

## PHILOSOPHY AND THE QUESTION OF PARTY POLITICS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*There are three things involved in the pursuit of the task of social organization and democratic reconstruction, namely, party, politics and political participation; it is alleged that successful democracies are characterized by a continuous expansion of the available forms of political participation and this participation refers to the activities of the public politics that represent its ideology and the core value of the party. As it were, there can be no credible democratic political process without a people-centered political participation. However, a cursory look at political participation in Nigeria leaves much to be desired and hence, calls for an interrogation. Adopting an expository and analytic approach, the paper examines the nexus between party politics and political participation in Nigeria. The paper found out that political participation in Nigeria for the most part is not only skeletal but even when it exists, it does not go beyond the periodic elections. The paper argues that philosophy possesses the capacity to alter the trajectory of democratic practices in Nigeria. In the final third, the paper concludes that, for sustainable growth, development and for the common good to be realized, a more vibrant political participation should be elevated above party politics and to do this, the paper advances a complementary attitudinal change by all the players in the Nigerian democratic space.*

**Keywords:** Philosophy, Party, Politics, Political Participation, Leadership.

### **Introduction**

It is fundamental to say that the freedom of choice of those who govern is, in modern times, usually exercised through competitive politics, in which elections play a crucial role. Through this process, the people, on a periodic basis, are able to express their preference for certain individuals or programmes<sup>1</sup>. Party, politics and political participation are imperatives in the pursuit of social coordination and democratic reconstruction. Political parties play fundamental and significant role, which include: means of interest aggregation, because the streamline the expression of socio-economic and political references by individuals; the serve as vehicles of political education as it involves canvassing ideas, values and programme. They help to educate the people on issues of public interest, while

politics is the means through which those who perform this duty (that is, the role of the routine activities in the society) are recruited<sup>2</sup>. And political participation involves the commitment of the citizens in the process of governance. What then can philosophy (not) do in the socio-political participation in Nigeria?

Philosophy as it were, has been in-appropriated by most people because there is hardly any field of knowledge whose relevance to humanity is questioned as dedicatedly and as frequently as philosophy. Most scholars according John Lewis pursue philosophy as an academic discipline; it is supposed to be a purely academic pursuit of no possible interest to the man of action, the speculative activity of curious minds with nothing better to do. In the same vein, some scientist will describe philosophy as argument about things of which we are ignorant; its subject matter is supposed by many to be that which lies beyond everyday experience and is therefore in its very nature either knowable or non-existent. Obviously uncomfortable with this trend, many philosophers have sought to justify their engagement with philosophy. Their aim has, in most cases, always been to show that philosophy is something useful, if not noble. Bertrand Russell contributed to the discourse on the value and usefulness of philosophy in the closing chapter of his book entitled the *Problems of Philosophy*. According to him,

Philosophy, like all other studies, aims primarily at knowledge. The knowledge it aims at is the kind of knowledge which gives unity and system to the body of the sciences, and the kind which results from a critical examination of the grounds of our convictions, prejudices, and beliefs. But it cannot be maintained that philosophy has had any very great measure of success in its attempts to provide definite answers to its questions. If you ask a mathematician, a mineralogist, a historian, or any other man of learning, what definite body of truths has been ascertained by his science, his answer will last as long as you are willing to listen.

But if you put the same question to a philosopher, he will, if he is candid, have to confess that his study has not achieved positive results such as have been achieved by other sciences.<sup>3</sup>

Having established the fact that the value and usefulness of philosophy should not be sought for in the same manner that the value of mathematics, astronomy and other physical sciences (which *ab initio* were all included in philosophy) are sought, he showed that the value of philosophy is in contemplation. He further avers that that philosophy is to be studied not with the intent of providing

definite answers to its questions but because of the questions themselves. This is because;

because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.<sup>4</sup>

From the above, it is crystal clear that to seek the value and usefulness of philosophy in the same manner in which the usefulness of other science is an exercise in futility and there is a sense in which it will not be result oriented. Be that as it may, “the man who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the co-operation or consent of his deliberate reason”.<sup>5</sup>

This pattern of “questioning the use of philosophy” and “establishing its necessity or use” has been the practice for many years; and one of such necessities or uses, is the role it either plays or have the capacity to play in party politics and political participation. The crisis of political participation and party politics as it relates to leadership may not be so peculiar to Nigeria. So, to speak, the issue of the relevance of philosophy has taken very serious dimensions as it relates to party politics and political participation and in such scenario, the task and role of philosophy becomes very imperative as a tool for political education and re-orientation for a genuine leadership and governance that will put Nigeria at par with other developed countries. To achieve this task, and considering the Nigerian perspective, the paper shall carry out a conceptual clarification on Philosophy, Party Politics and Political Participation’.

