THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

Democracy is held in high esteem because it has the capacity to promote human dignity and happiness. The ideals are so attractive that there is the tendency for people to frown at any one considered to exhibit an anti-democratic orientation. The ideals such as equality of persons, freedom of association, movement, assembly, expression and non discrimination make it a complete realization of humanity. Compared with other systems of governance such as autocracy, facism and theocracy which are not people centred, democracy is defined by the majority. A government is said to be democratic, when the people take decisions that can promote the common good. Unfortunately, these ideals which have made democracy popular have been far from realization. It is on this ground that the paper presents a phenomenology of democracy. Phenomenology is one of the philosophical methods of allowing entities to manifest themselves the way they are without prejudices, biases, and pre-conceived notions. Phenomenology therefore aims at a critique of democracy with a view to reconstructing the justification and domestication of the institution.

Key Words: Democracy, Phenomenology.

Introduction

The term "democracy" is a combination of two Greek words "demos" and "kratia" which denotes "rule of the people" or "government of the common people". The philosophical foundation of democracy lies in the fact that it is a metaphysical ideal crafted by the human mind to reduce as much as possible tensions of statecraft. The allocation of resources in society needed a precise identification of men of proven intellectual capacity to be entrusted with this responsibility. This accounts for Plato's critique of democracy because according to him, a philosopher-king is one intellectually endowed to rule over men and resources. The ordinary man does not have time for contemplation which is a necessary requirement for leadership. Democracy has witnessed a radical transformation different from the Greek epoch. It is now defined as a majority rule or a government controlled by majority representation. As noble as this conception appears to be democracy has suffered from the hands of politicians and political opportunist who have domesticated it to their own advantage. This is why this paper embarks on the phenomenology of democracy in order to give it a human face**.**

Some Conceptions of Democracy

Democracy is one of the greatest ideals that constitute the foundation of an ordered social system. Many societies the world over are plagued by authoritarianism or despotism without due regard to a democratic culture. To add insult to injury, dialogue has been a missing link in our political environment. This accounts for the proliferation of political and social instability. What then is democracy? Democracy is a metaphysical principle fabricated by the human mind to organize a chaotic universe. This definition is a departure from conventional conception of democracy. The universe under which activities of all sorts

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thrive has been battling with many contending forces that it requires a definite sense of direction by man. From inception, man has invented systems of governance for the effective organization of society. Such metaphysical systems include autocracy, theocracy, fascism and democracy. Democracy is a sustained evolution from the short-comings of the other systems of government mentioned.

The point to be made here is that all these systems are metaphysical creations of the human mind to ease administrative bottleneck in governance. Democracy then, is a majority rule arrived at through popular decision. In this case, a decision or a policy is said to be democratic when the majority takes such a decision or policy. Traditionally, the word democracy is of Greek origin. It consists of two words – 'demos' which means the people and 'kratein' which signifies rule. As a whole it implies the rule of the people. The implication can further be clarified by comparing it with other words of the same type. Thus, aristocracy means rule by the nobility, plutocracy by the rich; bureaucracy by the officials; and theocracy by the priests **(Banerjee, 1968: 174).** Since its inception in ancient Greece, democracy has undergone a series of transformation. For example, Herodotus a famous historian conceived it as the rule of the multitudes or a society in which there was equality of right and the holders of political office were accountable for what they did. Two key concepts are derivable from this definition, Democracy implies the rule of the multitude and those in leadership position are held accountable for their actions. It is also expected that major political decision is always in favour of the majority. It is in this regard that Pericles regarded the Athenian constitution a democracy because it is administered for the good of all citizens rather than for the benefit of the few (Ibid). Since democracy is people oriented, Abraham Lincoln gave a succinct definition thus, "government of the people, by the people and for the people" **(Ibid p.175)**. Lincoln's definition of democracy though a grass root definition, anchors this system on the people who exercise their mandate through participation. This definition also empowers the people to vote out an unpopular candidate. This can only take place where democracy has taken root to foster the aspirations of the citizens.

