

## PLATO'S THEORISING OF PHILOSOPHER KING: MODEL OF LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Plato's theorising of *Philosopher King* is predicated on leadership crises and the perilous consequences to the society, especially on the citizenry. In the traditions of leadership in the Greek city-state, Plato identifies gross inadequacies, particularly on the mistreatments of Socrates who he identifies as noble; virtuous and knowledgeable. Thus, he like Socrates opines that justice is imperative and indispensable for order, sustainability and transformation of the society. Justice is the foundation on which social, legal and moral obligations are built; it enhances the exercise of rights and duties. Hence, he thinks that a *Philosopher King* is person who is knowledgeable and habituates virtues, especially justice. Equipped by wisdom and justice, a philosopher king possesses the capacity, character and competence to deliver effective leadership; in the interest of the citizenry. In Nigeria, the socio-political classifications of majority and minority, identity politics, uneven distribution of national resources and electoral misconduct, especially malpractice are indicators that its political leadership is bereft of the principle of justice; equity and fairness. These factors lead to the social disorders that the country experiences and the consequent retrogression of the state. It is on these bases that Plato's theorising of the *Philosopher King* serves as a model of leadership to Nigeria. To alleviate the predicament, the study recommends reconstruction of Nigerian political system and policies; to build on social justice: fairness, equity and inclusivity of the citizens. It argues that capacity, character and competence are foundational criteria of leadership, rather than ethnic, religious and political identities. also, it contends that by justice, the government and the citizens would be mutually obliged to their duties and rights, which ultimately conduce to collective wellbeing. The study adopts the qualitative research methodology to provide existential perspectives.

**Keywords:** Philosopher King, Leadership, Nigeria, Justice, Wellbeing.

## 0. Introduction

The theory of the *Philosopher King* developed from Socrates' discourse on justice and the mistreatments he experienced. Socrates' conception of justice is structurally associated to an ideal-state. Also, Plato conceived that Socrates being noble, virtuous and knowledgeable deserved some appreciation by the government of Athens, but on the contrary, was persecuted in manners of great dishonour. Such unbecoming attitudes through agencies of the state, Plato thinks demonstrate ignorance, vice and injustice. Plato like Socrates thinks that the state possesses the ultimate capacity to order the activities of the citizens towards collective wellbeing. Consequently, it is imperative that leaders possess sufficient knowledge and virtue; to engender effective leadership and actualise the legitimate goals of the state. Put differently, a philosopher who is grounded in knowledge, virtue and justice is empowered and fit to be leader. He conceived that justice is a virtue that has the capacity to enhance social order. By implication, justice is indispensable for human wellbeing. This forms a model of socio-political leadership of a civic state, and applicable to Nigeria. The research argues that the integration and application of the theory of *Philosopher King* into the Nigerian political leadership system would enhance its social ordering, development and wellbeing of the citizens.

## 1. The Philosopher King Theory

The *Philosopher King* theory is delineated in the Platonic *Dialogue – The Republic*. *The Republic* is characterised by “the conception of justice” and “the construction of the state”. The implication is that justice and state are interdependent phenomena; they necessarily belong to each other; they belong together; one entails and enhances the other. In particular, justice regulates the activities of the government and the citizens of the state. Therefore, justice serves as a foundational pillar of the emergence, sustainability and development of the state.

The conception of the *Philosopher King* is birthed by the demands for justice and a well-ordered state. This implies that justice is instrumental for social order. The *Philosopher King* is a hypothetical ruler in whom political skill is combined with philosophical knowledge. Plato argued that the ideal state - one which ensured the maximum possible happiness for all its citizens – could only be brought into being by a ruler possessed of absolute knowledge, obtained through philosophical study.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher\\_king#:~:text=The%20philosopher%20king%20is%20a,Republic%2C%20written%20around%20375%20BC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher_king#:~:text=The%20philosopher%20king%20is%20a,Republic%2C%20written%20around%20375%20BC)). The explanation is that, only a person with sufficient and truthful knowledge that habituate virtues, especially justice can enforce justice and order in the state. In other words, Socrates, in response to the demands of the conceptions of justice and an ideal city-state suggests that “the ideal state would be ruled over by a specially-trained Guardian class, in whom a spirited nature would be combined with a philosophic disposition” (*Republic* 2.375–6; [Jowett 1991](#), pp. 68–70).

