



Leadership in Nigeria: A Reflection of Hobbesian Political Philosophy and Morality

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Abstract

It is almost a general national feeling that the multivarious socio-economic and political problems in Nigeria are rooted in poor leadership. This called for a philosophical analysis of the Nigerian leadership. It is bewildering to note that underpinning Nigerian leadership process is an over-whelming index of Thomas Hobbes political philosophy and morality. The prevailing argument therefore is that Hobbes political philosophy is grossly inadequate and a danger to Nigerian leadership both at the macro-level and at the micro-stages. As a panacea, Plato's Theories on disciplined leadership should be a model for Nigerian leadership in the face of corruption that begets and shelters numerous crimes in Nigeria.

Key words: Thomas Hobbes, Philosophy, Leadership, politics and Disciplinary

Introduction

If man is a great enigma unto himself, as Mundi (1985) says, then fathoming the complexities of man by another and directing man's activities to achieve a set goal will be much more enigmatic. For the person directing a leader of course, is dealing with a "bundle of possibilities" which is man in a hierdeggerian lexicon. Thus all over the world, leadership does not go without inherent crisis. But the case of leadership in Nigeria, as it is in many other third world countries is disturbingly perennial so much that the masses, followers are compelled to see the leaders as Demiurge to be approached with great trepidation.

In as much as the followers are subservient to the whims and caprices of the leaders, public treasures, subject to covetousness, embezzlement and



mismanagement of public funds become easy. For thirty years or more, it is calculated that Nigeria earned over \$300 billion from oil and Nigeria has over \$107 billion private wealth in overseas account (Omateseya, 2006). Yet the report of UNDP in Jabaar (2009) shows that 70% of Nigerians are considered poor because they live on \$100 or less a day.

A philosophical analysis of the actions and or inactions of Nigerian leaders both at the macro-level and at the micro-point, show that Hobbesian political philosophy and Machiavellian political theory are recognized and practiced in full. But these philosophical theories are not only inadequate for Nigerian leadership; their observance is steadily leading the country to a cataclysmic voltage of doom. We are therefore challenge in this article to expose the dangers of a leadership with Hobbesian and Machiavellian basic and thus to use Plato's discipline leadership as a paradigm leadership in education and in the society as a whole.

Concept of Leadership

Kirpatrick (1983:717) has it that leadership means to lead and the verb to lead means to show the way by "going first, to proceed, to guide, by the land: to direct to conduct etc". Leadership is variously defined by different authors and thinkers as the exercise of authority and making decision (Olusoji 2002); the process of influencing group activities toward goals setting and goal achievement (Wambutda, 1991); effective influence, learning and changing of status quo (Odimegwu, 2002); a process of mutual stimulation whereby successful interplay of relevant differences control human energy in the pursuit of a common goal (Theodore, 1986).

The above definitions imply that leadership is a dynamic interaction involving leaders and followers working toward set goals. Similarly in the context of Fayemi (2008), leadership is the competence to initiate influence, motivate, direct and or control thought, opinion and actions of the followers in a particular society so as to achieve purposeful desired ends. Leaders are popularly understood as being at the pinnacle of affairs in politics. But in a wider sense, leadership involves exercising duties and responsibilities associated with an office or position occupied by one in an organization, social grouping, society and state, (Ayo, 2009).

Hobbes's Political Philosophy and Morality: A Resume

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) of Westport began his political thinking with a descriptive analysis of Men's mode of beginning in the state of nature before the emergence of civil society.



The State of Nature

In a State of nature Hobbes theories that men engage in a relentless pursuit of egoistic interest, the summit of which is procurement of personal safety. The reason for quest for individual security is that the over-arching principle in a State of nature is survival of the fittest or MIGHT IS RIGHT. Equality is understood in terms of one's ability to hurt one's neighbor, and aggressively possess one's neighbors' possession to better one's lot. (Edwin, 1994). "Right" coheres with the Thrasymachian view namely, benefit of the strong party over the weak so the STRONG or the MIGHTY is always RIGHT while the weak is always WRONG. People are guided by aversion (love and hate). Whatever gears toward one's self-gain is pursued on the basis that it is morally good and whatever reacts against one's self-interest is aggressively resisted because it is presumed to be morally bad. Thus, good and evil have subjected quality. They lack objective, universal or permanent value. (Edwin, 2002).

According to Hobbes, nature laws exist in a State of nature though its blinding force is restricted to people's desire. But in concrete and practical application, nature laws have no binding power. The logical consequences of self-centered individuals aggressively pursuing selfish interest, Hobbes noted is anarchy. Neither leadership nor order will be rather constant fear, risk of violent death, solitary, poor nasty, brutish and short life were the lot of men in the state of nature (Sorrel, 1996).

Social Conduct- As a panacea to be the unsatisfactory condition in the state of nature, Hobbes rationalized that each individual willingly renounced some of his right and freedom of governance and reposed such on a sovereign individual or assembly of individuals. Hence creating an artificial man, the great Leviathan called commonwealth or state (Stumpf, 1977).

