

## Awolowo's Political Philosophy: A Panacea For Good Governance

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**Abstract:** The fundamental basic rule of life is on the centre of Awolowo's theory of mental magnitude as an avenue to free Nigeria and Africa in general from the social ills. The idea of a responsible and responsive government is to wage war against the social ills which culminate on the following; illiteracy, corruption unemployment robbery, violence and terrorism. The African continent remains underdeveloped due to the high magnitude of the social ills. More so, it is due to absolute negligence of the leaders towards the fundamental rule of life. For Obafemi Awolowo the realistic nature of good governance is based on the basic rule of life that good begets good while evil begets evil. He understood love as the basic rule of life for leaders who have passion in achieving good and effective governance. Therefore the paper advocates the moral and political philosophy of Abafemi Awolowo as a panacea for good governance in the continent of Africa.

**Key words:** Governance • Political • Philosophy and Nigeria

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### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is endowed with abundant economic (natural) and human resources but the greatest problem facing Nigeria is the idea of effective leadership. For Aderemi in his work, *Democracy and Corruption in Nigeria*:

*Nigeria is one of the world's most endowed nations, with abundant human and material resources there is practically every vital mineral deposit in the states of the federation.... However Nigeria remains one of the developing but under industrialized nations in the world [1].*

The reason being that the excesses of the politicians (leaders) conflict with the interest of the masses. The unusual drive for wealth accumulation by the politicians has destroyed the basic rule of life which is the essence of effective leadership. Similarly, the egoistic interests of the politicians have eroded the genu leadership mechanism, which involve equity, fairness and social justice. Nigeria as a nation lacks disciplined and corrupt free leaders which culminated in destroying the different institutions of development and created a high magnitude of poverty, diseases and ignorance. Furthermore the usual quest for material things by the individuals in power creates a loophole for corruption in all sectors of government. This has led to low index of

human development as published by UNDP. Every successive government mainly after the first military coup in Nigeria has been characterized by corruption and bad leadership, thereby shattering the dreams of our founding fathers. The political philosophy of Obafemi Awolowo remains important for the development of the nation. It will help to enthrone good governance and shape the educational thought and human development in Nigeria and Africa in general. The paper is organized as follows; the theory of mental magnitude/political philosophy of Awolowo, Governance are Nigeria and it challenges, the critical analysis of Awolowo's mental magnitude (Dialectical principle) and conclusion.

**Awolowo's Theory of Mental Magnitude/political Philosophy:** His theory of mental magnitude was informed through his "close observation and personal study and experience of human nature itself" [2] as recommended by Rev. Fr. Ogunmodede. It is based on Awolowo's conception and understanding of man. He advocated and gave a clear two different conception of the nature of man, which include, the Grecian dualist understanding of mind and body and the Judaic tripartite description of mind, body and spirit. The intention of Awolowo mainly is to show that man has a complex and robust nature. Inline with Plato, he affirms the reality of mind and body. In furtherance, he divided mind into two – conscious and subconscious phases. The conscious level involves

objective and subjective minds while subconscious level involves coconscious and super coconscious minds. According to Awolowo the major area or the centre of thinking is the subjective mind. Objective mind involves those facilities that have been impressed into the nature of man like seeing, smelling, feeling, testing and hearing. For his own understanding the objective mind needs an object for proper functioning or effective functioning while the subjective mind is absolutely and purely mental which involves specific functions like observation, inference, imagination etc. Then the most active parts of the mind are subjective and subconscious minds. The subconscious is tripartite in nature. The body which is physical and carries out a network of automatic nerve, the mind which is mental and reasons deductively and thirdly the spirit which is spiritual which is the essence of God. According to Awolowo, he stated that:

*The subconscious mind, being as we have described it, is not and cannot be object of instruction or education. It is the projection of the God essence into man and therefore the same as that essence in the kind and quality and only differs from it in degree [3].*

The essence of his theory of mental magnitude is to project the idea of reason that is the power of ratiocinative analysis (Dialectic) to control human instincts and emotions that are common to animals.

