



**State,
Governance
And Regional
Integration
In Africa**

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Published by the Nigerian Political Science Association, July 2019

Mental Harmony and Patriotism in Nigeria: A Philosophical Extension of Plato's Tripartite Soul

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Abstract

This paper examines mental harmony and patriotism in Nigeria. The main objective is to establish the way in which the three parts of the soul can live harmoniously and how this can engender patriotism in the country. It observes that patriotism is fast evaporating in Nigeria. This can be seen in the failure of the Nigerian state to fulfil its promise of good life to the people and the hedonistic lifestyle of the political class. The result is that the state is unable to fulfill the end for which it is established. In reaction, the people lose their faith in the Nigerian project and their patriotism is withdrawn. Being a product of the mind, patriotism can manifest from the inner natures of man. The study deploys Plato's theory of tripartite soul to establish the relationship between mental harmony and patriotism. It adopts the philosophical method of defining and clarifying concepts, weaving thoughts into a comprehensive whole to establish relationships and invoking new questions and propositions to enable the extension of knowledge. The findings are that the three parts of the soul – reason, appetite and spirit – are capable of being in conflict or in cooperation, one with the others. When the elements in the soul live in peace, the result is mental harmony. This can be achieved through knowledge and will power. It recommends reflective living, constant education and monitoring of our rational and irrational parts. A life so lived will bring about patriotism in the internal and external realms of existence in Nigeria.

Keywords: Mental, Harmony, Patriotism, Tripartite and Soul

Introduction

Nigeria is today faced with many problems which include lack of patriotism among its citizens. Nigerians are said to be among the world's most unpatriotic people. However, "this is not because Nigerians are particularly evil or wicked; in fact they are not. It is rather because patriotism, being part of an unwritten social contract between a citizen and the state, cannot exist where the state reneges on agreement" (Achebe, 1983:15).

Really, Nigeria as a state has not kept its commitment to the social contract. The Nigerian state is unable to meet its basic obligations to the people. This is due to the crisis of accumulation which results from the appetitive mind-set. When appetite rules, reason takes flight. Indeed, the appropriation of the common wealth by public official reduces the capacity of the Nigerian state to meet the end for which it is established. Professor Sagay captures the situation correctly when he says that political office holders in Nigeria are mentally stunted and have not been liberated

from the animal feeding frenzy (Sagay cited in Kalama et al, 2012). Ake (2004) agrees that the ruling class in Nigeria uses political position to grow its economic fortunes leaving the welfare of the people unattended.

In reaction, the people withdraw their trust from public institutions. Their obedience to the extant laws is at best patchy and the level of their patriotism very low (Ekekwe, 2015). And because the state sees itself losing the support of the people, it resorts to repression and self-serving campaigns for national unity in an attempt to hang on to power. In most cases, the state acting as though it were an alien force confronts the people and in turn, the people deny it the cooperation it demands from them (Ekekwe, 2015). The result is that patriotism diminishes by the day in Nigeria.

However, we have great hopes for a re-birth of patriotism in Nigeria. This optimism in a Nigeria of patriotic people is embedded in mental harmony which is largely what Plato's theory of tripartite soul addresses. The objective of this study, therefore, is to establish how mental harmony can be achieved and how this will bring about patriotism in Nigeria.

Methodology

The design of this study is essentially philosophical. The philosophical method involves thinking about the issues that are raised and the questions that are asked with an attitude of genuine and free inquiry (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003). Jacquette adds that it is "a forward-looking search for understanding, enlightenment and truth" (Jacquette, 2004: xiv). The quest by man to understand and resolve the problems of society through persuasive reflection remains constant and endless. Discussion is presented through the definition and clarification of concepts, the weaving together of thoughts into a comprehensive whole to establish their relationship, and the invoking of new questions and propositions to enable the extension of knowledge.

Plato's Theory of Tripartite Soul

In Plato's philosophy, every human being is made up of two parts – the soul/mind and the body. Plato (1952) opines that man is composed of two substances: an immaterial substance (the soul) and a material substance (the body). But of the two, the soul is the most important part of the self since it is spiritual. The soul acts on the body and the body does not act on the soul.

What is the nature of the soul? Plato (1974; 2000) says that the soul is made up of three faculties – the rational faculty, the spirited faculty and the appetitive faculty – which are situated in the head, chest and stomach respectively. Reason is responsible for thinking, knowledge, calculation and foresight. Spirit produces courage, determination, bravery and the readiness to act. Appetite engenders the longing for sex, food, drink and all other sensual pleasures.

