Nigeria

In Chapter IV of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, there is a provision for fundamental rights of citizens which include: “the right to life, right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, right to freedom of movement, right to freedom from discrimination, and the right to acquire and own property anywhere in Nigeria”. The question is: Who obeys the constitution among the political leaders in Nigeria and by extension, Africa? Who respects the inalienable rights of the citizens? Is there any validly and generally acceptable constitution in African countries, articulated by the citizens and through dialogue and general consensus accepted by Africans? Is the Nigeria constitution, for instance, drafted in the interest of the generality of the Nigerian citizens or for the good of the political class?

Because of the broad spectrum of human rights, I would like to limit this segment of the discourse to violation of the right to life and freedom of expression. The right to life is the most abused of all the inalienable rights in Nigeria. The right to life is a substantive right and is among the most important of all the rights guaranteed and protected by contemporary

international law. It is universal and obligatory; without it, no other right would make sense (Hunter et al, 2010). Environmentalists and human rights advocates rightly argued that apart from the killings and other forms of violation of human life, especially by anti-humanist governments, some environmental activities could in themselves lead to violation of human rights, especially the right to life. It is so because, “Initially, the right to life was aimed at preventing arbitrary killings by the government. In recent years the right to life has evolved to extend to address certain environmental harms that directly or indirectly infringe on the right to life. This extension of the ambit of the right to life is as a result of the efforts and works of the environmental and human rights advocates” (Hunter et al, 2010). This makes one to quickly recall the level of human rights abuses and violation of the right to life in the oil producing communities of Niger Delta in Nigeria.

Some of these communities suffer as much as having their farm lands, source of drinking water, and also the rivers where they fish polluted with oil spillage. Worse still, some of the security agencies and the oil companies do not also help matters. Similarly, (Onwuazombe, 2017) sheds more light on this when he articulates that: “Human rights abuses and violations in Nigeria in general and in the oil producing communities in particular cut across the entire spectrum of rights. The abuses come in different forms and could be direct or indirect. The inhabitants of the Niger Delta region are subjected to regular rights abuses and violations by the state security agents and the oil corporations. The perpetrators of rights violations are hardly or never held accountable or brought to justice due to the myriad of problems besetting the judicial institutions”.

Police brutality, and the peoples’ reaction that metamorphosed into ‘ENDSARS’ protest in October 2020, which led to the massacre of so many ‘unarmed’ Nigerian youths, seems to be the high point of human rights abuses in Nigeria in recent times. Those Nigerian youths whose lives were wasted, do they not have rights to life? Is it not their inalienable rights to express themselves about bad governance of the present administration through peaceful protest? For (Wale, 2021), “Whether anybody has been brought to justice as a result of killings of innocent Nigerian youths at the Lekki Tow Gate, Lagos, is a question of primary significance that needs urgent answer”. With the level of human rights abuses, it is apparent that what is obtainable in Nigeria today is dictatorial democracy, undemocratised democracy, theoretical/paper democracy or at best imperial democracy. In other words, (Hollenbach, 2002) clearly understands the situation when he argues that: “Hitherto there has been movement from constitutional democracy to imperial presidency where the party in power is no longer party

for the people but an authoritarian and over-centralised one-man show. There is the underscored point of our leaders settling for relations of super-ordination and subordination as if they and us are into a master-slave affair. We know that slavery institutionalizes inequality and non-reciprocity in the most radical way. The Nigerian scenario of obvious forms of unequal interdependence that exists between these rulers who are not accountable to those whom they rule might be less radical than slavery but nonetheless still harmful. The people who live in society of this kind of rulers are at best subjects, not citizens. They do not share actively in governing themselves but must simply cope with decisions made by another. Being reduced to a state of non-agency and simply coping does enormous violence to their human dignity”. It is practically impossible for one to value human dignity without first and foremost valuing human life as sacred and then, humanity itself. The sacredness of human life has to be infused and diffused and embedded into the consciousness of the political leaders in Nigeria so as to ensure preservation of human life, respect for human dignity and eradication of all forms of violation of human rights because man is primarily and essentially an image of God-*imago Dei*.

