

## THE PHILOSOPHER KING AND LEADERSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA: TOWARDS A NEW SPACE OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

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### **Abstract**

*The deficiency in governance and the socio economic imbalance that have wreaked havoc on Nigeria's political landscape since independence point to a clear manifestation of leadership failure. The country had been governed by a generation of leaders who did not grasp the fundamentals of leadership, hence the abysmal failure to develop socio-economic and religio-political strategies that would have allowed for sustained and meaningful nation-building. These leadership challenges are evidenced in political, social, and economic instability, as well as the prevalence of ethnic majority chauvinism, political instability and religious intolerance, which have all hampered Nigerian development. This is the justification behind Plato's suggestion in his socio-political philosophy that every political leader must be knowledgeable in philosophy. However, Plato's notion of philosopher king is not without scorn. This paper examined the notion of Philosopher King and its relevance to the leadership failure in the contemporary Nigeria. The paper adopted the qualitative research method, with reliance on primary and secondary source materials interpreted analytically on the subject matter. Although Plato's theory of the ideal state in his socio-political philosophy is admirable, the study found that it contains some outrageous and impractical elements that, if*

*put into practice, could lead to dictatorship, tyranny, insensitivity, slavery, revolution and pessimism, making it unrealistic and misleading. In attempt to solve the leadership failure in the contemporary Nigeria, this study proposed the principle of common good in Ziibalogzii Philosophy, implying humanness and community engagement over material wealth, and quality of community life over the acquisition of material things. The paper contended that the post-colonial Nigeria would have seen growth and progress in every sector if the leaders had diligently performed flawless and selfless services in the course of their leadership responsibilities. The paper called for the adoption and a coherent application of Ziibalogzii philosophy in order to address the socio-economic imbalance and governance deficit that have wreaked havoc on Nigeria's political system.*

**Keywords:** Leadership, Philosopher King, Ziibalogzii Philosophy

### **Introduction**

Today's Nigerian dilemma is centred on leadership in all spheres, including the government, economic, education, and religion etc. In his book *The Trouble with Nigeria*, Chinua Achebe succinctly said that "the problem with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership" (Achebe, 1998). In consonance with Achebe's position, Ayyiteh (1992) adds to that discourse by affirming that despite the rhetoric and vituperations against colonialism, very little changed in the years immediately following independence. Independence sometimes just involved a switch from white to black administrators for many nations. The new authorities started acting in the same way as the colonizers. In many areas, they were actually worse than colonialists. The irony of fate is that many Nigerian politicians ended up adopting some of the very traits they had fiercely criticized. The questions that agitate one's minds are: Are Nigerian leaders really well-trained? Do they genuinely take the necessary steps to get ready for leadership roles? Falaiye asserts that no one accepts an inexperienced doctor or lawyer, but everyone appears to accept untrained leaders and politicians (Falaiye, 2012). People run for leadership roles without any

official or informal training. They simply get out of bed and compete for prominent positions based on their credentials, wealth, ethnic or religious affinity, and occasionally, the gift of the attire.

One of the well-known ideas for an ideal state is the one Plato envisioned, one controlled by a Philosopher King. Basically, Plato thinks that the requirement for authority should be competence. The person who has the particular or special skills to carry out his duties should be the ruler of the state. According to Plato, the person who should be given the authority to rule is the Philosopher King because a philosopher seeks wisdom in all of its manifestations. Additionally, philosophers are different from other people since they are searching for the "truth" as opposed to false illusions. Accordingly, for Plato, the attainment of the philosopher's wisdom is what qualifies him to make wise decisions as a king. We read about the "philosopher king," a visionary leader who could brilliantly combine deep understanding with efficient rule, in Plato's *Republic*, a canonical centerpiece of political theory. The philosopher king is a just ruler who upholds truth, justice, fairness, equity, and righteousness with a fierce passion and who has attained the highest level of understanding or knowledge of the Good. If Nigeria is to actually succeed in the process of constructing a nation, this is the vision for the leadership role. The credibility of the aforementioned defense of Plato's theory is supported by more contemporary arguments made about the root of the leadership dilemma by scholars like Achebe (1985), Ebegbulem (2009), Agbor (2012), and Ezirim (2022). They had argued in various texts and forums that the leadership crisis we are currently experiencing is a result of the existence and proliferation of bad and insensitive people who make up the leadership class and who, for whatever reason, continue to win the majority of state elected office positions. The ascent of these unprepared and inexperienced people into positions of power always leads to the kind of scenario that Plato in the *Republic* defined as situations where:

human race will continue to have no respite from the evils arising from poor, inexperienced and ineffective leaders, until those who are really philosophers acquire political power or until, through some divine dispensation, those who rule and have political authority in the cities become real philosophers" (Plato, 2007:192).

The irony in the whole argument is that, despite the fact that the contemporary scholars previously mentioned strongly ascribed the title of Philosopher-kings to most of the post-independent political leaders in Nigeria's history, why is the current leadership failure in Nigeria thought to be the result of their ineffective leadership styles and activities? Some modern historians are debating the caliber, qualification, and experience of the persons who emerged as political leaders in the contemporary Nigeria due to the pervasiveness of leadership crises in post-independence Nigeria in the presence of these famous Philosopher-kings.