Bryce (1975) defined democracy in a more concrete language in this form:

I use the word in its old and strict sense, as denoting a government in which the will of the majority of qualified citizens rule, taking the qualified citizens to constitute at least three fourths, so that the physical forces of the citizens coincide (broadly speaking) with their voting power(p.65).

Bryce seems to have placed emphasis on qualified citizens as those to express their mandate in a democratic dispensation. Who are those qualified? What are the criteria for such qualification? This distinction is not properly articulated. In recent times, democracy has been given deeper and wider significance. **Lindsay (1987)** states that democracy is not a makeshift or a compromise or a means of keeping people quiet by the production of sham unanimity or a process of counting heads to save the trouble of breaking them, but by the ideal form of government. To many others, democracy is not merely a form of government but a way of life. This is the direction in which Owolabi(1999) citing **Merriam (1988)** saw democracy. According to him, democracy is not a set of formulas or a blue-print of organization but a cast of thought and a mode of action directed towards the common weal as interpreted by the common will. Merriam's definition of democracy grounded it on a metaphysical framework. It is a grand design by the human mind to fashion out a device to regulate society. This dimension grounds democracy on the intellect in order to respond to man's projective disposition.

Gandhi identified democracy as grounded in truth and non-violence defining it as the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of all **(Gandhi, 1947: 204).** Gandhi's notion of democracy brings out again the concept of majority in benefiting from democratic decision. Mobilizing all sections of the society requires cooperation, thus, the success of democracy depends on the support given to it by the populace. The definitions we have given so far show that the concept is riddled with difficulties**. Owolabi (1999)** anchored this controversy on conceptualization. He quoted **Olaitan (1992: 424)** as follows:

But it is a matter of regret that, whereas an almost inexhaustible literature exists on the concept *(democracy), there is glaring absence of consensus by scholars on the appropriate delineation of*

the nature and contours of the term. Such, that, it is rather, difficult to argue for a specific conceptualization of the term as the proper meaning, since democracy is now generally seen as a term with many meanings.

Adducing reasons for this apparent controversy in conceptualizing democracy, Owolabi states among other things that (1) democracy has become in current usage, another word for political decency and civilization. As an idea, democracy has become an honorific concept which has passed into the catalogue of universal virtues. Democracy has also become a moral concept, with a regime-laying claim to it just for the sake of survival, without any commitment to its ideals. The consequence of this is that it becomes very difficult for an agreement to be reached because of the diverse political regimes and systems that lay claim to democracy without being genuinely democratic (Owolabi, 1999: 4).

The second reason he mentioned is the ideological character of democracy. The ideological struggle between rival political divides has given rise to a situation where each of the parties lay claim to be democratic not because of its participatory tendency but mainly because of ideological persuasion. Throwing more light on this problem, Owolabi citing Gitonga (1988) states thus:

There is no doubt however, that the substance or content of what is described as democratic is a function of the ideological bent of the term. As the ideological bents or political families are many and diverse, so too are the meanings attached to the term (p.6).

Owolabi goes further to argue that the meaning attached to democracy by a scholar is coloured by his ideological orientation. For example, a scholar of a liberal inclination is likely to define democracy to encompass institutions and principles that are in line with his ideological position. On the other hand, a scholar who is not in conformity with the liberal tradition will attempt to define it excluding all those principles with which a liberal person would define it. This makes the conceptualization of democracy a difficult task. So far, effort has been made at a conceptualization of democracy as if that is all there is. One needs to go beyond conceptual problems and investigate the core issues in democracy. How does it operate generally? Do the principles differ across societies, regions or cultures? Is it an equivalent of globalization? What does Nigeria as a society stand to gain from democracy as an institution? These questions which have gained currency in our time need radical answers in order to justify democracy as a political and social institution and the need for its domestication in Nigeria for peace and stability.