In ancient period Socrates a Greek Philosopher advocated the idea of critical method in questioning and answering in order to achieve a true knowledge. Zeno a student of Parmenides was known to be the first in using the world dialectic [4]. Etymologically dialectic involves the mechanism of questioning and answering that exposes any subject of discussion. In the modern period, it could be traced to Hegel in his discussion of self development of Absolute spirit. He did not go into invention of the dialectic rather what inspired him is the recognition that contradictions are part of the nature of phenomena and such instigated the whole gamut of the history of Philosophy. Considering the Milesian Philosopher called Anaximander he understood the world in terms of the polarity of forces. For him, the particular stuffs of the universe can be captured into pairs of opposites hot-cold, good evil, wet-dry, day night etc. Heraclitus considered conflict or strife as part of the law of nature and of progress which is the essence of life. Precisely he denied all forms of permanence and employed contradiction on the moving principle of the world. For him, one cannot step into a river twice.

For Plato, dialectic has to do with certain kind of logical process. It is a method of argumentation which involves or prolonged cross examination through which the opponent is led to contradict his original thesis by various questions and answers. This employs what the modern logicians call contrary case [5]. Hegel's dialectic has to do with ideas. He saw the universe being the expression of spirit or the idea. The absolute idea develops itself through different stages which he treated in his *Science of Logic*. Hegel adopts the platonic meaning of dialectic as a logical process which proceeds from thesis to antithesis and to synthesis which retain what was true of both thesis and antithesis at a higher level. Hegel went beyond Plato in applying the laws of dialectic to the events of the world. He maintained that the progressive movement from the lower to the higher is only but the manifestation of the self-movement of the ideas trying to realize its essence independently of conscious beings. In summary dialectic are both a method of demonstration and an ontological principle as observed [6] by Berthold-Bond.

Considering the ontological nature of it, it has to do with the movement of things from their potentialities to actuality. What is basic and inherent in the principle is the notion of negativity which Hegel clearly captured in his philosophy of history. According to Hegel, the nation has life like individual. Its enjoyment depends on the desire and the abandonment of aspirations, "a nation slips into a merely customary life (like the watch wound up and going on of itself, into an activity without opposition). And this is what brings on its natural death." In analysis it means that the progressive nature of a nation and individual depends on the opposition. Opposition remains a critical area in development particularly for an individual or a nation. Precisely through endless self perpetuating struggle between ideals and the synthesizing of opposites one can reach its spiritual consciousness. Hegel's conception of dialectic refers to both thought and being. In the area of thought, the dialectical structure of thought reflects the dialectic structure of world. Both thought and the world reflect on the same structural framework. The ontological account of contradiction is the basis of Hegel's dialectic as stated by [7].

Hegel was interested in the perfect state, a state that is associated with reason and freedom while Awolowo was interested in universal mind or immutable law that regulates the material world, including the subjective world of thoughts, ideas and ideals. Thought in Awolowo could be good or evil. Instead of negativity

(contradictions) which is associated with Hegel's dialectic, Awolowo advocated for positivity, manifested in love and guided by the universal mind. Awolowo's theory of dialectic is associated with the idea that like terms beget the other, good begets good while evil begets evil. Awolowo referred the universal mind as God [8]. According to him, we believe in God and believe that He is the reactor of the universe. We believe that He is the universal mind which permeates and pervades all things". For Awolowo continuity should be maintained from God. Mankinde referred Awolowo's theory being tripartite in nature (mental magnitude, spiritual depth and God (Love) [9]. It is the possible way to eliminate selfishness and greed and ensure good governance. He understood and maintained that the adherence to the principle of dialectic including the cultivation of mental magnitude by the politic office holders will in many ways eliminate corruption.