It may be Plato's tripartite soul which Freud tries to develop further in his psycho-analytic theory. Freud distinguishes three operational schemes in the mind of each man. These are the *id*, the *ego* and the *super ego*. Stevenson (1974) explains that the *id* contains all the instinctive energies which desire instant satisfaction; that the

ego mediates between the desires of the *id* and the real world outside the person and that the *super-ego* contains conscience or the social norms acquired at infancy. The *id* appears to correspond to the Appetite or Desire because it operates according to the pleasure principle. It is not so clear how *ego* and *super-ego* are related to Reason and Spirit. However, due to Freud's assertion that the demands of the *id* and the societal provision of the *super-ego* usually conflict, the *super-ego* would seem to be akin to Reason. Since the *ego* abides by the demands of reality, it may be said to correspond to Spirit.

Furthermore, Plato (1974) opines that the man in whom the three elements perform their naturally allotted functions without interference is just. But there is always some kind of civil war in the soul when the three elements trespass on each other's functions. This conflict is usually between appetite and reason. Sometimes reason prevails, sometimes appetite wins. When reason proves superior, the spirit implements decisions, whose outcome is beneficial to mankind, but when appetite/desire rules in us, the spirit takes actions whose results are completely irrational.

Consequently, the ideal for man is the harmonious agreement among the elements that make up the soul with Reason in control. This ideal condition Plato describes by the Greek word "*dikaiosune*", which is standardly translated as justice (Stevenson, 1974:27), but as applied to the individual person, perhaps mental harmony or immaterial bliss. Unfortunately, when we look at humans in practical terms, we find just like Plato, that most people are not able to manifest harmony among their souls' energies. This happens when appetite rules in man.

Mental Harmony

It is important to re-emphasize that for Plato (1974), the human soul is made up of three components – the rational element, the spirited power and appetitive drive. Appetite engenders sensual pleasures especially those that are linked to the satisfaction of the body. Reason produces knowledge and coordinates the activities of the other parts of the soul in the most harmonious manner. Spirit releases courage and ought always to align with Reason to maintain the soul's natural order.

What this means is that in Plato's analysis of the mind, mental harmony is attainable when each part of the soul, under the guidance of Reason, performs its functions without attempting to interfere in the functions of one another. This condition, Plato also refers to as justice in the soul. It is that situation in which the three elements that make up a man's inward self dwell in harmony, "when the spirited and appetitive parts agree that reason should rule, when there is no civil war among them" (Hsei yung, 2007). But the question is: how can these opposing forces relate peacefully?

The unity of the soul, in Bobonich's view can be achieved using either Command Model or Force Model (Bobonich, 1994). The command model stems from the belief that the three parts can communicate with one another. Since they can communicate, they can listen, and since they can listen, they can be influenced. Accordingly, the responsibility of reason will be to control the actions of courage and

desire through the method of making appeals to them. But if we consider that Plato (1974) says that appetite lacks the aptitude for thought and cannot reason, it will be impossible to realise harmony in the soul by the method of appeal only.

Perhaps, Bobonich presents the Force Model as an alternative choice for those who doubt the efficacy of the Command Model in bringing about harmony in the soul. This model sees the rational and appetitive parts as irreconcilable powers dragging the mind in two diagonal lines which cannot meet. The situation is akin to a war situation in which victory for the stronger side is the only solution. However, Plato (1974) submits that without the assistance of spirit, reason cannot prevail over appetite. Yes, we agree that reason and spirit can collaborate easily, however, we are afraid that appetite if not checked can convince spirit for an alliance against reason.

On his part, Hsei-yung (2007) proposes what he terms Educational Model. He thinks that if the appetitive element is educated, whatever instruction reason gives will be obeyed by it, thereby resulting in the harmony of the soul. This idea lacks textual evidence and does not totally fit in with what Plato envisages. In fact, Plato (1974) says that education is only meant for the rational and spirited parts. The appetitive part seems in-educable and lacks the capacity for reasoned inquiry. Certainly, “the gain-lover is under no necessity to taste or experience the sweetness of the pleasure of knowing the truth – indeed; he would find it difficult to do so even if he wished” (Plato, 1974:121).

How then can the harmonious and peaceful soul be achieved if the appetitive element cannot be educated? Plato (1974:150-151) has an answer: “yes...reason ought to rule...and spirit ought to obey and support it.... When these two elements have been so brought up, and trained and educated to their proper function, they must be put in charge of appetite, which forms the greater part of each man’s [life]”. In fact reason and spirit should combine and subdue appetite and prevent it from taking charge of the soul, if not it will alter the natural order of life.

What this means is that the rational part of the mind requires education to remain rational, while the irrational part must be monitored in order to prevent it from altering the natural order of the mind. Indeed, mental harmony is a function of knowledge and will power. The unity of the three parts of the soul encourages each of them to work for the overall good of the mind which is patriotism at the immaterial realm. The individual whose soul is healthy because of the patriotic acts of its parts begins to demonstrate patriotism at the material realm. At the national level, the individual cares about and defends the common good. Patriots would, therefore, not indulge in personal aggrandizement and corrupt enrichment. They care deeply about the happiness and well-being of all members of the community. This readiness to subdue self-interest and contribute to the good of all is what patriotism is all about.