One of the most challenging and confounding issues in political philosophy is 'who should rule'? Nearly all classical theories have addressed it. According to Plato, every society must consider this fundamental question, and his entire political philosophy can be seen as an effort to provide an answer. In this situation, Plato responds, "A special trained people should rule" (Popkin & Stroll, 1993). For Plato, it's crucial to draw comparisons between the just (or well-ordered) person and the just (or well-ordered) society. He thinks that political theory and moral theory share the same fundamental ideas. Generally speaking, Plato's major suggestion is that philosophers should run governments. It is obvious that Plato's idea of the ideal state looks to be so ideal to imagine. But now the question is, "Would Plato's concept of the Philosopher-King be appropriate and effective in contemporary Nigeria?"

Plato's conception of the Philosopher King has drawn criticism from academics who claim it is unrealistic because it is overly

idealistic. It's because he came up with the idea without considering whether it would actually work in practice. In other words, Plato reduced the idea to a strictly speculative one. Additionally, it might result in tyranny or dictatorship and encourage social prejudice. Aristotle has questioned Plato's notion of politics by asserting that political knowledge must be explored in the world of historical reality and practical knowledge, which is also supportive of his argument. In his book *Nicomachean Ethics*, he makes the following points in unambiguous terms:

The topic of the unexamined has been passed down to us by our philosophical predecessors. In order to fulfill our philosophy of human nature to the best of our ability, it would be ideal for us to research this subject ourselves and generally inquire into the question of what defines a constitution. Then, in light of the constitutions we have gathered, let's investigate what influences or factors preserve or destroy particular kinds of constitutions or institutions, and what it is due that some cities are well-managed, while others are poorly governed. First, let's try to review anything that has been said in detail by earlier thinkers. After studying these, we may be better able to determine how the constitution should be set up and what rules and practices it should follow in order to function at its best (Aristotle, 1989:275).

In an effort to address the leadership crisis in contemporary Nigeria, this study puts forth the *Ziibalogzii* Philosophy's notion of the common good, which prioritizes human interaction and community engagement over material riches and the accumulation of things. The study argues that the post-colonial Nigeria would have experienced growth and advancement in every sector if the leaders had diligently performed fully and selflessly in their leadership obligations. The study comes to the conclusion that one of the initiatives to restore Nigeria's dignity as part of the creation of post-colonial Nigerian governments is

the resurgence of the *Ziibalogzii* philosophy. Finally, it urges the adoption and consistent application of the *Ziibalogzii* philosophy in order to address the socioeconomic imbalance and lack of effective governance that have wreaked havoc on Nigeria's political system. The study employs a qualitative research methodology and relies on primary and secondary source materials that have been analyzed for the topic.

### **Defining Leadership**

Prominent scholars such as Plato (1997); Aristotle (2012); Maslow (1970); and many others, have written on the role of leadership in transforming a nation. Despite the fact, they advocated diverse strategies; they were all focused on who governs and who should occupy position of authority in a society. Since there are so many distinct definitions of leadership used by different academics, it is practically impossible to come up with a single definition that is accepted by academics from all different perspectives. This fact may have informed Bedeian's observation that:

It is often associated with having a senior position. As a result, holding a high office makes a president, governor, or chief executive a leader. Some people define leadership as having particular personality traits including vigilance, perseverance, maturity, and intelligence. Finally, leadership can refer to a group of behaviors, according to some people. This perspective holds that it is a dynamic process in which one person's behavior influences others to imitate it (Bedeian, 1986:464).

Okadigbo defines leadership as the process through which one person regularly exerts more influence than others in the goal of group (Okadigbo, 1987). Munroe gave a more far reaching definition, when he maintained that leadership includes the capacity to influence, inspire, move, direct, encourage, motivate, mobilize and trigger others to pursue a common goal

or purpose while keeping commitment, momentum, self-confidence and courage (Munroe, 2005). According to Oyedepo cited in Folarin, leadership simply means service. He asserted that, a leader is actually a servant, a selfless servant who is preoccupied with the tasks assigned to him and delivers as expected or positively as unexpected (Folarin, 2010). The general thrust of leadership is a process of social impact by which a person influences others to perform an objective.

In the context of this study, leadership refers to the influence that pattern representatives have over social policy and resource allocation. According to this view, the leadership process depends on the ability to distribute limited resources, which establishes the location of power. In order to lead, one must use social power. Therefore, leadership should not be seen separately from social power due to its significant impact on individual behavior, individual and organizational productivity, adaption to working environments, and morale in organizations. It is the vital component that keeps the wheels of government turning smoothly. In a nation, leadership is what separates success from failure.