Characteristics of a Leviathan

The Leviathan for Hobbes has no contract with the people. The contract is rather an agreement of the people to relinquish their right and freedom of government to a Leviathan.

- The Leviathan wields absolute, unquestionable and irrevocable power.
- He is accountable to the people but to god he is accountable.
- Citizens are not to disobey the Leviathan because it amounts to resisting oneself and reverting to the state of anarchy.
- The Leviathan possesses the apparatus of law together with it's enforcement.



- There can be no unjust law because justice and morality begin with emergency of the Leviathan.
- Justice means obeying the law which comes after the Leviathan.

When the leviathan makes a law' it is as though it is made by the people. Therefore law cannot be unjust when it is made by the people (Stumpf, 1977).

Leadership in Nigeria: A Reflection of Hobbesian Philosophy Morality

It is the thinking of many in of Nigeria politics that the crux of Nigeria social-economic and political distemper is poor leadership. Obafemi (1977:108) highlight the inadequacies in Nigeria leadership thus:

1. Most African (Nigerian) leaders do not get their priorities right
2. They lack penetrating insight
3. Once in office, they begin to curse the hope of staying there for life.
4. They impinge on the fundamental right of the people and eventually become dictatorial.

Along the same line of reasoning, Ehigie (1990) maintains that political leadership in Nigeria is an issue that beats the imagination of genuine configuration and scientific classification; that it is the cause of Wolf in sheep's clothing; beclouded in difference and mottle with imperialism. Put differently, Ehigie (1990:11) writes that the fundamental factor underpinning the "demanding forces of embezzlement, tribalism, parochialism, nepotism and the corrupting quality of power and the resultant maniacal desire for political control is the inability on the part of the leadership to reconcile justice with charity".

Having established that Nigeria social-economic and political miasma are off-short of poor leadership, the first meaningful step to find a sustainable leadership process for Nigeria is to inquire into the kind of philosophy that pervade its already existing mode of leadership. Subjecting Nigeria model of leadership into a philosophical scrutiny, one is wont to discover that inherent in it are foundations of Hobbesian political philosophy and morality.

To start with, there existed servant-master or slave-master relationship or better still inferior-super or concept of followership and leadership during the colonial era in Nigeria. Like every other African countries that bore the burden of the colonial master, Nigeria was made to understand that theirs was the duty to carry out the command of their much more superior colonial leaders without grudges or



resistance. Ascendance to African Nigerian leadership position was by oppression, suppression and conquest. To sustain and perpetuate the control of the already occupied leadership positions required dominant removal from the “savages” (followers) all means of growth and development that would equip with knowledge and skills equivalent to those of their masters/leaders. Hence king Leopold of Belgium in Enoch (2011:5-6) instructed the masters thus:

.....You have to keep watch in disinteresting our savages from the richness that is plenty on their underground...you have to detach from them and make them disrespect everything which gives courage to affront us? Pretend not to want to abandon and you must do everything in your power to make it disappear...Avoid developing the spirit in the schools teach students to read not to reason.

Such was the lamentable cleavage of bitterly variegated begins planted in the same country by our British hegemony. And this sense of wide dichotomy between leaders and followers has gotten a deeper hold of leaders in Nigeria ever since independence. Thus, our political structure had witness imposed Hobbesian Leviathan in the nature of colonial leadership and passed through the throes of autocratic leaders. Ladiop (1986:174) x-rays the relationship between leaders and the citizen thus:

Given the topic of the colonial situation, the question about the government being responsive to the wishes and demands of the governed were irrelevant. The alien government concerned with keeping the “subject” people under control.

To say the least, this unwholesome relationship between leaders and the led in Nigeria is the bane of all the political brouhaha, economic mismanagement, financial crimes and impudent embezzlement of public fund. For just as the Hobbesian Leviathan is not accountable to the people, Nigerian leaders from the least to the top wield ultimate powers that are not restrain-able by masses. Consequently, the leaders are not held culpable for their abuse of office, corrupt practices irresponsibility and irresponsiveness to the lamentations of the teeming masses of the laboring poor.

Pervade by the Hobbesian dictatorship, the military usurped power for twenty three years or more, given the flimsiest reasons; restoration of peace and sanity, reconciliation of political difference, saving the nature from impending doom etc. But military interventions in Nigerian politics did not provide any succor. It rather heightens dictatorship and moral pervasiveness, intensified the pains of the existing



crimes and added new heinous and horrendous ones. And so did every other system of leadership in Nigerian toe the line of irresponsiveness. Ladiop (1986:75) raised alarm thus “under the presidential system of government, there was a noble failure of government leaders to behave responsively in accordance with the doctrine of the system of government, almost in the same manner as was the case under parliamentary government”. Ayo (2009:16) provided the reason for this failure of Nigerian leaders when he wrote; “with the exit of the colonial masters and their divide and rule tactics, their structure of exploitation remain with us”