Patriotism

Various attempts have been made by many researchers to tease out the meaning of patriotism. Scharz, Staub and Lavine (1999:151) try to do this by distinguishing between what they call “blind patriotism” and “constructive patriotism”. According to them, “blind patriots adopt a stance of unquestioning

endorsement of their country – denying the value of critique and analysis, and generally emphasizing allegiance and symbolic behaviours”. Conversely, constructive patriots applaud some actions of their state and criticize others in an effort to promote positive change and consistency with their nation’s ideals.

In their effort to underscore the importance of citizens’ participation in politics, Kahne and Middaugh (2006:3) make a case for “active patriotism”. They call for total engagement of the people in civic life so as to sustain what is good about a nation and adjust and transform structures and systems that require modification. In their words:

While both blind and constructive patriots love their country, neither type is necessarily actively engaged in civic or political life. Both blind and constructive patriots can discuss their perspectives in coffee shops and bars, for example, without acting in any way that substantively supports the nation. Such behaviour differs markedly from the kind of active participation required in democratic climes (Kahne & Middaugh, 2006:3).

There is another concept which has emerged in the literature of patriotism. That is “constitutional patriotism”, the notion which suggests that loyalty should centre on the values and processes of liberal societies. It is not an attachment to a nation or group of people, but a commitment to shared values such as democratic norms and constitutional principles. The origin of constitutional patriotism is usually traced to Karl Jaspers, who endorsed the stability of West Germany, “a half-nation with a sense of deeply compromised nationality on account of their Nazi past” (Muller, 2007:7). Its proponents such as Dolf Sternberg and Jurgen Habermas argue that constitutional patriotism would provide a basis for creating Europe’s solidarity since it extends beyond linguistic and national borders (Lucroix, 2002).

A fundamental issue which also engages attention is the difference between patriotism and nationalism. According to Kosterman and Feshback (1989:259), expressions such as “I love my country”, “I am proud to be an American” are patriotic, while comments such as, “in view of America’s moral and material superiority, it is right that we should have the biggest say in deciding UN matters”, “other countries should try to make their governments like ours as possible” are nationalistic. It is argued that a blind patriot tends towards nationalism – always insisting on his nation’s superiority and providing support for her control over other people (Kosterman & Feshback, 1989).

Although we will not labour the issue about the relationship between patriotism and nationalism beyond the present case, it is important to note that patriotism is a product of the mind which is usually evidenced in acts that tend to promote the good of the state. An atmosphere of patriotism is, therefore, possible when the minds of leaders of the state respond in a just, responsible and selfless manner to public issues. Some of the results of such a condition are that the rights and duties of all classes of people are guaranteed and become the corner-stone of public policy.

The Realization of Mental Harmony and Patriotic Political Practice in Nigeria

In his theory of Forms, Plato maintains that every phenomenon in the world has its ideal type which the physical mimics. Hence, the things we see in the material realm are imperfections of their Forms which exist in the intelligible world. As long as man depends only on the senses, he cannot see beyond the shadows that exist in the visible world. For one to rise above the limitations of the body, one needs to guard one's soul/mind in the most appropriate manner. The soul is that life aspect which makes man a living being. It is the vital factor which can make a human being thoughtful, emotional and adventurous (Bailey, 1960). The soul is the essence or substance of life and the engine of individual existence. In human behaviour, the soul is to the rational, the instrument of thought and to the irrational, the means of pleasure. The implication is that the state of a man's soul determines his actions and inactions.

A fundamental point in the idea of Forms is Plato's tripartite mind. Consider cases of mental conflict, such as when someone is very thirsty but does not drink the available water because he knows it is poisoned. Plato argues that there must be one element in the person's mind which is bidding him drink, and a second which forbids him; the first is called Appetite and the second is called Reason. There is a third element - Spirit - which is capable of aligning with any of the two contending forces, depending on where victory lies.

Reason, Spirit and Appetite are present in every person, and each of them has its proper role to play. Reason which resides in the head is responsible for thinking, discernment and understanding things as they should be. Spirit located in the breast, produces bravery and the readiness to face danger. Appetite residing in the stomach generates the craving for nourishment, the longing for eating, copulation and all other sensual pleasures. Of the three parts of the soul, Reason is the most important; it is the most divine because it partakes of the eternal (Plato, 2000).

Indeed, there is the potential for conflict or war within everyone's soul or mind. Our reason usually comes into conflict with our appetite, especially when faced with choices to make. While the irrational appetite pulls us towards the gratification of our desires, reason acts as "inhibiting principle" (Plato, 1974: 434-436). The third element, spirit, which ordinarily should be an ally of reason, sometimes supports appetite in the struggle within.