### **Philosophy, Party Politics, Political Parties and Political Participation: An Exposé**

Philosophy may mean different thing to most people because there is no one conventional definition of the term, though mostly all conceptions of philosophy are tied to its root word: ‘*Philo*’ meaning ‘love’ of and ‘*Sophia*’ meaning ‘wisdom’. As a scientific discipline, it is a critical examination of views and an evaluative tool for testing pretensions of beliefs<sup>6</sup>. This definition suggests that Philosophy is systematic view of reality. In other to substantiate this definition, various Philosophers have their various definitions. Plato looks at Philosophy as

the science that is the science of itself and other, the most excellent art that equips its possessors with wisdom. However, for Aristotle philosophy is simply a “science of being as being”. John Dewey will affirm that philosophy is the “criticism of criticisms”, In his definition he substantiates that philosophy has functions to play and they are chiefly to free men’s mind from bias and prejudice and enlarge their perception of the world about them. Using an analytic approach, Ludwig Wittgenstein views Philosophy as the “logical clarification of thoughts and its function is the uncovering of another of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up, the limits of language”, furthermore, William James perceives Philosophy as “a collective name for questions which have not been answered to the satisfaction of all that answered them”<sup>7</sup>.

The paper defines Party Politics as politics based on strict adherence to the policies and principles of a political party regardless of public interest. It means political activities, decisions and events that relate to or support a particular political party. Party politics played a massive role in determining who would be elected or chosen for various positions in the party. Nwankwo explains further in his own definition of party politics as the politics expressed through the channel of or considered from the ideal of political parties as opposed to national interest. This will imply that party politics does not serve the interest and common good of the People irrespective of the circumstances and situation. For Okoye, party politics therefore are “activities of formal structure, institution or organization which compete through electoral process to control the personnel and policies of government, and with the aim of allocating the scarce resources in a state through institutionalize means or procedure”. Hence, the primary objective of party politics is directed towards a single goal of wrestling for governmental or political power<sup>8</sup>. These definitions capture the crux and problem related to leadership crisis in Nigeria within the context of this paper and it relates to what party politics is.

The outcome of party politics is often misunderstood as political parties. As it were, political parties can be conceived as an advanced form of pressure or interest groups. They are usually a set of highly organized groups of persons or individual who come together with often quite broadscopes and objectives. By this, we mean that political parties are much broader in scope and seeking to hold onto power. This is where interest groups are known to differ from political parties. In most situation the goal of the political party is to win political office, gain political power, and thereby control the policy making process and such

political parties are usually open to the general public or to a particular class of people or membership.

If possible, there ought to be a connection between political parties and political participation. Any activity that shapes, affects, or involves the political sphere is mostly referred to as political participation. Falade<sup>9</sup> defines political participation as the involvement of the citizens in the political system. This definition summarizes the citizens participation as a process through which the individual plays a role in the political life of his society and has the privilege and opportunity to take part in deciding what common goals of the society are and the best ways of achieving these goals. From the definition of political participation given by Falade, this paper defines political participation as the active participation in the political affairs as it relates to the interest of the common good in the society. As such, active participation involves the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate, the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs, and the ability to register as a candidate to campaign. It is a voluntary activity and one may participate directly or indirectly. The various ways people get involved in the political system include selection or election of political leaders, formulation of policies, community activities and other civic engagements. Broadly speaking, there are three types of participation:

1. **Conventional Participation:** This type of participation is more likely to be associated with patriotic citizens. For most people, participation occurs every few years at election time. People strongly committed to politics are more likely committed on a regular basis. For example, conventional political participation includes voting, volunteering for a political campaign, making a campaign donation, belonging to activist groups, and serving in public office.
2. **Unconventional Participation:** This form of political participation tends to be legal but the means in achieving its desired goals and objective is considered inappropriate. It is commonly carried out by the youths, student and those with serious concerns about a regime's policies. Unconventional political participation includes signing petitions, supporting boycotts, and staging demonstration and protests.
3. **Illegal Participation:** In this kind of political participation people get involved in activities that break the law. Most of the time, people resort to illegal participation only when legal means have failed to create significant political change. Usually, this type of political participation includes political assassination, terrorism, and sabotaging an opponent's campaign through theft or vandalism.