The Justification and Domestication of Democracy

The justification of democracy rests on the assumption between development and democracy and their intrinsic values. Nnoli (1994) argues this position by saying that unless there is peace, development is not possible, unless there is development, peace, at least in the long run, is equally impossible. Nnoli further maintains that through development, individuals and groups are able to rise above the worst forms of human degradation and suffering created by the difficulties and hostility of the physical, biological and social environments. Such degradation and suffering in his view, are those imposed by hunger, disease, illiteracy, sheer drudgery, exploitation, domination and repression provide a fertile ground for the eruption of conflict, violence and war. Under such a prevailing atmosphere, peace becomes illusory and cannot be sustained. For Nnoli, this is where democracy comes in because it ensures the full liberation of the creative energies of individuals and groups in all facets of life of the society. Such a liberation also, presupposes the enjoyment of certain rights such as the right to work, food security, education, health services, freedom of speech, assembly, movement, privacy and active participation in the decision process that affects one's life. In the absence of these values argues Nnoli, the individual becomes alienated from society, withdraws legitimacy from governmental authority and the people cannot be fully committed to the creation of new values on the basis of a collective ethos, tolerance, trust, consensus, patriotism and loyalty to governmental authority. What results from this situation is armed resistance and by extension civil unrest or other forms of socio-political instability.

In the justification of democracy, Unah (2009:52-54), states that the ideals of democracy makes it attractive to all reasonable persons and societies. Some of these assumptions are; the popular participation of adult citizens in the affairs of the state, the provision of political parties to mobilize and arouse the electorates to canvass for votes, the sovereignty of the people and the equality of all citizens. Some of these

ideals Unah observes are controversial among scholars and commentators. For example, the equality of all citizens is not feasible because some citizens are above the law. In democracy, the people should be the repository of political power but this is not the case, rather, a group within the people, always hold others to ransom without due process. The justification of democracy therefore, seems to be based on utilitarian ground, the philosophical theory of the greatest benefits to the greatest number. Policies and their benefits are assessed on their ability to take care of the greater majority. The problem now is the minority. How do we take care of their interest especially in a multi-cultural setting?

Unah has observed that active political participation promotes fair treatment of people especially the minorities. It is also worrisome that the minorities are threatened from time to time and their interests are sacrificed at a great price. This situation has given rise to the question on the univerzalibility of democracy. It is in this direction that Dewey (1973:72), gave a broader conception of Democracy. According to him, democracy is much broader than a special political form, a method of conducting government, of making laws and carrying out governmental administration by means of popular suffrage and elected officers. But it is something broader and deeper than that. The political and governmental phase of democracy is a means, the best means so far found, for realizing ends that lie in the wide domain of human relationships and the development of human personality. This is why democracy is seen as a way of life. The key note of democracy as a way of life is expressed in the necessity for the participation of every mature human being in formation of the values that regulate the living of men together. The foundation of democracy is faith in the capacities of human nature; faith in human intelligence and in the power of pooled and cooperative experience to generate harmony and sustainability. The inability of some societies to realize these high ideals of democracy has resulted into a call for its domestication.

The notion of domestication will appear as if democracy is alien to some societies .The way we operate this system suggests that it is alien to some societies. The reason for this is that those who manage the affairs of the state exhibit anti-democratic posture. They do not respect the rule of law which is a basic foundation of democracy. This is where this research argues that democracy is culture driven. Where anti-democratic forces are foisted on the people through election rigging, cheating and other electoral malpractices the result is a general apathy. This has been responsible for the withdrawal of the intellectual elites from the political process. This has in turn empowered those who are not fit for statecraft. The question that we should ask is whether we are democratizing in the true sense of the word? This question was raised in a categorical manner by Ake (1996) thus, Is Africa democratizing? Ake's worry which is also a concern to many people is that the contemporary world is not a favourable environment for democracy. According to him, we have always preferred the reputation of being democrats to the notorious inconveniences of practicing democracy. While democracy is spreading globally, the world is becoming repressive through the violation of human rights. The situation is worse in Africa where democracy is used as a means to capture political power but its essence which is anchored on the people is highly trivialized and negated. Ake captures this situation when he states that Nigeria democratizes with no separation of powers, all powers having been invested in an imperial presidency. There is hardly any rule of law, no plausible system of justice, and no transparency. The coercive institutions of the state are above the law, civil society is below it, ordinary people are out of sight, far beyond its protection. The judiciary is dissociated from justice, and the bureaucracy is oppressive and arbitrary (Ake, 1996: 6).

