THE CONTINGENCY BETWEEN POWER AND RECTITUDE IN THE SOCIETY

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Abstract
Power and rectitude are two concepts that have vital roles to play in the society. The development of a society is dependent on these concepts. Power is simply seen as the capacity to give effective commands, that is, the ability to have one's command carried out while rectitude or morality is a code or set principles by which men live. It has to do with right or wrong, good or bad behaviour. This paper hopes to ex-ray the contingency between power and rectitude in the society. Our method in this research is deductive, analytic and synthetic. For this work, data were sourced from library books, journals, periodicals and biographies. In conclusion, a society is as good as the quality of its moral underpinning. Men in position of power with very low degree of rectitude are the greatest obstacles to the development of their society. Thus, the separation of rectitude from power is the destruction of the society. This is because a society bereft of morality is nearing non existence.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the modern concept of power was recognized as early as 1748, with the publication of Hume's essay, 'Of the Original Contract'. Almost all the governments, which exist at present, Hume contends, have been founded originally, either on usurpation or conquest or both, without any pretence of fair consent, or voluntary subjection of the people. Describing the processes of political change-migration, colonization, and military victory-Hume demands, rhetorically, is there anything discoverable in all these events, but force and violence?

Hume's comments offer one of the first clear versions of the assumptions of a modern age, which seeks to study politics positively, eschewing theological justification and moral evaluations in favour of a casual assessment of how the political world works in reality. In other words the 'power' world-view offers the would-be social scientist immunity from moral

evaluation and theoretical speculation, and the possibility of emulating the explanatory achievement of the physicist.

The ultimate origin of morality is a disputed question. While some see God as the foundation of morality, many others are reclined to attribute it to either society or the individual. However, to think that society or the autonomous individual is at the root of moral law will consign morality to relativism, subjectivism and conventionalism. No human society can be sustained in such a shaky foundation. The only understanding of morality capable of sustaining a stable society is that derived from natural law. In his much accepted natural law theory, St. Thomas Aquinas posits, "right reason" as the standard of morality. While doing this, his ingenuity linked up the eternal law of God, the human reason and conscience in a single apparatus for discovering what is morally right. Despite its obvious difficulties, it has stood the test as the only available standard that answers to the problem of a pluralistic society. It is able to combine the advantage of objectivity, universality, and subjective reference. Moral law obliges all persons in all cultures and at times, irrespective of socio- political and religious affiliations. According to Omoregbe (1979) it is a universal law about which no moral person who has reached the age of reason can claim to be ignorant.

Morality deals with right and wrong action. This includes honesty, truthfulness, and high standards of conduct in sexual and other matters and as judged and approved by right reason. According to Omoregbe (1979) a society bereft of this standard is in serious trouble. Life in such society becomes increasingly difficult, insecure, and unhappy. And this is because all the spheres of social relationship are overwhelmed by the demands of morality such that morality constitutes the main context for other forms of relationships.

THE CONCEPT OF POWER

According to Mclean and McMillan (2003) power is the ability to make people (or thing) do what they would not otherwise have done. Power can also be said to be the capacity to give effective commands, that is, the ability to have one's commands carried out. For Raphael (1976) the most general meaning of 'power' is simply ability. This may be seen from the French term 'pourvoir' and the Latin 'potestas', both of which are derived from the verb 'to be able' (pourvoir, posse). It is because of this general meaning of 'power' that we can use the same word for the power of a dynamo, will power, or political power. Politics is seen to be about might rather than right; might is seen as creating right de facto because the seizure of power leads to the establishment of authority and the successful inculcation of belief. Power is the appropriate central concept of this world-view because, in its modern form, it is concerned with which groups or persons dominate, get their own way or are best able to pursue their own interests in societies.

Power is often classified into five principal forms: force, persuasion, authority, coercion, and manipulation. However, only coercion and manipulation are uncontroversial forms of power. Coercion is perhaps the paradigm form of power and is said to consist of controlling people

through threats, whether overt or tacit, that is, using the threat of superior force to make others do what you want them to do when they are unwilling. Manipulation involves control exercised without threats, typically using resources of information and ideas. It is a more durable form of power.

Raphael (1976) opines that because coercive power is so prominent in political conflict, the word 'power', which at first simply meant ability of any kind, comes to acquire associations with enforcement. Power can be used to mean authority only when one is exercising power in virtue of a special office he holds. If a man holds a position of authority, and is able by virtue of that position to get others to do what he tells them to do, his power in a sense is the exercise of authority.

It is possible to have authority without power; yet, in practice, for political affairs, authority usually needs to be backed by coercive power. Thus, Raphael (1976) opines that building up political institutions without regard to the reality of power is a risky business, but the acknowledgement of the authority of law and its procedures for settling disputes can go some way towards making it effective, and is certainly conceptually distinct from effectiveness by the use of coercive power.

Most societies were based on force rather than right. According to Subtrata and Sushila (2007) John Locke was not an anarchist, distrusting political authority, but he was conscious of the dangers that it posed. Political authority is a trust, and if the terms of the trust are violated, the community has to take remedial members in order to preserve itself.