## **Considering the Functions and Roles of Political Parties in Nigeria**

The function of political parties is very necessary in this paper since political parties are indispensable tool for the working model of democratic government. The importance of political parties lies in the fact that democracies cannot function without the existence of political parties. These functions of political parties will form a theoretical framework of an objective understanding of party politics. It will also serve as a prism in better understanding of party politics and the problem it contributes to leadership crisis and development. There are specific functions of political parties:

- a. It functions in the recruitment of leaders:** The essential function of any party is to recruit men of integrity, letters, action, leadership to its fold as members and prepare them for election in future. Such leaders being drawn from public life are expected to understand expectations of the common good and formulate public policies accordingly.
- b. It makes the working of parliamentary government possible:** The whole idea of a representative government to form political parties is to bring about opposition for the possibility of check and balances to the political party in power which gets the majority vote. This makes the government in power responsible and accountable as the opposition always tries finding fault with the government.
- c. Political Parties formulate public policies:** Each political party coming into government or power has a manifesto and these manifestos contains in them objectives that the government will use as a road map towards driving development. It also contains in them policies that will be to the best interest of the people and not the party. The most important objective behind most policies remains the betterment of the general condition. Other than this, they make policies on national security, internal law and order, etc. Besides, each party has its own ideology. It is assured that the majority party gets the mandate of the electorate to implement its own political programme.
- d. Political Parties shapes Public Opinion:** It is the duty of the political parties to educate, formulate and organize public opinion. Political parties should create awareness about the social and political condition of their state to even the least citizen in the state. Through the political party, the people should be aware of their right to vote and make them to understand critical issues that will enable to people know their right from their left.

- e. **Political Parties provide political stability:** The political parties unite to stabilize the country. It is the duty of the political parties to create and enabling environment for peace by shunning violence, and other vices that could lead to violence. This can be done by pacifying the disintegrating forces and inducing cohesion.

### **The Challenges of Party Politics in Nigeria and its Implication for Political Participation**

The problem of party politics and political participation in Nigeria can be traced from a historical perspective because this is basically one of the fundamental challenges of leadership and economic development in the post-colonial Nigeria. The greatest challenge in political party formation was ethnicity and religion<sup>10</sup>. Hence the foundations on which political parties emerged in Nigeria were based on sentiments. It was obvious that party structures were formed on ethnicity, prejudice and sentiments which eventually had very strong influence on the approach to leadership and governance in Nigeria. There was no objectivity and sense of nationality in the formation of political parties which led to the collapse of the First Republic<sup>11</sup>. It was indeed this foundational mistake that has affected the political participation in Nigeria and has resorted to other ills that characterize party politics in Nigeria. It is obvious that when politics is hinged on sentiments it distorts the original intention of policy formulation and centers more on the person involved. This is very common as most times in our Nation's polity, there is this syndrome of distorted loyalty to ethnicity on the basis of regional and provincial political affiliation. It becomes difficult to ascertain the levels of citizens' judgment that is based on objectivity and critical analysis. This has also affected the role of credibility and competence in arriving at the election of a competent leader in Nigeria politics. The foundational mistake of ethnicismin Nigeria politics has generated from a machinery or tool of extremely abused through political rivalry, ethno-religious sentiment and thereby by making it undemocratic and reduces the level of political participation.

Some of the scholars are of the view that democracy in Nigeria has not been fully institutionalized and the phenomenon of Godfatherism and party politics are visible in the conduct of government and politics. They further concluded that this phenomenon has threatened our democratic processes vis-à-vis the socio-economic lives of the citizenry. Nevertheless, it is obvious to state that this has not only affected the level of economic development, but also, reduced the people's level of political participation in our Nigerian democracy<sup>12</sup>. Yet, for any

democracy to thrive and become vibrant, the political participation must grossly improve to the level that everyone is involved. Godfatherism has affected how appointments are made in Nigeria which has led to the politics of compensation rather than competence. There is a strong element of appointing/hand picking people who are not experienced and qualified to mount leadership positions and this often leads to the reproduction of mediocrity. Presently, in Nigeria governance is reduced to politics of compensation and sharing of national cake at the expense of the masses. Most political parties lack capacity and do not have ideologies that represent nor capture the interest of the people but rather they project some personal dictums that uphold their individual interest.