For him, the Nigerian state like the colonial state before it, turns on the calculus of strength. The problem now is that of choosing democratically those who will control a state apparatus which is inherently undemocratic. This paradox which manifests in the installation of leaders who do not respect the expression of the mandate of the people is a set back to the democratic institution. Politics is about the control of state power. Ake maintains that much of what is negative about politics in Africa arises from the character of the state, particularly, its lack of autonomy, the immensity of its power, its proneness to abuse and the lack of immunity against it. The character of the state rules out a politics of moderation and mandates a politics of lawlessness and extremism. It is for this reason that the nature of the state makes the capture of state power irresistibly attractive. Winners of political power win everything, the losers lose everything. Nothing can be worse than losing, nothing better than winning. Thus, everyone seeks power by all means, legal or otherwise and those who control state power hold on to it by all means (Ibid p.7). What is demonstrated here is not political legitimacy or legality as recent judicial victory has shown but

only a matter of expediency. For this research, what is sown is the seed of intolerance and political instability. From this position it follows that democracy means something theoretical and something in practice. The ideals which anchor on participation and accountability are fundamental to public morality. The concept of accountability and transparency are rooted in a phenomenological culture. Phenomenology cultures man to imbibe the orientation of allowing something to present itself transparently the way it is. What we have seen of democracy is that it is impracticable. As a metaphysical device instituted by the human mind, its inherent difficulties stare us in the face. No matter how its lofty ideals are fantasized, democracy remains an illusion in the context of attaining complete communal stability.

Democracy through the Lens of Phenomenology

The term "phenomenology" is associated with the philosophy of Edmund Husserl, a German Jew who lived between 1859-1938 (Unah1996:205). Etymologically, phenomenology is a derivative of two Greek words, "phenomena" or "phenomenon" which refers to appearance and "logos" which denotes theory, reason, or discourse. Phenomenology therefore, is the theory of appearance or discourse on reason. Phenomena refers to things, events or occurrences or in the words of Heidegger the totality of what lies open for inspection or what can be brought to light (Ibid). Phenomena as a concept have attracted various interpretations from philosophers of different orientations. Philosophers of the platonic tradition have construed phenomena as characterizing the tangible, the transient, or the ephemeral aspects of reality or the imperfect copy of original reality. It is on this ground that Lambert , a Platonist, described phenomena as the "illusory features of human experience" and phenomenology as the "theory of illusion" (Schmitt,1967:135). Kant treats phenomena as appearances which are distinct from things- in-themselves (noumena). For Kant therefore, phenomenology would be the theory of things as they appear to the human mind (Unah. op cit). Peirce understands phenomena as both sensually observable and mentally apprehendable meaning that phenomena includes all observable entities and whatever can occur to the mind or whatever can be construed mentally. Phenomenology to this end, would be the study of perceptions of objects or anything whatsoever whether they be real or imagined. From the few sketches of phenomenology, the following issues can be outlined: Things have a double which are not normally open to inspection through our ordinary perceptual apparatus. There is a dichotomy between what appears and the real nature of things. This picture painted domiciles phenomenology in the study of the transient, ephemeral, outward features of human experience.

The philosophical potency of phenomenology was given by Husserl and his successors. For Husserl, phenomenology is a method of philosophy, a presuppositionless inquiry or a critical a priori research. For Husserl and his followers, phenomena refer to objects as experienced by the transcendental self. According to them objects manifest themselves as they are. What leads to occultation and distortion of reality is not the way things appear but the way and manner we position ourselves in relation to them. If we approach objects and events from a position of bias, prejudice, preconception or predisposition we end up with a distorted picture of such objects and events. But if we approach things from a predisppositionless, unbiased, unprejudiced, presuppositionless position we easily understand things as they are for we are thus enabled to grasp their essences (cf. Unah, Ibid.p.207). The critical point for phenomenology is that things can be seen exactly the way they are if we follow the rules of bracketing experience or what Husserl calls the "*Epoche*". The *epoche* or *edeitic reduction* amounts to as much as possible dropping biases and prejudices associated with an object of experience. Husserl's theory of phenomenology is purely epistemological because his emphasis centers on making cognition critical and scientific. In the Husserlian fashion, the aim of phenomenology is to perform a basis-free or prejudice-free analysis and description of experience. Phenomenology does not deal with the concrete existence of individual things or their particularizing characteristics. It deals rather with the essences of things. This is how we come to define it as the essences of things (Ibid p.211).