The Platonic ideal-state is a state to which the transformation of an existential state aims. The question of the possibility of its realisation is potent but neither invalidates the quality of the ideal-state nor the efficacy of the criteria. Particularly, on the possibility of the achievement of the ideal-state, Socrates is accounted to have opined that,

Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy ... cities will never have rest from their evils,—no, nor the human race, as I believe,—and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day (*Republic* 5.473; [Jowett 1991](#), p. 203).

This excerpt reiterates the point that wisdom entails knowledge and virtue, traditionally intuitive of a philosopher king. In support of this position, the following observations are valid: “the true philosopher or “lover of wisdom” is one who loves “the truth in each thing”, as opposed to those who only love the things themselves (*Republic* 5.480; [Jowett 1991](#), p. 213). Again, this rightly discriminates between ‘knowledge’ and ‘wisdom’. Furthermore, “only the philosopher, therefore, is qualified to rule, as only the philosopher has knowledge of the absolute truth, and is able to apply this knowledge for the good of the state” (*Republic* 6.484; [Jowett 1991](#), pp. 214–5). On these considerations, the categories of the state, the qualities and criteria of *Philosopher King* are derived.

Plato proposes an ideal state in whose citizens are divided into three classes, namely the guardian, the auxiliaries, and the common people in correspondence to the three parts of the soul (the rational part, the spirited part, and the appetitive part, respectively) in Plato’s psychology.

The three categories of citizens of the state, according to Plato, have their respective functions. The guardians are the rulers of the State, the auxiliaries (soldiers) are to defend the State, and the common people (artisans) are to provide the material needs of the State.

The guardians (the ruling class-who must be philosophers) correspond to the rational part of the soul, i.e. reason which should rule the whole man. (Enomah, 2019, p. 58)

The above provisions establish a structural connection between the categories or classes of the state, the qualities and criteria of *Philosopher Kingship*. Importantly, one enhances the other, such that, citizens of the state are socialised through their respective classes, to acquire capacity, competence and sense of responsibility to the state and, in turn, to the self. These salient points bear emphasising.

### **Qualities of the *Philosopher King***

In the Socratic account, the qualities of a *Philosopher King* include: truthfulness, temperance, justice, and a good memory (*Republic* 6.485–7; [Jowett 1991](#), pp. 215–8). It should be noted that these qualities consist of social virtues that enhance harmonious coordination, cooperation and commitments to collective interests.

### **Criteria of *Philosopher Kingship***

To construct the ideal state, Socrates elaborates the measures of the education of the Guardians; for sufficient and adequate knowledge of the nature and the forms of an ideal city-state. For Socrates, this education will last thirty-five years, and prospective Guardians must then spend a further fifteen years occupying lesser offices, in order to gain experience of life. At the age of fifty, they will be qualified to rule. As philosophers, however, they will have no desire to engage in

politics; they will do so only from a sense of duty (*Republic* 7.520, 540; [Jowett 1991](#), pp. 260–1, 289).

Socrates is unequivocal and explicit on education, habituation and dutifulness. It is important to state that there is a structural relationship between these criteria of *Philosopher Kingship*; in the sense that one leads to the other. On this note, it should be recalled that Socrates initially establishes a correlation between knowledge and virtue, such that good actions result from knowledge while bad actions result from ignorance. Particularly, for Socrates, “knowledge is antecedent to action, that is, “knowledge of moral principles determines moral deliberations and moral actions.” In other words, Socrates’ position on moral knowledge conduce to the idea that, “knowledge and action are reciprocally mutual; they necessarily belong to each other.” According to Socrates, “virtue is knowledge”. This explains his thesis that “no one goes willingly toward the bad” (Socrates, 2006, 356e8-7a1).