### **Plato and the Notion of Philosopher-King**

In May-June 428/27 BCE, Plato was born into an aristocratic Athenian family. He lived from 429 to 347 BC. Plato had a lifelong interest in politics as a young man, and at the age of twenty, he decided to follow Socrates. He adhered to his philosophy and dialectical method, which is thought to involve asking questions, getting answers, and then asking more questions in an effort to discover the truth. His master Socrates was the object of his life's desire, but he was so dissatisfied by the way the politicians in Athens treated him that he abandoned that goal (Omoregbe, 1991). He was deeply saddened by how Socrates had been treated by the Athens government. He struggled to comprehend how the government of Athens could execute a man like Socrates, such a good man, an excellent philosopher, and moralist. He grew to believe that politicians are

ignorant and that the only way to fix the problems in society was to train the next generation of politicians to be philosophers. He established his renowned academy – now regarded as the first university in Europe – for this aim. Future politicians could learn sound philosophy in this setting. Because according to Plato, only intellectuals make effective leaders. Mathematics, astronomy, and the physical sciences were studied at the academy in addition to philosophy, which was the primary field of study there. Njoya (2007) claimed that Plato was a celibate man of considerable fortune who devoted the most of his professional years to the pursuit of philosophy and politics. He passed away in the year 347.

The writings of Plato are in the form dialogues. The *Apology*, *Crito*, *Euthyphron*, and *Phaedo*, among others, are about Socrates' final days. Others do not specifically mention Socrates, but he is made the primary speaker in the conversations and is the one who articulates Plato's own beliefs and philosophies. *Protagoras*, *Geogias*, *Meno*, *Hippias*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Republic*, Plato's most well-known work, are a few of these. According to Njoya (2007), there is now widespread agreement that Plato's works can be broadly divided into three categories: his early, lesser "Socratic" dialogues; his mature artistic masterpiece; and his later, less dramatic and more technical works.

Plato believed that the philosopher had the knowledge, intelligence, and training necessary to rule, which is where the concept of the Philosopher King originated. The philosopher king is a fictional monarch who combines political savvy with philosophical understanding. The goal of ruling, like any other duty, was the general welfare of all, and it needed knowledge and experience. The philosopher king was portrayed by Plato as a visionary leader who would skilfully blend deep study with efficient rule in his Republic. According to Plato, authority should only be granted to those who are competent; hence the ruler of the state should be the one with the special skills necessary to carry out that role (Stumpf, 1994).

Plato's *Republic*, which was written around 375 BC, is where the idea of a city-state governed by philosophers is first introduced. According to Plato, the ideal state, which ensures the greatest amount of happiness for all of its citizens, can only be developed by a ruler who has absolute knowledge, which is attained through philosophical study. A state was likened to a ship by Plato. According to him, the person who is capable of commanding a ship is the one who has obtained the required training and navigational knowledge (Plato, 1997). Therefore, the person in charge of the state should be well educated and have learned to distinguish between the visible and the intelligible worlds, appearance and reality, and the realms of opinion and knowledge. The philosopher-king theory proposes that the ideal form of governance arises when philosophers are in power.

According to Plato, a leader must have a superior education that is tailored specifically for the job of leadership. His education should be of the kind that will take him step-by-step through the learning of the "Divided Line" (Plato, 1997) until he learns the "Good," which is "a synoptic vision of the connection of all truths to each other" (Plato, 1997; Stumpf, 1994). The one who has the greatest wisdom or knowledge of the Good and who is passionate about the truth is the leader. Plato defined the "Good" as the best possible standard of leadership education and training. The leader would be fully prepared for the role of ruling the state at this point having developed adequate talent, competence, maturity, discipline, dedication, virtue, wisdom, and patriotism. These are the characteristics of effective leadership as shown by Plato's philosopher king. The categorical statement made by Plato in his *Republic* that: "Leadership is the capacity to transform the state or to bring about a sustainable nation-building" serves as an illustration of the philosophical justification for the recommendation of Plato's leadership as a model for the kind of leadership that could do both.

...until philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands... there is no other road to real happiness, either for society or the individual (Plato, 1997:473).

The implication of the aforementioned statement is that the philosopher king was the ideal candidate to lead since he would not be motivated by gaining power for the sake of self-promotion. Plato advises that only those who had knowledge and adequate training should rule, and that everyone else should be eliminated from this category because they were unable to do so. The personality of the philosopher king is the result of proper training. The act of governance should be learned as such. The philosopher king is a wise and learned monarch. Not every aspirant ruler possesses the trained mind necessary to comprehend and uphold the highest and honorable notion that "virtue is knowledge" (Plato, 1997). Therefore, it is essential that only a select few individuals with this developed mind receive the training, tools, and preparation necessary to become political leaders. Melissa Lane elaborates and states:

The idea of the "philosopher king" is based on the idea that the only person who can be relied upon to rule wisely is a philosopher. Philosophers are morally and intellectually qualified to hold positions of power; morally, because it is in their nature to value knowledge and truth so highly that they are immune to the lust and greed that tempt others to abuse their positions of authority; and intellectually, because they are the only ones who can acquire complete knowledge of reality, which is contended in Books V through VII of the *Republic* to culminate in knowledge of the forms of Virtue, Beauty, and, above all, the Good. By providing aspirant philosophers with a rigorous education, the city can promote this knowledge, and the philosophers will use

their understanding of goodness and virtue to assist other residents in pursuing these goals as far as they are practicable (Lane, 2022:12).