If Husserlian phenomenology is epistemologically based, it then means that the metaphysical dimension should be explored in order to accommodate the ontological perspective of human nature. This view is given a technical philosophical analysis by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) a profound ontology.

For Heidegger, Phenomenology is a method of philosophizing which insures that things, events or human reality can present themselves the way they are without our preconceived notions. Phenomenology

becomes a method of letting Being be seen in its own true light. Consequent on this view, Heidegger conceives phenomenology as a tool of inquiry appropriate to the theme of ontology namely, Being itself. In his own words, "The expression "phenomenology" signifies primarily a methodological conception" It is a tool of analysis which reaches out to the core of the object of inquiry (Unah1996:8,2002:31). The phenomenological method in the Heideggerian fashion when it is appropriately applied makes beings or entities to be transparent in their own light. The analysis of a phenomenological inquiry is made possible through ontology. The reason for this is that while ontology (the study of Being) points to the "what" of the object of philosophical research, phenomenology signifies the "how of that research" (Ibid. p.9). It is in this direction that Heidegger sees a structural connection between ontology and phenomenology. In his words, "Phenomenology is our way of access to what is to be the theme of ontology… only as phenomenology is ontology possible" (Heidegger1962:60). To make this view more explicit, Heidegger explains the meaning of phenomenon which goes back to the Greek expression "to show itself". Phenomenon means that which displays itself, that which exhibits or that which makes itself transparent for inspection. Heidegger sees the phenomenon as the "manifest" that is, that which shows itself as it is in itself. In this connection, phenomenon has the connotations of the visible, the luminous, that which is bright or that which is brought to the light (Unah1996:10). The plural form "phenomena" would mean "the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to the light" (op cit. p.51). The question now is, if entities or things can display or manifest themselves for seeing, for sighting or for inspection, how do they do it? Something can display or show itself in two different ways. Something can show itself exactly as it is, in this case, it is called the manifest. On the other hand, an entity can show itself in a way that is not. Here, it is called semblance. What this means therefore is that an entity has the capacity to display these two main ways. What is expected in a phenomenological exercise is for one to be patient to allow an entity manifest itself the way it is. It is in this regard that we say that phenomenology expresses the maxim, "To the things themselves" it cannot just be treated as an actuality whose boundary is already delimited in advance. Phenomenology does not represent a standpoint much less a direction. It is primarily and mainly a "methodological conception", a possibility, a potential tool for prying loose all rigid constructions, all sedimented theoretical elaborations about entities in order to reveal their basic structures or exhibit their general profiles precisely as they are (Unah1996:13-14). The point being made here is that what is presented to us in experience comes in profiles or segments or piecemeal. It is not proper for us take a rigid position when dealing with issues in human experience; rather, we should be open to critically listen to other viewpoints before jumping to a conclusion. This is how phenomenology becomes ontology. Phenomenology then becomes the disposition the orientation the attitude of mind which enables entities be seen in their proper light and Being itself is the light, the emergent power which throws light on beings.

In this paper, effort has been made to present the background and nature of phenomenological method of philosophizing. The next task is to connect phenomenology to democracy and show how democracy can be humanized with the tool of phenomenological philosophy. First of all, phenomenology as a method of philosophy is a demolition exercise. After a demolition, a reconstruction is required. What we have done so far is to open up the shortfalls, crises and misconceptions of democracy with a view to giving it a human face in order to encourage socio-political stability. The greatest ideal of democracy is the view that it is people centred. This notion that makes the concept so attractive is responsible for the clamour for societies to embrace it. This expectation is however appalling for so many reasons. We consider a government democratic if it supplies regular constitutional opportunities for peaceful competition for political power to different groups without excluding any significant sector of the population by force (Linz,1964:295; Hermet,1991:253). To this end, democracy should be seen to promote and guarantee freedom of political choice and should also require the pre-existence of social interests that can be represented. Diamond et al.,(1988:xvi); Nwokedi,(1992:4) identify three essential conditions for the actualization of democracy. i) meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups, especially political parties, for effective position of governmental power at regular intervals, and excluding the use of force. ii) a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular free, fair and peaceful elections. iii) a high level of civil and political liberties. Democracy having manifested itself the way it is practiced from a phenomenological vantage position has revealed its fallacies and contradictions. The people who are said to be the centre of democracy have been ignored, brutalized and completely replaced by cabals whose interests run counter to