In all these, one thing that is obvious is that the citizens neither trust the government nor their agents. Most worrisome is that even the judiciary which is said to be the last hope of the common man is superlatively compromised. And so, Nigeria operates at the level of almost a lawless state, where some of the politicians and elites in government are careless at the manner in which human life is wasted in the country. All the *apparati* of the government are grossly dysfunctional such that the security personnel who brutally and inhumanly violate peoples’ rights and often waste their lives are not held accountable, not even at the level of criminal justice system. Among the reasons given for this neglect is systemic and institutional corruption. Furthermore, (Onwuazombe, 2017) adds his voice to the perplexing experience when he argues that: “... there is an apparent lack of trust and confidence in the courts and general apathy towards the judicial processes amongst Nigerians as the civil remedies in law are merely enforced. Furthermore, the criminal justice system and the judiciary, generally perceived as dysfunctional, are ineffective in bringing security personnel and corporations involved in crimes and violation of rights to justice due to systemic and institutional corruption, lack of independence of judiciary, political interference and so on”.

On 26th and 27th July 2022, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) embarked upon peaceful solidarity demonstration with the members of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to register their grievances over the Federal Government’s insensitivity to education in the country such that, the public universities have been locked down for six months as at

those dates, and students roaming the streets. It is with this kind of attitude that African citizens should put on their thinking apparatus and say in unison: “let us prioritise our values” and rise to the occasion by inaugurating the era of ‘man know thyself’ in Africa.

Epistemethics: An Antidote for Human Rights Abuse in Nigeria

A case study of the challenges of governance in Africa has been identified in human rights abuse in Nigeria, even under the so called democratic dispensation. Education, or acquisition of knowledge has been identified as a necessary condition for good governance and effective leadership across the globe. There can be no good governance without strategic thinking and other problem-solving mechanisms like critical thinking and moral-leadership. Knowledge is acquired either through formal, informal, or semi-formal education. Again, in terms of strategic intent and focus on leadership, education is key and indeed, an indispensable tool. Prioritising education and grounding it in morality will go a long way to ameliorating the problem of bad governance and ungodly-leadership evidently manifest in human rights abuses in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general.

Nigeria, at this propitious time, needs leaders with clarity of thought, vision, and tenacity that is anchored on ‘situational resourcefulness and sensitivity’. As the pivotal of human capital development across the globe, education is key and knowledge is power. At the point in which Africa nay Nigeria is today, we need emergency plan to prioritise our education. In the classical era, the most celebrated Greek philosopher, Socrates, construed that, “knowledge is virtue”. Unfortunately, one sees that today, there are people who have gained knowledge, yet they are advancing the course of evil, abusing human rights and destroying human lives with impunity. The class of people described above have knowledge without being virtuous. The right education that is grounded in morality is lacking in this type of situation which is the case in today’s Nigeria. This calls for thorough re-examination of the *status quo ante*. One can now appreciate (Paolo Freire’s, 2000) advocacy on “education for critical consciousness”. Long before Freire, Plato (as cited in Rusk’s *Doctrine of the Great Education* 1969) teaches that: “Education is what makes a man eagerly pursue the ideal perfection of citizenship and teaches him how rightly to rule and how to obey. This is the only education upon our view that deserves the name; that other sort of training, which aims at the acquisition of wealth.... mere cleverness apart from intelligence and justice, is mean and liberal, and is not worthy to be called education at all.” On the other hand, Aristotle construes education as the “development of a sound mind in a sound body.”