The account that “virtue is knowledge” is anchored on two basic foundations:

- (i) Knowledge of the (moral) good is an imperative. A man who knows what virtue is will behave in virtuous ways; a man who behaves in virtuous ways has knowledge of virtue.
- (ii) A morally good act has a special claim to rationality. To know good from evil is to know what sort of acts can be justified and what sort of acts cannot be justified (Haulgate, 1970, p. 143).

The structural connection between knowledge and virtue is technically described as Socratic or ethical intellectualism. This crystallised to “virtue is knowledge” and “vice is ignorance” (Plato, 2006). Socrates opined that “no one chooses the evil or refuses the good except through ignorance” (Ibid.). By logical inference, Socrates thinks that “we seek the good but fail to achieve it by ignorance or lack of knowledge as to how to obtain what is good” (Ibid.). Also, that no one would intentionally harm themselves. When harm comes to us, although we thought we were seeking the good, the good is not obtained in such a case since we lack knowledge as to how best to achieve the good. If we act rightly or do good, it is on the basis of knowledge, therefore, we act wrongly or do bad on the basis of ignorance.

The Socratic knowledge-virtue correlation “virtue is knowledge” is supported by and supports virtue ethics. Also, this position is supported by the idea that “virtue can also be learned and cultivated”. In this regard, he conceived that a man will act according to what he knows. Precisely, he states “what one truly knows is the dictate of his own conscience or soul” (Socratic Paradox). For him therefore, no one chooses evil; no one chooses to act in ignorance – we see the good, but fail to achieve it by ignorance or lack of knowledge as to how to obtain what is good. This score of Socrates’ ethical theorizing is referred to as the Socratic paradox.

Socrates’ theorising that “virtue is knowledge” can be alternatively rendered “knowledge is virtue”. The theorising is appropriate in the sense that “knowledge is instrumental to leading good life” and consequently achieving *eudemonia*. On the contrary, ignorance is instrumental to vicious existence. In another dimension, knowledge helps to conceive virtues and their relevance to human wellbeing. Similarly, Peschke observes that:

A person's decisions can reach no further than the light of the knowledge he has of the moral values. He cannot develop a virtue unless he has at least some unreflective insight and knowledge of the value it endeavours to realize (*nihil volitum nisi praecognitum*). If orderliness, neatness, thriftiness, comradeship, godliness are not apprehended as values, no corresponding virtue can develop. Of course, the neglect of these values in default of insight will not be a vice in the strict sense either, because where understanding is absent, responsibility is also lacking. Nevertheless, absence of these values is a deficiency which is to be deplored and which ought to be remedied as far as possible. Hence arises the need of proper education, instruction and formation. The child must be guided by his parents and educators to perceive the moral values and to gain an understanding as to why certain things are good and therefore ought to be done. Yet also in later years the need for such instruction continues. Entire communities may stand in want of education in certain values, e.g. fraternal acceptance of minorities, tolerance, industry, corresponsibility in public life, etc. (Peschke, 2010, Vol. 1, pp. 347-348).

These perspectives confirm the Socratic thesis on the correlation of virtue and knowledge – “virtue is knowledge”. Both Socrates and Peschke state without equivocation the imperativeness of knowledge to virtue. Truly, to authentically act right, knowledge is necessary and indispensable. However, that knowledge is sufficient for virtue is controversial. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle developed different arguments on the subject matter. Socrates and Plato associate knowledge and action in terms of cause and effect. Consequently, they negate the possibility of *akrasia*. Conversely, Aristotle severs to conceive that knowledge does not necessarily translate into action. He argues that it is one thing to know, it is another thing to act. These arguments continue to gain currency.