The essence of Awolowo's mental magnitude is based on paramount nature of reason (reflective thinking) to guide and control human beings. It is centred on the ground that through the universal mind, one advocates for universal truth precisely for good leadership and governance. Furthermore it reinvigorates the ideas of self-discipline and rational behavior. Awolowo was a Platonist who upheld the power of reason that control the emotion and instincts.

**Governance In Nigeria And It Challenges:** Awolowo understood good governance as that which involves the preservation of a peaceful and just social order through the following avenues; liberty, fairness, good education and legal equality, among others. Many African founding fathers have expressed concern over the level of poverty in Africa which made Nyerere to express the idea that poverty is an enemy of good governance especially if it is shared in a grossly unequal manner. The problem comes into reality on the ground when several African leaders or rulers neglect to transfer the seeds of development from their countries. In the process they neglect their responsibilities and because of their corrupt and self-centered nature, they fraudulently siphon public fund leading to autocratic system of government. A leader becomes corrupt when his or her mind is not developed. Awolowo emphasized a leader with developed mind cannot indulge in corruption. By the time three major ethnic groups emerged as one nation (Hausa Igbo and Yoruba), one thing that is common among them is the way the nation resources are being siphoned. The scenario was just like Makinde's view that "everybody wants the

best thing in life for himself at the expense of his fellowmen. The dividend of democracy is more hardship for the poor and life more abundant for political elites" [10].

The word corruption is of different degrees and levels to different countries in the world. That was why some scholars presented it as a normal phenomenon. Aderemi Ajibewa was of the view that "Corruption has increased tremendously in the world. There is no continent, region, society and organization without some level of corruption". This is due to people's understanding which differs, precisely based on different perception. According to [11], corruption involves illegal means of wealth acquisition and also going against the fundamental rules or objective rules in order to satisfy oneself, thereby upholding private benefits or gain devoid of the interest of the public [12]. Then for Osoba, corruption is "any anti-social behavior conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms and which undermines the authority's capacity to secure the welfare of all citizen" [13]. Likewise in Americana Encyclopedia, corruption is a general term for the misuse of a public position of trust for private gain. In a critical analysis corruption cuts across, political, social, moral and economic life. Corruption is a negative character that ninety nine percent of Nigerians exhibit.

Corruption is not associated with those in politics only but it cut across different sectors. In Nigeria many administrations have tried to solve the problem but it persisted. The administration of Shagari came up with the idea of Ethical Revolution but such gave rise for more corruption growth in the country according to Anyanele. [14]. It gave the military reason to take up the government. Buhari came up with his own anti-corruption posture, many leaders were jailed justly and unjustly. The idea of Operation War Against indiscipline was introduced due to its neglect of court orders and public opinion people felt disrespected and unsatisfied. Then Babangida's administration came up with Structural Adjustment Programme and Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reliance mainly for the intention of reinvigorating the economy and for Nigerians to imbibe discipline in their day to day activities. Unfortunately and behold the government fraudulently siphoned the Nigerian money. The government under General Abacha introduced War Against Indiscipline and Corruption yet the regime wore corruption as clothe. Furthermore the regime of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo introduced the Independent Corrupt Practice and other related Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial

Crimes Commission (EFCC) to eliminate corruption. The Commissions were known for their selective arrest mainly for their opposition parties. Most importantly the system of government in Nigeria remains a failure to Nigerians. Every leader wants to be the richest in life and death at the expense of the masses. Although capitalism instigates corruption, selfishness and greed as pointed by Awolowo but Nigeria's own is out of proportion. So such remains the problem that is ravaging the country.