Epistemethics is, therefore, proposed in this research as a viable philosophy that will aid in ensuring that human rights abuses and all forms of tyranny in the cloche of democracy give way for good governance and people-oriented leadership. Poor education ‘in character and learning’ on the part of African leaders is a significant part of the challenge of bad governance in Africa. The Latin maxim: ‘*Nemo dat quod non habet* – No one gives what he does not have’ is as true as wise considering the present situation in Africa. This study suggests that African political leaders should not just have Senior School Certificate, Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s Degree or even Doctoral Degree in any field of study, they should as a matter of necessary condition and situational sensitivity go through moral formation in character first and foremost to be ‘human’ in their actions and inactions. They must have at least basic education in morality, where they will undergo training in ‘ethics, not without critical thinking’. And until the moral values they acquire through learning in ethics and critical thinking are put into practice, they will not be regarded as educated, rather, they will be regarded as people who went to school. That is why Plato’s demand for philosopher king to be at the helm of affairs of the state is as expedient as ever in today’s Nigeria. Good moral life has not yet become a culture in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general; and when it becomes an intrinsic aspect of our culture, the entire world will turn to Africa for genuine aid in all spheres of human endeavour, not the other way round, where people from the West and across the globe pretend to be giving aid to Africa and yet ‘milking’ Africa dry through the back door.

Epistemethics construes leadership and governance as service to God and humanity. Political leadership in Nigeria has failed woefully simply because the leaders do not see their function as service to God and humanity, rather, they commercialise government and construe politics and governance as means of getting rich overnight and, in turn, enrich their immediate families, allies and circle of friends, especially those who would help them in looting public funds and also aid in the cover up of such a corrupt act. Any time governance and leadership are perceived as service in Africa, Africans will rise from their slumber and have a new breath of life, and good governance and sustainable development will flow like a river.

Situational Sensitivity and Resourcefulness as an Intrinsic Part of Epistemethics

By situational resourcefulness and sensitivity, I mean, for instance, that African leaders and, indeed, all Africans should rise up to the challenge and be sensitive to the fact that Africa is abysmally and alarmingly lagging behind almost in all spheres of human endeavour and in all segments of the global economy. It is so because majority of the African leaders choose to be insensitive to the fact that the level of poverty and hunger ravaging Africa ought not to be

so because, all the countries in the continent are superlatively endowed with rich human and natural resources. It is this same resources that few individuals within the political circle have hijacked, laundering them into other countries and these other countries use those resources to develop and advance their course. Is that not situational insensitivity of the highest magnitude?

Is it not situational insensitivity and lack of criticality that, some of the Nigerian students who are currently forced out of school for seven months now [that the Federal government forced the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to embark on strike] are today campaigning for some of those politicians who have kept them out of school? Is it not situational insensitivity that some of the Nigerian students, their parents and even some other members of the society erroneously believe that there is no money to fund education in Nigeria, yet before their eyes, the same politicians raise billions of naira from the sales of nomination forms for various positions in different political parties? Without situational sensitivity and resourcefulness, critical thinking, deep-seated reflection, and decisive action for emancipation, Nigeria in particular and Africa in general will remain the way it is.

African Rebirth and Epistemethics Reflection

It is one of the principles of *epistemethics* that African pessimism must give way for deep-seated reflection and decisive action. African pessimism, which is symbolically embedded in lack of reflection, situational insensitivity and lack of resourcefulness are among the factors that have orchestrated high level of bad governance and human rights abuses both in Nigeria and in the continent. Some of the African leaders and even the citizens tend to hold the idea that, “that is the way we are”. Some of the leaders have no idea about governance, and would not have reflection and take decisive action that could lead to emancipation of their people from ‘neo-slavery to real freedom’. Some of the citizens prefer to eat today and get hungry tomorrow through their actions and inactions. That is largely why in Nigeria, some of the youths whose inalienable rights are being trampled upon and whose future are also being destroyed would willingly allow themselves to be employed as political thugs, take all manner of risks, and go much further to help rig elections for the greedy politicians and the so called elites because of mere peanuts.

Ideas rule the world, is a philosophical maxim of timeless validity. Nigeria in particular and Africa in general need leaders who have ideas and who would be willing to move out of their comfort zones to cross pollinate and cross fertilize their ideas. How? By systematically

employing a philosophy of their own in all spectra of their lives. Africa needs a philosophy or philosophies which they can boldly call their own, and then, both leaders and the led make the philosophy or philosophies their own in word and in deed. With *epistemethics*, the narrative will be changed because morality and its apparatus like good conscience, will be an intrinsic part of our political culture.