Dutifulness as a criterion of *Philosopher Kingship* is also critical to the purposeful nature of wisdom. It is a means to an end; a strategic imperative for social order. This means that “sense of duty” is connected to necessity. Since, “as philosophers, however, they will have no desire to engage in politics; they will do so only from a sense of duty” (*Republic* 7.520, 540; [Jowett 1991](#), pp. 260–1, 289), the Philosopher King has the moral responsibility and obligation to fulfill the duties that constitute the mandate of the particular position of leadership.

Enomah identifies the Socratic-Platonic criteria of *Philosopher Kingship* as “discipline and sacrifice for the Guardians”. In his accounts,

The guardians are to own no private property and none shall have a wife of his own. They are to live in communities like monks in monasteries or soldiers in barracks, and they are to practice common possession of things with nobody claiming anything as his own. Here, Plato proposes not only the abolition of private property but also of the family for both the guardians and the auxiliaries. There should be no families among the guardians and the auxiliaries, no private properties, no individual wives. They should have wives in common, and marriages should be arranged on eugenic principles. In this way, the guardians and the auxiliaries will be completely dedicated to the state; their loyalty to the state will be undivided, uncompromised, and undistracted. Embezzlement of public funds by citizens should be punished by death. Class distinction should become hereditary, that is the

children of the guardians become guardians themselves, the children of the artisans (common people) also become artisans to supply the materials and economic needs of the state (Enomah, 2019, p. 58).

It is crystal that *Philosopher Kingship* which serves as a model of effective leadership has befitting criteria. Unah identifies and examines the criteria to advance the argument. In his account, “a leader is a person who embodies the good and dispenses justice” (Plato, 1997, Bk I. & II in Unah, 2021, p. 16). By this, he establishes a correlation between justice and the good. He nuances that,

Only a good person who has internalized the idea of the good can dispense justice to all. ... But justice has a metaphysical background in the idea of the good. The idea of the good is domiciled in the world of forms populated by perfect forms of things, including the idea of justice. That is why Plato’s *Philosopher King*, the ideal ruler and his ideal state is defined in terms of its relationship with a metaphysical ideal of Justice.

A just leader is a person who molds or aligns his or her character to approximate, as closely as possible, the characteristics of justice. He internalizes justice. He lives justice. The most desirable leader is one who best aligns or confirms himself or herself to the ideals of Justice. Justice is the chord which ties individuals and society together. Once it snaps, insecurity, instability and anarchy will reign like evil kings (Unah, 2021, p. 16).

Unah’s emphasis on internalisation of justice reinstates the idea of education and habituation of justice. This is imperative because a leader bereft the knowledge and practice of justice would rather endanger the state than enhance social order. He advances the thinking, on the note that,

The leader, which Plato calls the *Philosopher King*, must contemplate the perfect form of things, in this case, Good and Justice, and try to radically grasp them before downloading them to address the practical problems of a decayed social order. In other words, the leader must be a person of well developed and large intellectual capacity who understands the Good to be able to rule the human society with justice. Good and Justice are the twin principles of credible leadership. It is knowledge of the forms of the Good and Justice gathered as knowledge transmitted or imbibed through contemplation that the leader or *Philosopher King* deploys to affect the visible, concrete world of human beings (Unah, 2021, p. 17).

Based on the accounts, it is consistent that the criteria are necessary antecedents to which social order is the effect. The accounts identify the transition from knowledge through practice of virtues and social order to collective human wellbeing. This is the thesis for which this research argues.

## **2. Leadership in Nigeria**

Leadership in Nigeria has evolved historically; the pre-independence and post-independence. Since the political independence of Nigeria on 1st October, 1960, it has oscillated between the civilian rule and the military rule. While the civilian rule is of the democratic orientation, the military rule is of autocratic tradition. Both have made notable impacts to the situations of Nigeria. Notably, the inefficiency of the civilian rule necessitated the military interventions at the various moments. Herein, the civilian rule is the point of concern.