The key to mental harmony is the proper integration of these potentially conflicting parts of the soul. This is clearly illustrated by Plato in the story of a man in a two-horse driven chariot. One horse (the spirited element) does not need to be whipped, and is guided simply by the charioteer's voice. The other horse (the appetitive part) is uncontrollable by the whip or spur, and keeps trying to plunge off the path. The charioteer (reason) is pulling the two horses to keep track and maintain speed (Plato, 2000). Plato here portrays the reality of war and peace in the soul. The happy soul, therefore, is that in which reason controls and guides spirit and appetite.

But what happens when the proper ordering of the parts of the soul is altered, especially when the appetitive part refuses to take instructions from the rational part? In the event that appetite rules in man, reason takes flight. Such mind cannot attain

true knowledge – the apprehension of the Forms. This individual operates only at the level of the senses. By perception alone, man can never get to the knowledge of the universal, unchanging and eternal truths that define concepts. The senses only present to us how things are without any consideration of how they ought to be. Plato says that this is the realm at which the appetitive mind, the self-centered mind, operates. This mind only thinks and talks about material things, and stops at nothing to gratify his bodily desires. This is the type of mentality that governs political practice in Nigeria.

Imagine what Plato will think of the Nigerian state where political leadership corruptly converts national wealth to its project of primitive accumulation. Honestly, patriotism will be difficult within states in which those whose minds are governed by acquisitive tendencies are in charge of the commanding heights of the economy. As Achebe (1983) observes, certainly they will be extremely loud in their adulation of the system, and will be quick to pass themselves off as patriots and to vilify those who disagree with them as trouble-makers or even as traitors. “But doomed is the country which permits such people to define patriotism for it as their definition will be about as objective as a Rent Act derived by a committee of avaricious landlords, or encomiums that a colony of blood-sucking ticks might be expected to shower upon the bull on whose back they batten” (Achebe, 1983:28). This type of patriotism is what Achebe calls “spurious patriotism”, and this is the hallmark of Nigeria where members of the political class mismanage the economy and corruptly enrich themselves and their cronies. To justify their coup d’état, they talk as patriots, but their pronouncement is only mouth-deep; it does not exist in their minds and certainly not in the work of their hands (Achebe, 1983).

Harmony or Justice, whether in the individual or in the state, is an effective remedy to instability because it secures the space of every person in society, especially in relationship to what they are in terms of transparency and integrity. This is why the governing function of a state should not be left in the hands of those whose minds are guided by profit motive. The tendency to see politics as a means of material accumulation will only encourage people to do as they wish and grab as much as they can. Humans must learn how to achieve mental harmony and live peacefully with other people in the society. Imagine a state where there is injustice, the basis for patriotism is gone. Take away the mechanism by which citizenship is perfected, patriotism becomes a mirage.

Indeed, the mind is such that when properly developed will result in patriotic acts. The problem with politics in Nigeria is that many Nigerians, especially those who call themselves leaders do not know how the mind works, and so handle it wrongly. The fact is that the absence of mental harmony at critical moments of political decisions will incline the country to disorderly growth. There is, therefore, need for Nigerians to learn how to deploy the elements of the soul to achieve the best possible results. Hence, it is still through the reflective lifestyle that mental harmony can be achieved by humans in Nigeria and anywhere they are found.

The importance of society of patriots is not that everybody can be one, for that will be an impossible and totally unrealistic expectation. But the truth which no

one can deny is that society needs patriots whose intellectual and practical identifications are so complete and uncompromising that they cannot be corrupted, not even by the deadening blandishments of the highest office in the land. They are not angels in heaven; they are human like the rest of mankind. The difference is only that this set of people maintains that inner unity from which patriotic acts result. Patriotic leaders neither harden their minds against the genuine needs of the people nor loot the treasury; rather they usually leave worthwhile legacies that stand the test of time.

Conclusion/ Recommendations

The harmony of the soul self is indeed very significant in view of the fact that a healthy human mind engenders healthy human behaviour and by extension, healthy human society. When individuals and, or leaders achieve mental harmony or justice in their inner man, they are inclined to behaving patriotically by ensuring that the welfare and comfort of the masses are vigorously pursued and ultimately attained. In fact, the harmonious relationship between and among the three parts of the soul inclines political leaders to pursue worthwhile projects and programmes which have general reach and fulfill vital needs of the human family. It is in the light of this truth that we recommend the cultivation of reflective lifestyle by Nigerians and the continuous education and monitoring of our rational and irrational parts respectively. The philosophical attitude will result in knowledge and the will to act justly, responsibly and selflessly in private and public affairs.

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