According to this, philosopher-kings are "true rulers and philosophers who, knowing the Platonic Forms or Ideas, thus become authorities on ends and values" (Flew, 1979). In his masterpiece *The Republic*, Plato introduced the idea to the world. "Plato maintained that there will not be any relief from evil for humanity until philosophers rule as kings or until people who are currently referred to be kings and princes become actual philosophers" (Flew, 1979). In a similar vein, Brown claims that Plato believed "The only chance lay in building a "right philosophy" and creating a new society ruled by philosopher-Kings who understood philosophy" in response to the decadence of his civilization (Brown, 1990). The notion of philosopher-Kings as a remedy to Nigeria's leadership issue is motivated by a similar conviction.

### **An Evaluation of Plato's Philosopher King within the Nigerian Political Structure**

Due to leaders' political illiteracy in the game of politics, Nigeria has experienced a significant setback. The best course of action at this point is to assess Plato's philosopher king within the context of Nigerian politics to determine whether it has any ideas that can clarify the country's current leadership issues and offer solutions.

In his socio-political philosophy, Plato's concept of the perfect state clearly lays out the qualifications for both current and future political leaders in Nigeria. The guardians (rulers), who in modern times can be referred to as the political leaders, carry out the crucial and most delicate tasks of coordinating and organizing the other two classes of citizens in the state (the auxiliaries and the artisans). In other words, Plato believed that the most delicate duties of the state were given to political leaders. Plato strongly advises that political leaders be educated

in philosophy as part of their leadership development. Given their distinct sensitive roles at the federal, state, and local government levels of government in Nigeria, this is an undeniable fact. Applying Plato's socio-political philosophy, the following philosophical stances, mind-sets, or leadership philosophies should therefore be possessed by every political leader or anybody aspiring to become a political leader in Nigeria.

According to Plato, the city state could only be a place where justice could be found if and only if it was ruled by philosopher kings. This is due to the fact that only the philosopher kings are aware of the ideal form of administration. Plato emphasized the need for the elite who will govern to possess great rationality. They must receive scientific and philosophical education. The choice of the ruling elite must be made on the basis of innate intelligence. It should not really matter who has this characteristic because it should be universal. But there is a purpose to the "guardians'" rigorous training in music, gymnastics, physics, and philosophy. The elite are supposed to be liberated from bias and corruption by the rigorous training. They should only be better able to differentiate between what is good and evil in this way. The candidates will then understand what justice is, the highest good, and the eternal truths. The interests of the nation and its people are served by this. Nigeria needs a philosopher king or kings, a leader who is/are knowledgeable and wise. It is unfortunate and perplexing that "just two individuals (one ceremonially) have ruled Nigeria since independence, which was attained more than 50 years ago. Does it say anything about the values and concerns of our country? Take a look around us and evaluate how we stack up against our neighbors, including those in Africa.

Not educated rascals, but messiahs and university-educated men/women are what Nigeria needs. We must agree that historically, the Nigerian university system has not performed all that well in this area. The sooner Nigerian philosopher kings

begin to assume political office, the better. This is so that no one may give away something they do not possess. Before receiving a political post in Nigerian society, leaders need to be educated and knowledgeable. In Nigeria, qualifications for leadership roles should be based on the applicant's degree of education, knowledge, morals, and character. This is essential because, in the words of King, who was cited in Odey (1989), "intelligence is not enough; the purpose of education is intelligence plus character." Accordingly, the Watch Tower Bible Tract warns that:

When true knowledge is attained, the will becomes sincere, the heart is set right, and the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, the family life is regulated; when the family life is regulated, the natural life is orderly; and when the natural life is orderly, there is peace in the world (Tower Bible Tract, 1990:181).

According to Plato, leadership is an art that requires a high level of intelligence talent rather than just being a game. It is a craft that calls for a keen understanding of the underlying ideas and other complexities at play. A good statesman, if he has the philosophical knowledge, should organize political actions through laws, much as a medical doctor knows the rules and laws of the art of medicine. Nigeria needs a true philosopher king like that who will appreciate and respect human life and lead this wonderful nation endowed with unrestricted natural riches to greater heights.

At this point, we would like to compare the political life in Nigeria ever since independence on October 1, 1960, using Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," which described the essence of society. Since then, the so-called Nigerian leaders have been on the wrong side of the cave and, as a result, are at odds with the unchanging facts. Self-gratification is what drives their emotional motivation. They are addicted to the power that some of them ruthlessly attained and maintained. Since they are truly

in the dark, they take advantage of the weak and unfavored. Despite this, we still think that the philosopher kings will be this corrupt society's saviors. The emancipated ones are the philosopher kings. Ezebuilo described the philosopher kings as follows:

They are not self-centered; they understand what justice, truth, and good are. As a result, they would rule in accordance with the law. Despite their profound understanding of the everlasting truth, they should go back to the cave in order to educate others who are unable to tell their right from their left. At this time, one could confirm that the city state could not be ruled by citizens of the lower classes (Ezebuilo, 2005:12-13).