Nigeria's leadership system of the civilian rule is inherited and adopted from the colonialists. A critical factor at play is the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates which was facilitated by Fredrick Lugard in 1914. The amalgamation, being without the consent of the parties (the peoples) has dovetailed into governance without the consent of the governed. Alaba, (2014) described it as an ill-conceived connubial resolution. Further, he notes

the union which ought to serve as a unifying factor turned out to create an endless animosity between the two protectorates because none of them was prepared for it. ... The unification was consummated purely for economic reasons rather than political. History has it that, Northern Nigeria Protectorate had a budget deficit; and the colonial administration sought to use the budget surpluses in SOUTHERN Nigeria to offset the deficit of the Northern Nigeria, (Alaba, 2014).

Evident from the above is the idea of forced fusion, alternatively referred to *Coerced Coexistence* in which case Paul is robbed to pay Peter. The paradox is overwhelming; that the southern region which unequivocally sustains the Nigerian economy is discriminated against on the corridor of political power, hence, denied of fair benefits and opportunities. While it could be the case that those who planned and executed the amalgamation have some legitimate motives, the unfolding effects: contest and conquest, bigotry, self-imposition, discrimination, objectification of the other, et cetera, demonstrate more of manipulation by the colonialists and self-deceit by the Nigerians political elites. To legitimise this structure, the constitution stipulates that the regions and the people must remain together. Precisely, "Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign State, to be known by the name of the Federal Republic of Nigeria" (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 2(1)). This pattern of is amalgamation that gives no credence to the peoples' interest tends to be "for better or for worse"; a reminiscence of some theocentric matrimonial contracts.

In Nigeria, like many other nations, the social structure is constituted by leadership and followership. Rightly, both are necessarily interdependent. However, quite peculiar to the leadership system of Nigeria is a kind of democratic practice that is fundamentally characterised by the *majority factor*; rather the majority rule. This orientation describes the extent to which leadership system in Nigeria is determined by groups who constitute the majority. The *majority factor* is demonstrated through ethnicity and religion, amongst other factors. The point is that,

Ethnicity and religion have considerable influence on the voting patterns of the Nigerian electorate. Although the federal government often stresses the need for the citizens to put national interest above ethnic and religious considerations, yet there is no politician in Nigeria who will win an election without the support of the members of his or her ethnic nationality. This is why most politicians tend to give priority attention meeting needs of their ethnic nationalities even at the detriment of national interest. Unfortunately, the present Nigerian political system has no provision for the members of the minority ethnic groups becoming president of Nigeria without the support of the major ethnic nationalities in the country. This might be one of the reasons for the ongoing agitations for secession and the call for

an amendment on the present structure of the Nigerian political system by some ethnic groups in the country (Oboh, 2017, p. 80)

It becomes eminent that Nigerian socio-political construct is not only informed by colonialism and the effects therein, rather, it has been nurtured by the idea of *coerced-coexistence* with evident consequences that engender social disorder. We coexist but indeed, it's a one person/group to his/her/it/self-affair. It is such that we are enjoined to common identity - Nigerian but do not enjoy common interest(s). This explains for the unending cycle of corruption. Simply, this research identifies an underlying problem of amalgamation; people of different regions, orientations, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, leadership systems and purpose are being fused; for some private benefits. Some ethnic nationalities experience injustice, yet, the national government enjoins them to unity, peace and progress. If we must fact the fact, would there be unity, peace and progress without the consent of and justice to the member groups? The attitudes of insensitivity and indifference in response to such concern are responsible the situation of reciprocal enmity. It is the case that the ethnic nationalities are enemies but fellows in disguise; each group seeks and ceases opportunities to dominate the other. Accenting to this, Alaba, (2014) reiterates "it has always being a cat and mouse relationship which every ethnic group tries to outsmart one another in an existential 'rat race'".