The political system and parties in Nigerian is identical with a high level of corruption due to the fact that individuals seem to be 'stronger' than 'institutions' and there is no clear contrast between 'office' and the 'office holder'. Hence, the most part of those who holds the reins of power have become more powerful than the political parties; invariably, they determine every decision taken in the party. This is the where funding forms a challenge for party politics and political participation in Nigeria. Aside the problem of corruption, funding plays a vital role in party politics. For the electorates, it is very common for them to be influenced by politicians and cajoled into selling their votes. Vote buying has constituted a challenge in party politics and this has been attributed to the high level of ignorance and poverty in Nigeria. Until recently, another challenge of party politics was the marginalization of women in political leadership, there is a great divide in terms of gender in our political system. This has also affected the level of women political participation in Nigeria as such political parties ought to make the participation of women equal in most cases.

On the level of participation, these realities are both worrisome and disturbing. This thinking is based on the fact that leadership and followership are the different sides of the same coin. The implication of this is that the followership class which constitutes the voters and electorates cannot successfully exonerate themselves from the problem of leadership as it stands. It is drawing from the above that this paper agrees with the leadership theory that holds that "a people get the kind of leadership that they deserve" and makes bold to stipulate that moving away from the thesis that elevates the colonial influence on the problem of leadership in Africa, the problem as it were, is self-caused. It is also a product of the collective actions and inactions of the African people and hence, deserving. Going forward, African should see governance as a collective enterprise to which



they are a major stakeholder. They should see governance and leadership within the context of the social contract where the violation of the terms of references as well as the rules of engagement is unacceptable. In this sense, the leadership class will be accountable to the people and the consequent of the above antecedent is the institutionalization of a responsible governing and leadership class that can drive developmental programmes and projects that are both sustainable and enduring. Now let us look at the philosophical approach of party politics and political participation.

### **Philosophical Perspectives on Party Politics and Political Participation**

The definition of party politics as the interest of the party members against the common good gives an erroneous understanding of party politics to the detriment of political participation. As it were, socio-political philosophy summarizes the whole idea of politics as a means to a good life for everyone and not a selected few. Plato, in *The Republic* views political participation as the combined effort of both the people in power and those that are governed as a philosophical approach anchored of the classification of the state into namely, *rational*, *auxiliaries* and *masses*. This is a situation where everyone does his/her own job with a general interest without interfering with other persons. Aristotle did not deviate from Plato's idea of what it means for people to get involve in political life. Aristotle, in his *Politics* buttressed his opinion on citizens' participation in politics as he views the connection between the well-being of the political community and that of the citizens who make it up, his belief that citizen must actively participate in politics if they are to be happy and live a good life.

Aquinas *Summa Theologia* also did not shy away from the reality of his predecessor Aristotle but rather Christianized this idea when he emphasized the need of people's political participation in politics and the need for civil disobedience when the policy formulations of a state fall short of people's expectation. Immanuel Kant in his popular 'Duty for the sake of Duty' as an imperative to moral duty, reflects the importance of political participation as a right amongst the list of human right not just on a superficial level but on a minimalist list of Human Right. This means that, the idea of political participation discredits the philosophical basis of party politics since the idea of political participation has a more rooted foundation from Ancient to Modern times.

In modern times, one cannot underestimate J. J. Rousseau's role in his persistence on direct citizen's participation despite his idea of a social contract. As such, he

advanced his philosophy of participation that is hinged on the “General Will” which is the “voice of all for the good of all”. J. S. Mill a classical liberal theory of democracy of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century has also seen representative government as direct citizen participation even though he sees it possible on a microscopic organism of a society. Visnovsky further has emphasized the need of political participation in his upgrade of Jean Jacques Rousseau’s conception of self-governing order<sup>13</sup>. The governing of rulers and ruled should be abandoned; people have the right and must also be given a real opportunity, to decide on matters that concern and affect their lives; People are free and equal in their access to institutions and decision making in all spheres of life. There is more to democracy than voting which is not the sole, paradigmatic or the most significant democratic activity. Visnovsky went further to advance that Political participation breaks down political apathy, and civic passivity as it leads to consensus, Social responsibility and strong democracy. Political participation is real and it command with its own tools, such as referendum, recall, and citizen – initiated legislation.