the common good. The greatest pitfall of democracy is the preponderance of racism among the highly democratic societies and statism of less democratic ones. Racism according to Kelsey(1970:265-267; Wasserstrom, R.A.(1980:11) is human alienation. It is one form of human conflict that divides human beings as human beings. Racism promotes the superiority of human beings which manifests in social and political discrimination. For this reason, and because racial hostility is most potently manifest on the political and economic planes, many observers mistakenly assume that racism is nothing more than a device by which political, economic, and cultural interests are defended and expanded. Although racism did have its beginnings in a particular constellation of political and economic events in the early modern world, it has developed into an independent phenomenon, possessing meaning and value in itself and giving character to all the institutions and societies. Racism at a global level and statism at the local level is ca negation of human right and by extension a negation of human values. This negative dimension of social discrimination raises a fundamental question on the feasibility and sustenance of democracy as an institution. This is where once again, we should reflect on two dimensions of the manifestation of an entity. The current wave of democracy is not the manifest but the semblant. In other words, what is being practiced globally is not the true democracy, rather, a distorted version. This accounts for different concepts such as nascent, African, American, British and Russian democracies.

In some societies, political parties have become the Leviathan of the machinery of government policies and programmes. Granted that political parties are agents of social and political mobilization the current practice of making the people irrelevant to policy trust and implementation is a negative signal for the feasibility of democracy.

The realization of a genuine phenomenological actualization of a democratic culture rests on dialogue as an instrument of political stability. Conflicts and crisis are fundamental to human nature. A phenomenological understanding of democracy therefore, expects us to listen patiently to others and hear their own position. Dialogue is all about consensus and consent. Reaching a compromise involves free discussion. By a free discussion, all facets of an issue are exposed, analyzed with a view to distilling the essential elements in the matter. The problem which democracy has faced over the years is the inability to listen to the voice of the minority which is part of the political process. It is on this ground that Mill (1947) sees the majority as a destruction of the minority. He reasoned that the suppression of the majority by the minority amounts to the destruction of individuality. It follows from here too, that democracy destroys individuality. It prevents men of exceptional merit from rising to great height by regulating their deeds and utterances. Since the majority rush to take a position on the issue thereby fore-closing other points of view, democracy through this dogmatic fashion disallows superior opinion no matter how creative it may be. This in turn produces incompetent and inefficient leaders especially in the Nigerian environment. To restore this individuality, competence in leadership and creativity, a phenomenological dissection of democracy is imperative.

To this end, consensus through compromise, consent, consultation and the sovereignty of the people should dominate the practice of democracy. A phenomenological temperament is all democracy needs for its actualization in our contemporary society. The contradictions and paradoxes which we are experiencing are parts and parcel of democracy. This is why a call for its domestication in Nigeria appears to be an exercise in futility. A genuine democrat who is oriented in phenomenological culture realizes that there are many ways to truth and that in every question, there are many competing answers. What is expected is to explore all possible answers to a question. By this human imperfections in thought and actions, man's understanding and a prescription to a problem should admit limitations. There is also a painful admission that one's own aims and actions are also imperfect. This ontological insight demands humility and scepticism without which compromise is impossible. This is the novelty of phenomenological ontology in the application of dialogue to achieve socio-political stability.

Relating this position to the present Nigerian democratic set-up, one becomes cynical whether the country is on the way to the attainment of socio-political stability. A school of thought has also argued that democracy is alien to developing societies such as Nigeria. To this end scholars have suggested that democracy be domesticated to suit Nigerian political environment. This research sees nothing wrong with democracy as a viable system of government. The problem is the way and manner democracy is practiced.