Re-evaluation and Prioritisation of Values as an Intrinsic Part of Epistemethics

Why has Africa in the midst of plenty could take care of all and even generations to come, millions of people are dying of poverty and hunger? Why is it that the number of out of school children today in Nigeria are about 20 million according to UNESCO? Apart from inter and intra neo-colonialism, nothing is wrong with Africa, except bad governance and ungodly leadership that is enshrined in lack of a philosophy or philosophies that Africans call their own. Having a philosophy that people appropriate and make their own in all spheres of their lives serve as a game changer and indeed, a catalyst towards advancing their own course. America, for instance, adopted pragmatism as their own philosophy. If one closely looks at almost all segments of the life of American people, one would notice that pragmatism permeates everything they do and it is working for them. It is when Nigeria in particular and Africa in general have their own philosophy or philosophies that is (are) grounded in morality that, separation of powers, rule of law and independence of judiciary will be possible and then political interference will also give way for good governance. It is because Nigeria has no philosophy she calls her own that is grounded in morality that students, for instance, who graduate with First Class Honours would be given twenty-thousand-naira incentive with little or no publicity; while their fellow students who make Third Class or even Pass can go necked and involve themselves in all forms of atrophy in the name of ‘Big Brother Naija show’ on social media, for instance, are rewarded with gifts of cars and millions of naira. Is it not a clear indication of misplacement of priority encapsulated in bad governance? What a misnomer! What a deterioration of values? One can now appreciate one of the principles of *epistemethics*, which emphasises re-evaluation and prioritisation of values.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Democracy has been identified as the government of the people by the people and for the people. Human rights, on the other hand, are those rights all the citizens of a country have equally before the law not minding one’s status in the society. Bad governance has become a

way of life in Africa in the sense that one can hardly see a country within the African continent where there is no record of corruption and human rights abuses, especially violation of the right to life and freedom of expression. It is also identified that the root cause of this hydra headed monster is traced to lack of a philosophy or philosophies that Nigerians in particular and Africans in general can boldly call their own.

In this discourse, *epistemethics* is proposed as a viable philosophy such that, if imbibed by the rank and files of the Nigerian society, the rights of the human persons will be respected simply on the basis that they are human beings sharing in humanity, and all forms of willful and deliberate abuses of the peoples' inalienable rights will, if not totally eradicated, drastically reduced. It is so because one of the principles of *epistemethics* is that respect for the dignity of human person should be a grand norm for personal, intra-personal and inter-personal relationships. Respect for the dignity of human person and his inalienable rights should be among the grand norms of every political leadership and governance that is truly described as democratic. In the Philosophy of *imago Dei*, which is an intrinsic and indispensable part of *epistemethics*, respect for the dignity of man is an imperative and not an option. Respect for the dignity of man is part of our respect for the Absolute Being Whom man is His image (*imago Dei*). To trample upon the human dignity (abuse human rights) is a high point of disrespect for the Absolute Being and, in fact, to trample upon the Absolute Being, that is, God Himself.

In all spheres of human endeavor, the human person must be given a pride of place. This must have prompted (John Paul II, 1982) to admonish thus: "I wholeheartedly encourage all those entrusted with the well-being of their fellowman to make the human person the true criterion of all development efforts. Development projects must always have a human face. They cannot be reduced to a purely materialistic or economic endeavor. The human person must always be the ultimate measures of the feasibility and the success of an economic or social programme. Progress can therefore not be separated from the dignity of the human person nor from the respect of his or her fundamental rights. In the pursuit of progress, total progress, anything must be rejected that is unworthy of the freedom and the human rights of the individual and of the people as a whole". That is why this study suggests *epistemethics* as a viable and indispensable philosophy in tackling the challenges of governance in Africa, which is the root cause of human rights abuses in Nigeria, even under the 'so called democracy'.

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