It is important to remember that the colonial power orchestrated the transfer of power to an obscure group of Nigerians in 1960, possibly because they "cynically believed that they did not have the intellectual stamina and will to dismantle the skewed economic and administrative arrangements that the departing British administrators bequeathed the country." This is Achebe's point of view (1983). In Nigeria, universities and philosophers must play a role similar to Plato's in Athens, and kings – markers of the conventional monarchical system of the past – must replace these uneducated and self-centered leaders immediately. The entire nation's constituency, including those who will aspire to national leadership, should be instilled with general enlightenment and a passion for greatness beforehand. The next generation of leaders should be academically and morally equipped now. This was the exact purpose of Plato's academy in Athens, where the next generation of leaders received instruction in the art of philosophy to prepare them for effective leadership roles.

Nigeria urgently needs university-educated men. This does not imply that the institution is the exclusive source of brilliance and enlightenment, though. But one can assert without fear of

dispute that Plato long ago proposed a solution to the vexing leadership failure in Nigeria in his *Republic*. Only when true thinkers become kings or kings become philosophers will Nigeria as a nation advance. Only by changing our educational strategy will our society be able to complete this project. This has implications for developing a strong educational philosophy. It suggests that we set the proper priorities.

### **The Problem with Plato's Philosopher King**

Plato's socio-political philosophy's vision of the ideal state is admirable, but it also contains some ridiculous and unworkable ideas that, if put into practice, could lead to dictatorship, tyranny, insensitivity, slavery, revolution, suicide, frustration, and pessimism. For instance, Plato disapproves of marriage and procreation in the *Republic*. The guardians (political rulers) may become dictators, despotic, and insensitive rather than exercising compassion, wisdom, and caution in some situations because they do not have families and children of their own. No amount of philosophical understanding can substitute for or replace the experience of family life since it is priceless and singular. More effectively learned via informal family experience than through any formal schooling are the virtues of compassion, judgment, fairness, and mercy, which are essential elements for outstanding and successful political leadership. Similar to this, Plato's idea of a hereditary class system might result in slavery, the violation of basic human rights, revolution, suicide, and pessimism. For instance, it is unfair to them and a violation of their fundamental right to self-respect, dignity, and development when the children of artisans (ordinary people) grow up to be craftspeople. The devastating effects of revolt, slavery, pessimism, frustration, and suicide will unavoidably result from hereditary class distinction. Instead, everyone should be given the chance to advance to a position of leadership or any other higher one in the community.

Once more, Plato's vision of the Philosopher King is overly utopian and hence unreal. It's because he came up with the idea without considering whether it would actually work in practice. To put it another way, Plato reduced the idea to a strictly speculative one. Aristotle has questioned Plato's notion of politics by asserting that political knowledge must be explored in the world of historical reality and practical knowledge, which is also supportive of his argument. His book *Nicomachean Ethics*, which states this plainly, says:

The topic of the unexamined has been passed down to us by our philosophical predecessors. In order to fulfil our philosophy of human nature to the best of our ability, it would be ideal for us to research this subject ourselves and generally inquire into the question of what defines a constitution. Then, in light of the constitutions we have gathered, let's investigate what influences or factors preserve or destroy particular kinds of constitutions or institutions, and what it is due that some cities are well-managed, while others are poorly governed. First, let's try to review anything that has been said in detail by earlier thinkers. After studying these, we may be better able to determine how the constitution should be set up and what rules and practices it should follow in order to function at its best (Aristotle, 1980:50).

As we can see, Aristotle wishes to make the point that before deciding what is best for the state, a thorough analysis of the historical information and practical knowledge must take place. The proposed idea would become more effective and applicable if this were to be done. Plato, on the other hand, only put up the idea without providing any real evidence or actual knowledge. Additionally, he doubted that material success could be a valid indicator of knowledge, which is undoubtedly another reason that contributed to his conception of such an idea. As we examine his theory of forms, Plato holds that everything in the world is merely an illusion and that his realm of forms contains

the real thing. If this were the case, Plato would not have based his concept of the Philosopher King on real-world experience. And as a result, it would be very challenging to put such a concept into practice because it is purely theoretical and lacks a foundation in real-world experience or historical truth.

The Philosopher King in Plato's conception is also prone to rule in tyranny or dictatorship. Let's first go over his definition of the state in order to demonstrate this. Plato basically viewed the state as a social organism because he noted that human are born with naturally distinct skills and talents. As a result of this distinctiveness, he believed that the only way to run the state for the good is to have a political structure in which citizens are, in a sense, divided into categories based on what skills they possess. The following are Plato's three main categories of citizens: The Philosophers, whose responsibility is to establish and carry out laws. This make up the social organism's head. The Soldiers, whose responsibility is to protect the state. They serve as the social organism's brain. The populace, which includes farmers, merchants, slaves, and other people, provides all citizens with the tangible items they require. They make up the social organism's arms, legs, and trunk. All citizens have a responsibility to uphold peace and support the government.