The democratic system in Nigeria is characterized by inheritance. A situation we have past governors becoming senators or legislators and some past legislators becoming ministers even as governors thereby creating the cycle of corrupt leaders. Is it not dangerous to our democratic system in Nigeria? The culture of political inheritance in Nigeria shows the high level of corruption, thereby creating poverty. Poverty stares the faces of the masses, while our leaders loot our money to foreign banks for their future generations. In Nigeria, corruption has remained a pervasive social phenomenon. It is a universal practice found in all spheres of life. This has given room for low Human development index precisely with low GDP. Nigeria is among the poor countries in the world. The attitudes of the leaders have destroyed the processes for development and left the country in the hands of mediocre. Bad governance has contributed 98% cause of poverty in Nigeria. The dialectal nexus between the people and their leaders is often empty. Governance is in the hands of the few in Nigeria who have no genuine interest in developing the country. The country is in the hands of those who plunder her resources and create vicious poverty. The vicious poverty persists because the governance structure is meant for the past leaders including the idea of collegiate ruling system. Good governance is all about a good leader who respects the fundamental basic rule of life. Actually the problem with Nigeria is centred on the leadership. Good leadership involves training of capacity building and stringent standards of integrity and ethical behavior. It has much role to play in engendering economic growth, promoting development and ensuring poverty reduction.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo introduced the idea of mental magnitude which is anchored on moral and political philosophy in order to solve the problem of leadership. The philosophy reflects on the concept of man as it was discussed by Plato and Descartes (mind and body relationship). Like these great philosophers Awolowo stated that, "man is a dual nature, part animal,

part God; part conscious, part sub conscious, part body, part mind. He is definitely superior to all other living beings in the animal kingdom" [15].

The rational aspect of man which is on the mind controls man especially his sensual nature to avoid negative thoughts and emotion. The mind is associated with emotion. The mind is associated with positive thinking including the power of reason. A leader manifests good and godly acts when he or she allows reason to prevail over emotional acts. According to Makinde, the mental magnitude has to do with a philosophical doctrine which derives from a theory of mind and body with the assertion that the mental is superior to the physical element of a person and should take control over the emotion, desires and actions of man." [16]. The leader is well organized and balanced when he upholds the superiority of mind over body thereby training the mind to take a wholistic control over body. For Awolowo, emphasized the process of man being balanced that:

*If all the organs in man, together with the five senses and all the instincts are balanced and functioning normally and harmoniously as nature intends to there will be no such thing as negative emotion like those we first mentioned. Murderer and all forms of crime will be non-existent. Man would live a full, happy glorious and triumphant life. [17]*

It means that there is a need for a leader to have absolute control over his emotion and generally allows proper reasons to be in control. According to Fasoro, the essence of the mental magnitude is for the eradication of the following: (1) negative emotion of anger, hate, fear, envy or jealousy or greed (2) indulgence in the wrong type of food and drink and in ostentations consumption and (3) excessive or immoral craving for sex" [18]. Leaders should be masters of themselves in order to instill discipline on the masses. For Awolowo "Those who are masters of themselves become masters of others". Indeed, Aristotle has said it with the authority of one of the greatest and wisest men that ever lived. Let him that would move the world first move himself. [19] For the masses to acquire this philosophy Awolowo emphasized the importance of education. He stated that:

*The cordial aim of education is not, as is popularly but narrowly conceived to teach a man to read and write, to acquire a profession to master a vocation or to be versed in the liberal arts. All these are only*

*means to the end of true education, which does not help a man to live a full, happy and triumphant life. in other words, any system of education which is help a man to have a healthy and sound body an alert brain and balanced and discipline instructive urges is both misconceived and dangerous [20].*