The system allows corruption, cheating , fraud and other electoral offences to the extent that the winner takes all and the loser loses all. This situation gives rise to tension, conflict and instability. Representation is lopsided. It is on this ground that the author recommends proportional representation. Representative democracy will ensure that various interests be integrated for national spread. Representation will also ensure that consultation is made on sensitive policies instead of the current practice on party patronage. Representative democracy promotes the management of pluralism especially a multi-cultural and a multi-religious country like Nigeria. This is where there is a parallelism between phenomenological ontology of democracy and postmodernism.

Reconciliation of Democracy, Phenomenology and Postmodernism

Philosophy in the eighteenth century witnessed a radical revolution with the emergence of existentialism, positivism and postmodernism. These movements criticized traditional philosophy for a continuous promotion of the regime of the absolute. With reference to postmodernism emphasis shifted to the demolition of the absolute as a way of having access to truth and reality. In this connection Smyth (1991:12) considered postmodernism to be ontological in the sense that it has abandoned the modernist assumption of a fixed and an unchanging reality. Similarly, Solomon and Higgins (1996:300) contend that there is no all-embracing, "totalizing" viewpoint, no "God's-eye view," no pure "objectivity". Unah (2002c :128) maintains that postmodernism is averse to all totalizing pretensions, to orthodoxy, to authoritarian accounts and regimes of truth, to excessive conceptualizations of reality that lock us up in rationality. On how postmodernism becomes a version of phenomenological ontology Unah says:

> Consequently, postmodernism is a call to self –discovery, to multi-vocation: and an invitation to witness the contingency, fragility, indeterminacy and immanence of human ways of knowing and experiencing ,and a heeding of the call of Husserl to return to "the things themselves" –to pre-reflective consciousness, to naïve experience, to the lifeworld, in order to organize experience anew with a view to understanding the politics of creating meaning (I bid).

Postmodernism therefore emphasizes the perspectival of truth without relying on absolutism. This however, does not amount to relativism as effort is geared towards tolerance, accommodation through intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity applies to the polling of opinions to arrive at a middle course. This is better expressed through the Sartrean notion of the "universalibility" principle which demands actions and policies to reflect a human face without which instability will continue to dominate our political   and social landscape.

Postmodernism in an effort to reduce metaphysical abstractions and pretensions has attracted various criticisms ranging from intellectual arrogance to autocracy. In order to streamline its focus from phenomenological ontology the later does not advocate a rejection of the status quo but a reconstruction in order to make reality holistic. Phenomenological ontology is the determination of the metaphysical capacity of man which facilitates all forms of human activities. In this connection one will be correct to say that phenomenological ontology proceeds from human finite essence by expanding the scope of the objectivity factor thereby exposing the nature of reality. With this foundation the humanistic essence is guaranteed.

The humanistic essence which is anchored on fundamental ontology stipulates the analysis of various forms of man's transcendental structures which hold the key to socio-political stability.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenological analysis of democracy is a critical exposition of the fallacies and assumptions that have made democracy attractive and appealing to all societies . Traditionally, democracy is seen as an institution characterized by the will of the people. In other words, democracy is people centred and people driven. This is seen in one of its popular definitions. "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people". The implication of this definition makes democracy very attractive but the reverse is the case on the actual practice of the term. The people who are to exercise their fundamental freedom are neglected as cabals assume the monopoly and arrogate to themselves the decision process and policy implementation. The people become mere tools to satisfy the selfish interest of politicians. Phenomenology

through its lens investigated democratic practice observing some absurdities. Phenomenological analysis also observed that democracy has failed in the protection of the minority interest manifesting the view of Mill as the tyranny of the majority. The protection of the minorities is one of the ideals of democracy. Democracy from this point of view cannot be said to be democratic because power is acquired fraudulently at all cost. When power is acquired in this manner, it gives room for corruption, inefficiency and a mediocre leadership. This paper made a reconciliation between democracy, phenomenology and postmodernism pointing out the need to create an enabling environment for the emergence of a true democratic culture in Nigeria and Africa for the reduction of racism, statism in order to promote socio-political stability.

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