THE CONCEPT OF RECTITUDE

Rectitude or Ethics has a number of different meanings. But in its most frequent uses, it refers to a code or set of principles by which men live. Morality originates in Everyday Life. It has to do with the daily life of men. According to Richard and Avrum (1969) the church regards the moral code as an objective and infallible guide to correct behaviour, which cannot therefore be questioned. This is because the code is regarded as an expression of God's will. Anyone who deviates from its precepts is by definition behaving immorally.

Philosophically there are many opinions concerning morality or ethics. The Eudemonism contends that happiness is the goal of life and the standard for morality. According to the Hedonists pleasure is the moral standard. These two concepts are popularly understood to mean exactly the same thing. The Stoics contend that the moral standard is reason. To live a moral life and be happy, man must live according to reason and not according to his desires, for reason is man's true nature. The Utilitarians, however, maintain that the moral standard is utility, and utility is defined as the principle of the greatest good of the number. Utilitarianism therefore is the greatest happiness of the greatest number. For Kant, the moral standard is duty-duty for the sake of duty. To have moral value, actions must be performed strictly out of a sense of duty in reverence for the moral law.

Moral principles are seen as guides or indicators. It is also explicitations or more specific formulations of moral law. According to Omoregbe (1990) the moral law can be defined as the law (traditionally known as natural law) which enjoins man to do good and refrain from evil. The moral principles are explicitations of this imperative of the moral law, making specifications regarding the good to be done and the evil to be avoided.

PLATO AND ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPT OF POWER AND RECTITUDE IN THE SOCIETY

In the ancient days, life in the city-state was not classified and subdivided so much as it is now. Consequently, the activities of man were intimately connected with his citizenship, since his religion was the religion of the state, and his art very largely a civic art, thus, there could be no very sharp separation of these concepts. According to Sabine and Thorson (1973) the good man must be a good citizen; a good man could hardly exist except in a good state; and it would be idle to discuss what was good for the man without considering also what was good for the city. For this reason an inter-weaving of psychological and social questions, of ethical and political considerations, was intrinsic to what Plato was trying to do.

In considering the location of the state Plato contends that it should not be too near to the sea rather about eight stradia from the coast. He objected a commercial state and accepted an agrarian. For Plato maritime population is always harassed by enemies. However, Njoku (2002) said that not locating the state near the sea and prejudice against a commercial has an ethical implication because Plato wants to save the 'moral worth of the social system'.

Plato admits the Socratic doctrine that virtue is knowledge. This doctrine implies that there is an objective good to be known by rational or logical investigation rather than by intuition, guesswork, or luck. The good is objectively real and it ought to be realized not because men want it but because it is good. It then follows that the man who knows the philosopher or scholar or scientist ought to have decisive power in government and that it is his knowledge alone which entitles him to this. Sabine and Thorson (1973) argued that it appears upon analysis that the association of man with man in society depends upon reciprocal needs and the resulting exchange of goods and services. Thus, the philosopher's claim to power is only a very important case of what is found wherever men live together, namely that any cooperative enterprise depends upon everyone attending to his own part of the work. To cap it all, there is no hope for states unless power lies in the hands of those who know-who-know, first, what tasks the good state requires, and, second, what heredity and education will supply the citizens fitted to perform them.

Aristotle propounded a new science of politics. This new science was to be general; that is, it should deal with actual as well as ideal forms of government and it should teach the art of governing and organizing states of any sort in any desired manner. This new idea of politics involves the knowledge both of the political good, relative as well as absolute, and also of political mechanics employed perhaps for an inferior or even a bad end. For Aristotle the state

is the union of families and communities. Every community is formed for the sake of good in other words the state which is the supreme and all-embracing community must aim at the supreme good. The nature of the state is rooted in the needs of living for the highest good. In Aristotle's mind the ethical aspect of the state was uppermost. This is because the determining factor in any state would be the ethical values which the association of citizens was designed to realize; the moral purposes of the citizens in living together would be the essential thing that they had in common and hence, the life of the state.

Aristotle's politics proves virtue to be essential for the individual, which at the same must be essential for the state which is an association of individuals. The state needs enough of external goods for the performance of good actions. Njoku (2002) argues that Aristotle is convinced that good life or happy life requires education in virtues, thus happiness depends primarily on virtue and secondarily on external goods*.* It can then be concluded that ethics and politics are embodied in the individual. Plato and Aristotle's concept of the state is that of an integrated system of social ethics, which exists for the common good or moral end to make good citizens. They had moral perfection as their end point which is best delivered by the state and as such subjected everybody to it. The state is more of and institution for moral perfection of humans. Njoku (2002) opines that:

> *Plato's scheme of the Republic is for the divorce of political power from economic possession, under which the serving class surrenders private property for the sake of pure devotion to public service. For Aristotle, households and cities can use properly the means at their disposal to live a good life. Wealth is a means to moral end; hence it is limited by the same end. Although the modern capitalist system may laugh at both authors they have a message on the end for devotion to service by the governors of the people and modern attitude to wealth and acquisition.*

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POWER AND RECTITUDE IN THE SOCIETY

The influence of religion on humankind can be traced back to the first records of history. Religion has served as a pillar of strength to some and binding chains to others. There are vast amount of information and anthropological studies revealing the interaction of religion and humankind.