To state the worst, the Nigerian circumstance and experience do not demonstrate collaborative contributions for communal benefits. The dominant manifestations of injustice necessitate crises which dovetail into social disorder. It is observed that there are legitimate policies that oblige both the government and the citizens to their rights and duties; in order to guarantee mutual responsibilities, good living, common wellbeing and flourishing. It suffices to state that Nigeria's leadership system is fundamentally, in practice undemocratic.

### **3. Implications of Plato's theory of *Philosopher King* to Nigeria's Leadership System**

Plato's theorising of the *Philosopher King* in the ideal city-state subsists in the categorisation of the state. For him, the state is structured into three classes: the Guardians, the Auxiliaries and the Artisans which represent the leaders, the soldiers and the common people, respectively. The class of the Guardians translates to the class of the political elites in Nigeria. Political office holders as the guardians are entrusted with the duties and rights to organise the resources of the state. That is, people who take political positions in the civic state have the duty and right to administer justice in the quest to instill social order. Notably, however, the situations in Nigeria are different. There is neither technical nor fixed categorisation of the Nigerians; hence, individuals and groups who possess the persuasive instruments to appeal to the audience could, through its democratic processes assume positions of leadership. As it is, in Nigeria, the tendency to assume public position is neither a function of the class nor competence but the persuasive ability to induce the support of the majority or the masses - the hoipoloi.

The implication is that, if either the majority or the hoipoloi democratically determine people who assume political positions, then, their kinsmen or counterparts have the higher chances of being elected. To state in other words, by virtue of duty and right, the class of the guardians can be juxtaposed with that of political office holder in Nigeria, but by virtue of capacity, competence, quality and criteria, they severe, since Nigeria has no effectively working systems and standards similar to those by on which the Guardians are instituted.



By the structural systems of the ideal city-state in which the *Philosopher King* is hypothesised, the guardians are neither determined nor elected on the bases of accidental political processes, rather, they by virtue of their qualities, having undergone the education and virtue habituation processes, satisfy the criteria to be leaders of the state. In point of fact, the guardians necessarily constitute the ruling class. To make this intelligible, Unah observes, “the masses or populace do not have the intellectual capacity and propensity to contemplate eternal forms of Good and Justice” (Unah, 2021, p. 18).

Another significant implication to glean from the *Philosopher King* theory is professionalism. It entails peculiar and technical demonstration of capacity and competence. We take note that each category of the three classes: guardian, auxiliary and artisan is in accordance to the different capacities of the members of the society. This implies that a person would necessarily belong to the class most appropriate. It becomes a matter of inconsistency and misplacement of function to let either an auxiliary or an artisan take the leadership position. The consequences would include but not be limited to injustice, ineffectiveness, abuse and misuse of resources, and disorder.

A line of thinking would render the above perspective of social categorisation as discriminatory. The thinking that, people are confined to certain classes identifies discrimination. However, another line of thinking appropriate to this context is that, social categorisation aims to enhance professionalism, commitment to duty and division of labour, rather than discrimination. To support the argument, it is observed that a state without explicit criteria for leadership, as Nigeria, would be susceptible to confusion, imposition, incompetence, disorder and discrimination – enhanced by distorted democratic principles and practices. What this means is that Nigeria’s leadership system requires an overhauling using the *Philosopher King* theory. To achieve this its integration is a strategic imperative – the way to go.

### **Measures of intergrating the *Philosopher King* theory into the Nigerian Leadership System**

Firstly, it should be stated and established that the *Philosopher King* theory is realisable. We recognise some nations and civilisations such as Dubai, Canada, United States of America, et cetera, with superior leadership systems that bear the responsibilities of formulating adequate principles and effectively executing those principles for socio-economic transformation of the state and the wellbeing of the society. This is nonetheless, in recognition of some inadequacies.