It is clear that Plato has overlooked human rights in his conception of the state and of the Philosopher King. He removed the right to participate in the political processes of the state and viewed people primarily in terms of what they could give to the state. Furthermore, Plato only accepts his own theory that the philosophers, or the Philosopher King, are the only people qualified to rule the state due to their rigorous training and educational background. One of this idea's flaws, according to John Stuart Mill, is to imagine the populace as a uniform group with a single interest (Mitchell, 2022). Indeed, Mill was correct since, in addition to the fact that the state is made up of people who share interests, its inhabitants also have individual interests. In other words, the state must serve the people since it

is the state's responsibility to watch out for their interests, not the people, who must obediently serve the state. Another point is that Plato supports what Voltaire called a "benevolent dictator," in which a wise person would rule in the interests of the populace without consulting them. This notion is obviously dangerous and overly idealistic. It is unlikely that such a "benevolent dictator" would actually run the country in this manner. Finally, it appears that Plato is promoting a tyrannical state in the face of a philosopher by way of this idea.

According to Plato's theory, the state's disorder is brought on by lower elements' attempts to take over the functions of higher faculties (Glenn, 1954). He added that the unbridled appetites and spirited behavior would cause internal anarchy in both the individual and the state. He came to the conclusion that logic must rule at both levels as a result. Positively, it is important to recognize Plato's desire to imagine a better condition. He was unable to consider the negative effects, though. To refute this, one could say that Plato has in some way degraded and prejudiced the inferior components of a state. He had never given himself the opportunity to consider the potential of these subordinate factors in state political processes. The worst part is that this ostensibly discriminatory structure of Plato would probably inspire rebellion on the part of these lower elements because the state solely assumes that the Philosopher King alone has knowledge of the truth and that he must bear the burden of ruling for the benefit of his subjects and the social organism. The freedom to participate in the political affairs of the state was denied to all other members of the state besides the philosophers.

The truth is that each state is unique and complex. Even if we are all committed to the common good, we must keep in mind that the state is also made up of people with varied interests. And the state's job is to serve these interests. Additionally, politics must involve negotiations between the people and the government. The belief that a ruler alone knew what is best for the state and

how it should be run according to his own ways and views must be replaced with the ability to accept suggestions and proposals for the good of the state.

### **Ziibalogzii Philosophy: Towards a New Space of Philosophical Thought**

*Ziibalogzii* is a philosophy that originates from Ogoni indigenous people of Southern Nigeria. It emphasizes humanness and community engagement over material wealth and quality of community life over the acquisition of material things. In the Ogoni philosophy, *Ziibalogzii* is used to indicate empathy, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity in the pursuit of establishing and upholding a community based on justice and reciprocal care. *Ziibalogzii* addresses human interconnection, shared humanity, and the duty to one another that stems from their strong bonds. *Ziibalogzii* is the awareness of human innate urge to support and uplift one another while keeping the interests of the community at the forefront of their actions. *Ziibalogzii* is recognized as the Ogoni philosophy of humanism, linking the individual to the collective through 'brotherhood' or 'sisterhood.' It significantly advances indigenous "ways of knowing and being." In the larger socio-political context of the Ogoni society, it is regarded as a spiritual way of being with varying historical emphasis and (re)contextualization over time and place. This method is not only an expression of a spiritual philosophy in its theological and theoretical sense, but as an expression of daily living. That is, a way of knowing that fosters a journey towards becoming human or which renders us human, or, in its collectivist sense, a higher humanity that transcends all forms of alterity.

According to its etymology, *Ziibalogzii* comes from the Ogoni terms *Zii*, which means one, *ba*, which means hand, and *log*, which means washes. *Ziibalogzii*, which means literally "the condition of being human," is a theory that was developed from the ancient Ogoni collaborative, reciprocal manner of thinking (one hand washes the other). *Ziibalogzii* is a concept that is difficult to reduce to a scientific process. Instead, it serves as the

cornerstone of a particular way of life or culture that prioritizes fostering personal connections over all other social, communal, and professional interactions. The topic of *Ziibalogzii* is the art of being a human. Like religious people who attempt to be good, people endeavor to live out their *Ziibalogzii* values.

As a socio-religious philosophy rooted on the value of reciprocity, care, harmony, hospitality, respect, and responsiveness, and human existence's fundamental interdependence Human beings are the most essential thing to *Ziibalogzii*, which plainly ties the empirical world and the cosmos. It also makes no distinction between the individual and the community. *Ziibalogzii* is a religious philosophy that unites the physical and spiritual worlds. This philosophical and religious system is based on a totemic framework, according to which each person should see themselves as linked to and interconnected with the spiritual world on the vertical axis and with other nonhuman species and the larger environment on the horizontal axis. *Ziibalogzii*'s religio-philosophical theory holds that personhood and humanness are inextricably linked to the dynamic (bio) physical and spiritual worlds through a web of interconnectedness and relatedness, with one's actual and current web of communion, such as current family ties, taking precedence over potential or future links.

*Ziibalogzii* philosophy has far reaching implications for a person's priorities in life, his behavior towards others, his attitude and perspectives. This means that other people, their joys and pains, are truly important to him who has *Ziibalogzii*, that is, s/he shares their emotions. What is good for the community is good for the individual. What is humiliating for a member of the community is humiliating for the whole community. To be able to forgive is an essential part of the *Ziibalogzii* spirit. *Ziibalogzii* philosophy is the view that people are naturally interdependent as human beings and that life finds its meaning in the way people respect this truth. *Ziibalogzii* therefore implies the absence of class, since everyone is essentially the same.