The date 311 AD marked the issuing of the 'Edict of Toleration' for Christians. This date is important because it symbolizes 'national' acceptance of Christianity. The church became intermingled with politics and became a strong entity. The politics delivered from the church had more authority than the local rulers and magistrates of the developing feudal system. For instance, St. Augustine wrote about war and what justified its enactment against fellow men. This policy was followed and adhered to for hundreds of years after writing it. Another example is the use of the Bible as a guideline for establishing governing systems. Scripture portrayed God as choosing the king of the people. The Pope, being God's "representative", was

then given the authority to crown the king. This crowning process gave the Pope large influence in the political arena. This ritual continued for a number of centuries.

During this period of Renaissance the political identity was going through a tremendous transformation. This transformation took form in what is called absolutism. The political entity in the form of monarchy began to wean itself from the church for its legitimacy and looked towards its own power.

During this period states began to develop colonies and exploration of the new world. This period in history starts with the age of reason. States began to mature politically as colonial powers. The church or rather the concept of religion is still strong but begins a transformation during the Enlightenment.

The law has replaced the concept of morality. This is the framework of which laws created make the state and its sovereign powers legitimate and legal. States no longer operate in terms of what is just but on whether the legality for the action or jurisdiction has application. The church once being a dominant political factor has been reduced to a mere whisper of advice. The influence of religion in instituting or in the elective process of choosing a representative ruler has been severely minimized.

Morality as a notion is seen as the fundamental principle concerning right and wrong, good or bad behaviour. It can also be referred to as the perceptions and attitudes of a people regarding what is right or wrong for an integral part of culture. It would not be out of place to say that morality is culture bound.

One can then say that moral rectitude of a person is the only available security against socio-political, economic, and cultural crises. When people do what they ought to do and avoid what they ought not to do, the social dispensation will be tolerable at least. Thus, of the values entertained by a society, the place of the moral probity of the citizenry remains unchanged. It always provides the needed means and motivation for progress and civilization even in pluralistic society as ours. Little wonder Pope Pius XI (1937) warns that all attempt to withdraw from morality and moral order will sooner or later lead the individual and society to ruin. Hence at the root of most human problems lies a decadent morality, the possibility of which is found within the free-moral subject. It was Oladipo (2000) who says that a society is as good as the quality of its moral underpinning. Then the task of politics cannot truly begin without an inquiry into the state of morality in our terrain. According to Omoregbe (1990) a very important aspect of the development of human personality is moral development. Moral development and maturity on the part of the citizens of a country are pre-requisites for the development of that country. Indeed, moral development is the most important aspect of national development, for there can be no development of a country if its citizens are morally underdeveloped and immature. Moral development on the part of the citizens is therefore a conditio-sine-qua-non for the development of any nation.

Education is vital instrument to the development of a society. But if it is not accompanied with a high degree of morality it will not be of much use in the development of a society. This is because education with a very low degree of morality is incomplete and defective. Educated

men in the position of power with very low degree of morality are the greatest obstacles to the development of their society.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

A leader leads with authority, thus, he directs and gives commands based on the power reposed on him by the people and the talents and abilities he has received from nature and nurture. This indicates that one who is reposed with power ought to be morally wise. Thus he should work in accordance with the morality of his society. A leader works to the test of the people when he commands in order to protect common interest of the group he leads. When the leader proves untrustworthy through arbitrariness or unjust exercise of power, he erodes the basis of his authority. He fails to command obedience and thereby makes himself superfluous. He can get his subjects do what he wants by means of guns behind them, but he has no authority. He is just being authoritative. He is a dictator. No dictator is an authentic leader. No dictator rules with authority. Therefore, the government and the people must understand that governance is not just a political issue. It is primarily a moral issue.

Thomas Hobbes in his Theory of the State of Nature explains a society the members of which were morally underdeveloped, a society dominated by selfishness. Everybody simply sought the satisfaction of his appetites and in the course of doing so came into conflict with others. Hobbes contends that there was no progress, no development in that society. The foundation of morality is man's own very nature as a social and rational being. It is the same human nature as a social and rational being that is also the foundation of human society. Consequently, Omoregbe (1990) opines that:

> *Morality and society therefore have the same basis, the same foundation, and are consequently inseparable. Neither can exist without the other, for there can be no society without morality nor can we talk of morality without society. To remove morality from society is to destroy it, for it would immediately cease to exist.*

To cap it all, it is necessary to note that the removal of morality or the absence of moral conscience from one in position of power or one who possesses power is the destruction of a society in which such exists. The relationship between power and morality in the society can be expressed by saying that morality is the soul of society. For Schweitzer (1961) says that the prosperity of a society depends on the moral disposition of its members. This is because if the person in possession of power embraces moral laxity, selfishness, bribery and corruption, lack of a sense of duty and social responsibility, disregard for public good, embezzlement of public funds, etc in any society, the development of such society will be obstructed and rendered impossible.

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