Political participation is a possibility within any political culture and it is the key to any democratic future. William Morris<sup>14</sup> asserts that individual men cannot shuffle off the business of life on to the shoulders of an abstraction call a state, but must deal with it in conscious association with each other<sup>15</sup>. This is exactly the point Karl Marx opined when he talked of the community as the only realization of human and personal freedom possible were his potentials and talents are cultivated in all directions<sup>16</sup>. J.S. Mill adopts a similar ideology of self-development and agrees with the contention of Morris and Marx that the privatized individual<sup>17</sup> engaged in competitive self-seeking and lacking any sense of Community will be spiritually impoverished<sup>18</sup>. This informed the necessity of the Universal Declaration of Human Right in Article 21, which emphasizes on the right to take part in government, it states:

Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his Country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this we shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.<sup>19</sup>

### **Establishing the Prism of Citizens and Leadership for Good Governance**

This thinking is based on the fact that leadership and followership are the different sides of the same coin. The implication of this is that the followership

class which constitutes the voters and electorates cannot successfully exonerate themselves from the problem of leadership as it stands in Nigeria. Citizen's participation is a very important aspect of good governance because until citizens learn to hold their leaders responsible for the dividends of good governance, things may not get better in Nigeria. The gap between the leaders and citizens in Nigeria is so pronounced, due to the fact because leaders do not carry the people along and on the other hand, the people have left governance to the leaders without holding them responsible, as this has resulted to the rise of unemployment, decay social and economic infrastructure, as well as insecurity and marginalization. It is imperative to state that responsive governments and leaders, effective political participation of citizens is the hallmark of inclusive development.

Citizens should be courageous to speak truth to power irrespective of their religious and political affiliation, they must speak out without fear or favor against a corrupt system and they should know that sovereignty belongs to the people and the people decides who to confer it on. The People's power should help checkmate the activities of government as this is a necessary ingredient for an ideal democracy. If a government or the ruling class cannot be subject to either the dictates of decency of good conscience, the fear of repercussion from those they rule should at least call them to order and whip them in line, although this scenario is contrary in Nigeria. The respective roles and responsibilities of the government (making decisions for which it is held accountable and on which its performance may be judged) and the Citizens (providing input for the decision-making process) must be clear too. Citizens are not government; they elect it and want to be served by it. If citizens are to participate it must go beyond the ballot box and as such, they need proper access to information, meaningful consultation and opportunities to take an active part in governance. The strength of our democracy in Nigeria lies in having active and informed citizens. Transparency, public consultation and participation are more important than ever to improve policies and reinforce democracy and stability. As it were, government alone cannot succeed in combating corruption without the active participation of civil society and citizen action groups. The Nigerian citizens and civil societies are in the best passion to articulate the grievances of the citizens and highlights priorities of action on corruption to governments. This can be done as observers, critics, analyst, campaigner, or protestor. It can create public awareness against corruption and mobilize citizens to fight against corruption in ways that government cannot. Governance implies to the way people are ruled either with or without their consent. The way people are governed can be bad or

good. It is therefore important that citizens should distinguish the difference between good and bad governance in order to fully understand the type of government which rules them.

### **Contextualizing the Role of Philosophy and Philosophers in Political Participation: Lessons for Nigeria**

If Philosophy is the love of wisdom or the love of knowledge, what then is the task of Philosophers in Nigeria in relation to this paper? The relevance of philosophy in this paper readily implies the obvious fact that philosophy must serve humanity. It also shows that Philosophy has some fundamental roles to play in human society<sup>20</sup>. Philosophy helps in looking at issues critically in trying to find rational justification in evaluating circumstances and situations about the universe and human affairs. Therefore, Philosophy with the aid of systematic analysis and critical evaluation, can aid in reshaping the society for the better in addressing issues that constitute problems in the society. Philosophy as an activity of evaluating and justifying our beliefs and those of other people and can help broaden one's spectrum of understanding in justifying and rationalizing government policies of policies formulation as they affect our economic life for the common good.