Accountability and openness are necessary for democracy and effective government. The obligation to disclose actions and results of such actions, as well as to openly defend and justify them, is a requirement of public accountability and transparency. Similar to this, for their personal *Ziibalogzii* activities to be considered seriously, public leaders and officers must uphold public duty and openness. In order to implement the new order using *Ziibalogzii* as a framework for social theory, political ideals, and public policy, leaders must: create a new institutional framework to replace the current political culture with one based on *Ziibalogzii* principles; use their popular mandate to more fully utilize state resources; invest in people and improve their capacity to exercise their right to govern. Track new and recurring political patterns of behaviour.

Principles and practices that attempt to create harmony, understanding among people, and consensus are significantly included into African culture. These include leadership and healing skills, as well as interpersonal skills like knowing how to welcome someone in the morning. *Ziibalogzii* philosophy places a strong value on working as a team, support one another, and emphasize the principle of treating everyone with respect. Leaders among the *Ziibalogzii* are conscious of their connection and how their humanity is inextricably linked to that of others; if others are lessened, they are as well; if others fail, they fail. They appreciate seeing others achieve because they understand that their success is everyone's success. *Ziibalogzii*'s leadership teaches leaders that we are more alike than different. *Ziibalogzii* promotes cooperative and collaborative work environments and encourages people to participate, share, support one another, and work as a team. Leaders who take their cues from the *Ziibalogzii* continue to forge ties based on reciprocity: shared need, common interest, and respect. This is true even if these leaders hold prominent positions and a lot of power within their organizations. At all levels, including business, politics, and religion, leaders now need to be healers. Because they can

identify and hold the group's vulnerability, encourage sincere collaboration, and heal the numerous individuals one at a time, leaders with *Ziibalogzii* are innate healers.

The Philosophy of life and philosophy of leadership go hand in hand, because a philosophy of life aids in identifying the values that a given culture upholds. A *Ziibalogzii*-oriented leadership approach has consequences that go beyond simply promoting teamwork at the most fundamental levels; they also encourage team members or followers to put aside their own aims in favor of the group's objectives. One technique to instil values in general and *Ziibalogzii* social values in particular in a team is by using value-based leadership. Value-based leadership makes it simpler to create a team culture that promotes positive values. A developmentally centred, change-oriented, and value-driven leadership approach is known as value-based leadership. The objective of this leadership approach is to support team members' development and flexibility so they can actively contribute to the team's effectiveness.

The essential principles of *Ziibalogzii* include that relationships should be built on listening to and affirming others, and that they should be marked by respect, decency, and harmony. *Ziibalogzii* awareness is the desire to develop a compassionate, sustainable, and just attitude to community, whether that community be a company, village, city, nation, or our global family. Because *Ziibalogzii* places a strong focus on our shared humanity and the moral obligation to demonstrate our collective responsiveness in the world, it offers an alternative strategy for remaking a world that benefits everyone. Simply put, resources would be reorganized to enable individuals, groups, and nations to once again learn how to coexist with respect, decency, and fairness. *Ziibalogzii* style of government is thus defined as a "humane" form of governance that emphasizes communality and group solidarity over individualism and particularity. The Principles of *Ziibalogzii* place a significant focus on connections and collectivism over material commodities in terms of leadership philosophy, including ownership of opportunities, responsibilities, and challenges.

Humans naturally have a tendency to view self-preservation and the pursuit of interests as being good in and of itself; this is the notion of the common good as stated in *Ziibalogzii* philosophy. Philosophers contend that not all of human interests are as constructive as we may believe. Once more, how we see our interests as both people and organizations has a significant impact on how we act toward them. Because of our ability to understand this relationship between individual interest and the common good, we are in an excellent position to be true citizens who can affirm their love for their nation and all the institutions and peoples that make it up. This depressing reality – that self-interest has dominated Nigeria's leadership to the extent that those in charge primarily consider themselves and those close to them while paying little to no attention to the people who elected them – has undoubtedly harmed Nigeria in many aspects of her national life.

For instance, socially, it has resulted in the idea of first-class and second-class citizens, creating a separation between those in positions of control and the common populace. This report issued a strong warning against considering any individual or group as second-class citizens in this situation. The wealth gap between the rich and the poor has grown due to the economy. This is evident from the types of food consumed by citizens of the same nation. Quantity above quality will be prioritized by the destitute masses, leading to cases of undernourishment, sicknesses of all types, and social problems like armed robbery, prostitution, kidnapping, and other crimes done by the poor victims in an effort to survive. Due to their egocentric leadership style, Nigeria and her leadership are not only poorly regarded morally in the international community, but it also inevitably forced the poor masses to engage in unethical endeavors and deals in order to survive, which contributed to the moral decay already present in Nigeria. Today in Nigeria, if it is not a money ritual, kidnapping, armed robbery, or child trafficking, it is prostitution. This is because individuals in positions of power have selfishly seized the resources these victims would have had

access to in the country. Therefore, to the dismay of the populace, egocentrism has emerged as a worrying pattern in Nigeria's political leadership. This paper applies one of the distinctive characteristics of common possession to the situation in Nigeria in this context.