The State of Education in a Leviathan Leadership

From a sociological perspective, the society is described as a network of action, meaning that the society consists of intervenient and interrelated subsystem. The subsystems are so intertwined and interlaced that crisis in one unit invariable affects the entire units (Okeke, 2002). It thus means that as the Nigerian leadership is held hostage by the Hobbesian autocratic philosophy, the education sector has not been extricated from dictators’ leadership and its concomitant aberration of justice and infringement upon the rights of individuals; abuse or assault on students, conflict of all sorts among schools, college an university authorities. For often one sees cases of use of power to emasculate those who are generally referred to as sub-ordinates. An education system imbued in this kind of political disorder arising from misuse of power is certainly oblivious of leadership skills, qualities and goals. Consequently, it is suggested in this article that the Nigerian curriculum of education must at all levels embody device of inculcating in the leaders the virtues of disciplined leadership. Put in another manner. Ayo (2009:18) writes that the Nigerian Education Policy and Curriculum Planners ought to design means of nurturing the spirit and skills of leadership in the learners. He regretted that “the absence of this goal in our education policy is partly responsible for the Leviathan types of leadership that dominate the Nigerian society”. A Leviathan, he says, “wields absolute power over and above his/her subjects while a Machiavellian rules with deceit for the sole aim of retaining power.”

Plato’s Theory of Discipline as a Paradigm for Discipline Leadership in Nigeria

Plato’s concept of discipline is a consequence of his theory of man. Being a dualist he projects a dual of man as a being, and consisting of body and soul. He emphasized the immortality and primacy of the soul and the body. Plato also present vision of the soul namely, intellect, temperate, and appetite. He places premium on the intellect as the factory that penetrates the eternal world of forms (Lindsay and Redford).



Similarly, Plato theorizes that the society house three classes of individuals-the philosopher-kings, the guardians or soldiers and the artisans or labourers. Every class has its distinct duty. The philosopher-kings, because of their unique intelligence and training are the leaders of the society while the artisans are to provide domestic and other manual work and services in society, (Stumpf, 1977). Plato was not really referring to the bookish, that is, those who possess degrees in philosophy as philosopher-kings. The disciplined qualities of philosopher-kings which qualify them to be leaders are:

1. Censored education in literacy, musical, mathematical skills acquisition.
2. Acquisition of the vision of the good by which the philosopher-king is able to transcend the domain of materialism and avarice through self-discipline (Stumpf, 75-76). Perhaps it was for the above reasons that Plato's believes that "human race will not be free of evil until either the stock of those who rightly and truly follow philosophy acquire authority or the class have power in the cities be led by some dispensation of providence to become real philosophers" (Stumpf, 1977:76).

It is important to note that the cardinal virtue for while Plato ascribed leadership position to philosopher-kings is discipline. For him, a philosopher is he who has vision of the good, whose nature of education has prepared him to cut-across emotions and sentiments. He is ruled by reason and detached from material quest. He is so much discipline that nothing carries him away from the good.

Nigeria needs leaders who are thoroughly discipline. Nigeria does not need leaders who know sound national polices but lack discipline and will power to implement them. "For knowing that" and doing that are not the same thing. Nigerian leaders must in addition to "knowing that" be able to 'do that'. Nigerian leaders need much discipline to conquer the over-whelming weight of injustice, bribery and corruption lawlessness, indiscipline, stealing, murder, deliberate assassination of human life, armed robbery, rapacious usury, avarice, looting, and terrorism like Boko Haram. militant, threats, kidnapping, drug and human trafficking, nepotism, tribalism, etc. in the wake of this uncharted horizon of departures from comfortable an happy living, Nigeria needs highly disciplined leaders to take up maintaining law and order and building up the diverse human and material resources for the actualization of her ideal (platonc) dreams of more importance, Nigeria has to overhaul its political provisions. The economic and material gains accruing from political positions in Nigeria are, extremely attractive, where a local government councilor earns more that a university professor, and a senator's allowance and security vote can feed a whole community, where a governor's security vote is



more than the salaries of fifty professors, there is an easy temptation for individuals to clamor for political positions without minding that they lack the basic prerequisites for leadership. Let the political leaders be paid according to their level of educational qualification and experience just as other workers in the society. Again the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that minimum academic qualification for the office of the president is secondary school certificate. This is quite inadequate to initiate in secondary schools the acceptable level of self-discipline for such glorious position. Consequently that of the constitution has to be amended.

CONCLUSION

Achebe (1935:1) was unequivocal when he wrote that the “trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.” By way of diagnosing the causes of leadership failure in Nigeria, discovered are large indices of Hobbesian philosophy and morality as the philosophical underpinning of Nigerian leadership demeanor and process. With the exercise of absolute power, unaccountability to the masses and depraved moral sense that informed Hobbes philosophy and morality Nigeria leaders are therefore mere inflections of irresponsible actors like Leviathan of Hobbes.

A panacea to leadership failure in Nigeria is a conspicuous leap from Hobesian stranglehold to disciplined leadership, using Plato’s rationalization on the qualities of disciplined leaders as a paradigm.



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