In ancient Greece, Socrates stressed the benefit of philosophy to a state, by showing where it was wrong<sup>21</sup> and as such philosophy is necessary towards equipping the Nigerian people in pointing out the wrongs that affects our common good as a people. This is the very reason Plato agrees with his mentor Socrates that the business of governance should be left to people who have gone through a specialized training for leadership, these group of people, he called the philosopher kings. Aristotle posed a very vital question as to whether Philosophy should have anything to do with politics. As such, should philosophers act politically? Should Philosophers engage in ordinary politics or get involve in regimes or work to establish new ones? Or should philosophers abstain from politics? In response to the above posers, Aristotle stipulated and divided two lives namely: the life of politics and the life of philosophy. He further averred that philosophy might have to address the political but its highest calling soared above as such Socrates political fate was the stimulus and motivating factor for Plato to invent a new metaphysics and epistemology in order in order to articulate an alternative realm of political possibility.

Political participation was a very obvious characteristic of the Athenian Society. The space of the political was the space of participation in speech and decision

concerning public affairs and actions.<sup>22</sup> That invent of the political was the hallmark of the classical Greek world. Citizens, whether the few (usually the rich) or the many (including the poorer and perhaps the poorest free adult men) deliberated together as to how to conduct public affairs, sharing either by custom, by election or by lot. Hence, the invention of political philosophy as a mode of reflection upon the value of ordinary political life in the Athenian society reflects the role of Nigerian Philosophers as instrument of change in our Nigerian society. As Philosophers, it is our duty to put in the minds of the people the basic understanding in political philosophy as a methodological process in objective critical thinking to help position the minds of our people on what it means when we talk about an Ideal State and purpose of the state? What makes a government legitimate? What are the proper limits of a government power? Is civil disobedience ever justified? Under what conditions is it justified? These questions will help inform the majority of Nigerians to make objective and justifiable grounds for an effective political participation. We must rethink the party politics and political participation in Nigeria, where individuals seem to be stronger than institutions and where there is no clear contrast between the 'office' and the 'office holder'. Hence and ethical approach must be adopted towards objectively readdressing issues of common interest despite our political differences or individual political affiliations.

That philosophy can be a vehicle in the search for a change in the narrative in the Nigerian Political space is a statement of fact. Consequently, this search for change will be more fruitful if philosophy and philosophers are engaged. This search for change must be comprehensive and must extent to all the means through which we organize ourselves in the Nigerian political space. In the same vein, every attempt at rationalizing the basis of party politics that does not recognize the people as supreme, and does not allow them the opportunity to participate in the political processes freely should be rejected with total vehemence. In this context, this paper advances what Asouzu referred to as the complementary attitudinal change with the intent of institutionalizing a saner political culture that allows for the participation of the people. This change is "the process through which individuals and human societies, at large, seek to reposition their minds in a way that makes it possible for them to anchor always their interest on the dictates of the common within a universal complementary harmonious framework".<sup>23</sup>

Granted this attitudinal change, the individual, the political class and all the players in the Nigerian political space will work towards the common good.

Here, the individual will not make light of his responsibility of participating in all political processes transcending mere voting in elections; the politicians and the political class will be realize that politics is basically about the people, they will also be guided by altruism (a selfless determination for the good and welfare of others) and hence, will work towards delivering the goods of human flourishing to the people rather than engaging in a self-serving task of wanting to remain relevant by hook or crook. In this sense, politics, party politics and political participation will constitute a vibrant tool for shaping the Nigerian society.

### **Conclusion**

This paper is an attempt to examine party politics and political participation in Nigeria and to emphasize the role of philosophy as a fundamental tool towards the contribution of efficient leadership and good governance as it enhances all levels of political participation. Nigeria need to step-up to reality to face the existential challenges of leadership considering the fact that it is one of the privileged continents in the world endowed with human and natural resource and yet, her citizens are suffering in abject poverty. In doing this, we cannot underestimate the role of citizens in the political space and their capacity to contribute to the development and progress of Nigeria. If Nigerians will compete favorably with its comity of nations and become the pride of the International Community, the participation and involvement of the citizens in all democratic processes leading to good governance must be elevated above the prevailing party politics that hold party supremacy over and above the common.

In this paper, we have argued that philosophy which is the critical evaluation of the ideas that we live by and engages in questioning the status quo has a role to place in the task of instituting change to the status quo. It has been argued here that, while it is the task of the philosophers amongst others to both question the status quo and educate the people on the their place in the political space and the ideal, the conclusion that is reached in this paper is that, all the players in the Nigerian political space must change their attitudes towards politics and political participation. It is only in this sense that true democracy can be institutionalized and the goods of human flourishing delivered to the people.

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