Therefore through right education, every citizen will be well emotionally balanced and disciplined and when this comes into reality with spirituality, evil will be a thing of the past. In Awolowo's political thought, the issues of good governance remain necessary. The ultimate nature of good governance centres on presentation of a peaceful and just social order in collaboration with good education and legal equality. The quest for good governance is a global phenomenon. According to Awolowo the minds of our leaders need to be developed for good governance in Nigeria, to avoid the corrupt minds that are crazy of inordinate desire of wealth. Any country without economic strength lacks proper development and this could be linked to the structural decay in Nigeria in many areas raging from educational sector and economic sector. As a Platonist, he advocated for the leaders with genuine insight into what is good which has great connection with proper education. It helps for the removal of ignorance and illiteracy and equips the citizens and the leaders with proper power of reason. Awolowo was of the view that ignorance and illiteracy are the major issues behind lack of good governance. These major issues or problem manifest in two basic and fundamental aspects of democracy (electorates and leaders). Mainly, in the areas of illiterate electorates who advocate for rigging and ignorant leaders with corrupt minds that advocate for the corrupt individuals in the country. Educated citizenry including the leaders are very important for sustainable Democracy. Good leadership paves way for successful administration and in the area of good governance, adherence to accountability, transparency and rule of law remain important. Its strength depends on how the following are harnessed, love social justice, equality and fairness.

For Awolowo education is the development of the mind, body and brain. Awolowo gave a clear explanation of the areas of education; education that centres on acquiring certificates and laurels and the one that has to do with the development of the whole person. The later is the holistic form of education which helps individual to have a clear developed thought and deed including the power of reflection. Awolowo was interested on right education that can led one to acquire mental magnitude,

self-discipline and spiritual depth. Nigeria and Africa in general lack leaders who have developed their minds, bodies and brain, particularly those who enjoy ratiocinative analysis or reflective mode of thought. So through these means, the needs of the citizens are met. He has interested in two forms of education, education for the masses and education for the leaders. Mainly, it will help to reduce the problem of ignorance, superstition, illiteracy and instinctual enslavement. Nigeria needs a well planned education with training and retraining of teachers. Education for him is not a prerogative of any class and because of that it is for all citizens. Poor people should be well assisted. Education projects the ideas of self realization and self fulfillment. Self realization means self development. Such education for Awolowo will guide the leader and the political class through the power of reason. He was interested in education that will project development which has a close ties with his dialectic. Education helps in development of skills, knowledge for holistic transformation. The problem with Nigeria is that the political class has paid leap service towards education. It is reflected in the low percentage of education in entire budget of Nigeria. The political class is greedy, corrupt and selfish. The question now is, if our educational system is very poor, how can our economic sector grow? That is why Nigeria remains a consuming nation and far from being an industrialized nation. He stated clearly that the level of development of education; determine the development of the economic sector. Lack of proper education can lead to the collapse of business that is why he further advocated for mass education precisely for national development.

## CONCLUSION

The foundation of Awolowo's dialectic is based on the following principle; equity, social, justice and fairness. His dialectic involves the universal mind which can be compared with Hegel's absolute spirit. It has to do with the golden rule which embodies the idea of love your neighbor as yourself. It brackets the idea of self-centeredness and embraces the idea of love as the guiding principle for governance. The transparent and accountable nature of the leaders depend on the level of love they have for the people.

Considering the fact that human being are made of mind, body and brain, these have much influence on them. Awolowo educates political theory of idealism which means that the political practices should be based on moral order, political norms and also natural justice. Being

a moral agent, man can be selfless and this can be manifested through the power of reason. His Idea of political idealism makes leaders to be visionary, selfless, rational and self discipline in order to embark on the best programmes for the people. These qualities reduce the quest for material wealth thereby subjecting their actions into critical evaluation and falsificationism.

The unmanaged resources by the politicians have resulted too many decays in different sectors of development in Nigeria. The policies of different administration from 1960 till date have been characterized by the enthronement of egoistic interests there by creating a lacuna for crises and different agitations of different group of people. Our leaders have consistently and absolutely avoided the needs of the people. The reason being that our politicians do not understand the relationship between education and development. The educated and well disciplined leaders according to Awolowo can pave ways for good governance which in turn leads to development. Awolowo's ideas of dialectic principle (Mental magnitude) remain important and paramount for good leadership. It allows the power of reason as a proper mechanism to control of man's actions in line with universal moral values in the society. It is necessary for our leaders to understand the superiority of power of reasoning in handling the affairs of the state. Therefore the application of Awolowo's theory of mental magnitude can help in development.

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