Being possible in such contexts, Nigeria should prudently learn from the principles and practices of developed civilisations and nations. They have theorised principles that are either in part or in whole derived from the Platonic socio-political theory. Simply, most transformative socio-political principles are gleaned from Plato’s *Philosopher King* theory, technically formulated in the *Republic*. By implication, for the transformation of Nigeria, it is incumbent on Nigerians to reform its leadership system with formidable principles that constitute the blueprint of developed civilisation. While the contexts and circumstances of the different nations differ, this study identifies “moral character education” as a veritable means of integration.

Moral character education entails conscience formation, virtue cultivation and value orientation. It is the training of human agents to acquire the knowledge about moral virtues, to cultivate moral virtues and to practice them through their attitudes, conduct and in the discharge of their daily duties. It is necessary because ‘when people learn, from infancy to adulthood, to live adequately, they also learn to lead adequately’. Put differently, moral character education enables people

acquire virtues or moral habits that will help them individually lead good lives and at the same time become productive members of their communities. Therefore, moral education contributes not only to the students as individuals, but also to the social cohesion in the society. This promises great tidings to the Nigerian society and her socio-political sphere if adequately integrated into the system.

#### 4. Evaluation

The *Philosopher King* theory is characteristic of justice, thus, symbolic of a leadership system that can foster a well-ordered society. By the entailment, it typifies the blueprint of the Hobbesian *social contract* theory in which rights and duties of the members of the society are identified, exercised and protected. It bears emphasising that *Philosopher King* theory is realistic through effective implementation of justice and its principles. Nonetheless, the theory is neither dogmatically absolute nor immune to criticism. Consequently, it is imperative to examine the extent to which it is realistic or achievable and democratic.

On the question of the realistic nature of the *Philosopher King* theory, the concern is, given human existential situations: inequality, inadequacies, disorientation and disasters, on how the *Philosopher King* can emerge and employ justice for the social ordering of the state. A critical point of departure is, given the complexities of the society, the *Philosopher King* is susceptible to distractions and oppositions. On this note, in relation to the thesis, it is observed that, "this ideal is in sharp contrast to reality, as many philosophers are "utter rogues", and the best of them are generally considered to be useless" (Cite properly).

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher\\_king#:~:text=The%20philosopher%20king%20is%20a,Republic%2C%20written%20around%20375%20BC.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher_king#:~:text=The%20philosopher%20king%20is%20a,Republic%2C%20written%20around%20375%20BC.)).

Similarly, Socrates acknowledges that many philosophers are indeed corrupt, but attributes this to the fact that they are brought up in a corrupt society. Only in the ideal state will a philosopher be able to achieve his full potential, "and be the saviour of his country, as well as of himself" (*Republic* 6.497; [Jowett 1991](#), p. 232).

On the realistic possibility of the theory, in the light of the above exposition, two critical points deserve examination. Firstly, the susceptibility of the philosopher. Secondly, the structure of the philosopher-state relationship. On the first point, if the philosopher is susceptible to corruption, then, he has no significant edge over the common members of the state – the *hoipoloi*. An implication of the susceptibility of the philosopher is that he can be dragged into the mud by the *hoipoloi*, by which his knowledge and virtue can be ruined by ignorance and vice. As a result, the philosopher suffers from *akrasia* – weakness of the will, incontinence and lack of self-control. However, if the philosopher were to possess the impeccable character, that sustains his knowledge and virtues, then, s/he would not fall prey to the seduction of the *hoipoloi*. In this sense, he would demonstrate *enkrateia* – self-control, to triumph the travails of the society and the baits of the *hoipoloi*. It is the *enkrateic* philosopher that can execute justice dispassionately and phenomenologically, towards the ultimate goal – wellbeing. It is important to establish that there is structural connection between *enkrateia* and wellbeing which in this context is a strategic imperative for philosopher – ideal society relationship. Simply put, a philosopher with self-discipline is empowered to administer justice, instill social order and enhance the achievement of collective wellbeing.