Common ownership as a component of the principle of *Ziibalogzii* philosophy in this sense is the common right which enjoins every citizen within a geographical area to enjoy the national resources to the fullest. Regardless of gender, class, or family origin, everyone is expected to share these resources, which include core institutions, infrastructure, and natural resources. This suggests that any exclusivity claimed for these resources, as self-centred political leaders would, amounts to alienation of the excluded groups. Common ownership, in theory, provides for everyone's needs (both the leader and the led), so regardless of economic status, all citizens should have access to the nation's resources to meet their basic needs for things like food, healthcare, education, clean water, electricity, a good road system, and so on. Unfortunately, these needs of existence seemed to be enjoyed exclusively by the political elites and leaders, while the majority of the population lives in utter destitution.

Unfortunately, given that the country is overrun with beggars and is blessed with abundant natural riches, including oil, Nigeria has nothing to show for it. Because of unemployment and inadequate living conditions, cases of armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, and similar crimes are common. The leaders seize the funds intended to help the less fortunate and internally displaced people only for their own benefit. Nigerians enjoy riches, yet they also experience poverty. Given the benefits the nation derives from the natural resources that nature has provided her, the roads that should have been built to a standard beg for national attention. What a contrast. Following the aforementioned are the unrestrained agitations of the poor, ignored people. Because the poor masses would not regret

placing their trust in their political leaders if they used the national resources to provide food for the population, develop industries; construct good roads, offer health and educational facilities, and other requirements of life. Because we collectively own these resources and they can help us improve the quality and significance of our lives, the principle of the common good, as expressed in *Ziibalogzii* Philosophy, promotes the use of national and natural resources and what results from them to meet the basic human needs of all Nigerians, regardless of class, gender, ethnicity, or any other form of social affiliation. We are tasked with maintaining and preserving them as a shared legacy because they are common commodities. If we are successful, they may be the source of our happiness, and in this case, we feel an impulse that challenges us to maintain them as something positive and to firmly stick to them both now and in all subsequent situations. The main way that this challenge is possible is through shared experience. There is little question that the Nigerian state would change its image and become regarded as a "country of integrity" in the comity of countries if leaders reject self-centeredness in their leadership. This would also contribute significantly to improving Nigerians' quality of life while lowering social evils and fostering a purposeful and peaceful way of life. Because it is a shared resource, everyone in the country depends on it to survive. No one, not even the leaders, are expected to have exclusive rights to it above and above what is owed to them.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The thrust of this paper is the attention it has drawn to the deficiency in governance and the socio economic imbalance that have ravaged the Nigerian political landscape since independence. This suggests to a large extent a vivid manifestation of leadership failure in Nigeria. In other words, a fundamental threat to the nation's survival has come from the leadership of the nation, which has been characterized by a lack of vision, political squabbling, and – most significantly – gross corruption. National growth has unquestionably remained an

illusion as long as the nation's leadership crisis and corruption are not effectively addressed. The government in Nigeria still has a long way to go before it can be trusted by the people it governs. The reason being that government programmes are targeted at the wealthy, well-known, influential, and politicians, while the average persons do not notice how the government affects their lives. Because the general populace believes that government only makes policies for their own self-interest, they do not benefit from them.

This is the justification behind Plato's suggestion in his socio-political philosophy that any political leader must be knowledgeable in philosophy. According to Plato, "there will be no end to the troubles of states... humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in the world... and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands" (Plato; 2007). Perhaps Plato's claim for a group of knowledgeable people with the power to provide happiness and justice to the Republic is ideal, but utterly implausible. As Aristotle said, since politics is a force that inevitably affects us all, it is unavoidable for us all to be interested in and have a voice in politics, not just an elite group of elderly men. Plato's argument is asking us not only to be disinterested in the political process, but also to leave our rights and opinions in the hands of some benevolent dictators. For this reason his argument is not only unpersuasive but is also unrealistic.

This study, therefore, proposed the principle of common good in *Ziibalogzii* Philosophy in an effort to address the leadership failure in contemporary Nigeria. This principle places human decency and community engagement above material wealth and the quality of community life above the acquisition of material goods. It encourages selflessness, inclusivity, and commitment as opposed to selfishness, exclusivity, and a "we-them" mentality – adopted by policy makers and deeply ingrained in Nigeria's political leadership. The paper argued that the general public must obviously be included in the demand for political

education and training that Plato emphasizes is essential for "philosopher kings" or rulers. According to the argument made in the paper, post-colonial Nigeria would have seen growth and progress in every factor if the leaders had diligently performed flawless and selfless services in the course of their leadership responsibilities. The paper demanded that *Ziibalogzii* philosophy be adopted and applied consistently in order to address the socio-economic imbalance and governance deficit that have wreaked havoc on Nigeria's political system.

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