On the question of the democratic nature of the *Philosopher King* theory, the concern, is, to what extent are the common interests served?

Socrates explains the poor reputation of philosophers through the metaphor of the [Ship of State](#), in which he compares [Athenian democracy](#) to a group of mutinous sailors vying with one another for control of the helm of a ship. The sailors, having themselves no knowledge of the art of navigation, deny that this is a necessary qualification for a pilot, and heap abuse on anyone who does not help them to achieve their goals (*Republic* 6.488–9; [Jowett 1991](#), pp. 220–1).

In the above excerpt, Socrates is at breast with the possibilities and situations of philosophers. However, he intends, by the analogy, to provide instruction on the appropriate attitudes and dispositions that can implement justice and social order. It is to this end that knowledge, virtue and *enkrateia* ultimately characterise the recommended *Philosopher King*; one that would prioritise common interests above personal interest, in the demand of the good. Herein, we are reminded that “human flourishing” is the ultimate human existential good, the background of virtue ethics.

Some arguments tend to dismiss the *Philosopher King* theory, as being undemocratic. Basically, the critics posit that,

being a philosopher, and knowing about logic, ethics, metaphysics and political philosophy, does not necessarily make you an expert on the interests of the people. It is the people who, in theory, rulers are aiming to represent and support. Plato is obviously not concerned with a representative form of rule, but nowadays it is necessary, though difficult, to ensure that all the ruled are represented, at least to a certain extent, by their rulers. Plato also argues that a specific education, available to few, will allow these few to become philosophers, but again this would create a ruling class that is not representative of the ruled (Matassa, 2013, p. 2).

Analysis of the positions identifies both the validity and invalidity of the theses. They are valid to the extent that the *Philosopher King* would neither appeal to premonitions of the masses nor be supported by them. Conversely, they are invalid, to the extent that, by virtue of justice, the rights and duties of the members of the society would be adequately administered.

More importantly, it should be noted that democracy is not limited to the electoral processes through which the leadership of a state is instituted. Another important element of democracy is the constitution with the entailments of the rule of law and equality before the law. This point is succinctly accounted thus, “a democratic state can be said to be a kind of state that is governed by a constitution put in place by representatives that are periodically elected by the people and whose administration is run by laws which have been properly passed by the representatives of the people” (Bamikole, 2008, p. 1). In this sense, justice is fundamental to both philosopher kingship and democracy.

It is crystal that the *Philosopher King* theory, if strategically applied can enhance justice and social order in the society. This seems to have practical bearing in the Nigeria context. Peter Obi, the 2023 Presidential Candidate of the Labour Party (LP) who studied philosophy has verifiably demonstrated knowledge and virtues: competence, diligence, discipline and prudence. Perhaps, it is on these bases that he tends to endear the supports of well-meaning Nigerians.

## 5. Conclusion

This study has interrogated the Plato's theorising of *Philosopher King* in relation to leadership in Nigeria. Essentially, it advocated for the integration of the theory into the Nigeria's leadership system. The purpose of the integration is to form human beings with moral character, such that can sustain effective leadership system. It identified the qualities of the *Philosopher King*: knowledge, virtue and moral character, and the criteria: education, virtue habituation: moral character formation. Furthermore, it established moral character education as a veritable means through which the theory can be adequately integrated into the system. Importantly, it identified the extent to which the hoipoloi – the masses are hypnotised with the *majority factor*, basically enforced through ethnicity and religion to gain support rather than emphasising effective principles for social order. Consequently, the study argued for the structural relationship between justice, social order and human wellbeing. It established that a candidate who possesses and have demonstrated moral character and effective leadership skills should be supported. Moral character education is imperative because leadership depends on moral character which derive from virtues; intellectual and moral. Truly, the Philosophy King in Plato's Republic typifies ancient wisdom for modern leadership.

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