

## **A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POLITICS AS THE NORMATIVE FOUNDATION OF THE COMMON GOOD**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

The problem of the common good in our democratic world is grounded on the epistemic realism of human relation. This paper aims at an analysis of politics in relation to normative philosophy, particularly as a foundation that can ensure the common good in human democratic society. Politics is aimed at the common good of the people and that characterizes its normative context. The existential-cum-pragmatic reality of the common good expresses the fact that politics is ultimately and fundamentally an anthropological constant of contemporary society. The common good has a realistic dimension for man's existential relation. This paper adopts the analytical framework in explaining politics as the normative foundation of common good in democratic society. The common good is not just an abstract term but also has an epistemological significance in human democratic interaction. The finding and conclusion reached in this paper is that the existential reality of politics is aimed at the objective dimension of democratic society. The normative possibility of politics is grounded in the social ordering and the normative principle of democratic states.

*Keywords: Politics, Common Good, Society, Freedom, Normative Philosophy.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is germane to note that politics means the activities involved in getting and using power in public life and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society (Hornby 1132). Politics is anchored on the formal ways of human actions based on good sense of judgment or prudence. Politics requires prudence and skills. Politics is hinged on realism. The word "realism" in its contemporary usage, reflects "the basis that reality exists independently of our consciousness of it, in contrast to idealism" (Lawhead 577). Politics requires social order and normative peace. In consonance with (Ukagba 45) politics is reflected in realistic anthropology that the human person is a person among

other persons, forming a natural and immediate context of human life and lived experiences. There has not been any comprehensive analysis of the conceptualization of politics. Philosophy cuts across all languages, race or cultures. No part of the human race is left out when it comes to the study of philosophy. The theory of history and politics in which we are concerned in this paper is as old as our humanity. The aim of this philosophical argument is that the concept of the common good in the history of political philosophy which has necessitated the move for this paper is an existential imperative. Some political philosophers have taken into theoretical account the conceptualization of politics and the epistemic realism of the common good as fundamental issue of human relation. The common good is the fundamental foundation of politics and it has been argued that politics is all about co-operative human activity.

This paper discusses the critique of the philosophic foundation and contextualist approaches of politics to the common good. Politics has an epistemic dimension to human cooperative affairs. This theoretical discourse is subdivided into various subsections. Section one is the introductory remarks. Section two is the idea of politics as a normative philosophy. Section three talked about politics and its role in normative society. Section four anchored on the concepts of politics, freedom and society. Section five discussed the conceptualization of politics and the common good in society. Section six focuses on the idea of political realism and the Nigerian paradox. Section seven discusses the evaluation of politics and its epistemological significance in human society. The last section anchors the concluding remarks. This paper concludes that the common good is not just an abstract term but has a contemporary and epistemological significance in human democratic interaction. The utility of politics is aimed at the objective dimension of democratic society. The normative possibility of politics is grounded in the social ordering and the normative principle of democratic states.

## **POLITICS, NORMATIVE PHILOSOPHY & ITS ROLE IN SOCIETY**

Mackenzie argues that politics is focused on the human dimension. For Mackenzie, politics, it would appear needs at least two people. Politics is very fundamental and appropriate. Politics is all about the negotiation between the need to philosophize about political life and to politicize those philosophical claims themselves. For Mackenzie (2) philosophizing about politics means thinking beyond the everyday practice of political opinion. It is also true to say that political philosophy must always keep its feet firmly planted on the ground of contemporary issues, movements and debates. In some sense, it is this connection with unfolding events and the desire to understand the constantly shifting sands of our collective life that puts politics into political philosophy. For Mackenzie (1-2), in fact, to think about politics is to become part of a conversation that has been ongoing for over two thousand years ago. Political philosophy is encapsulated on the politics of common purpose and public engagement. The theme of broadening and deepening public engagement in

political life can be found throughout the civic-republican tradition of political thought. Politics is a form of human cooperative activity that results in, and expresses norm-governed human interaction.

Moreover, Mackenzie (8-9) argues that politics is an attempt to understand the nature and value of such norm-governed interaction. The definition of politics has already gone a long way towards a clearer understanding of one of the core problems in political philosophy. He maintains that the changeable world of politics requires analyticity and that the idea of politics is expressed as norm-governed human interaction. The broader domain of moral, ethical and political philosophy is built on the evaluative demands of the justifiable standards of human activity. Mackenzie (13-14) posits that normative political philosophy has a very close relationship to legal jurisprudence. Politics dwells on many core normative political concepts such as equality, liberty, justice and sovereignty and freedom. It is this view of political philosophy that informs debates about the nature of equality, liberty, justice, sovereignty and many other core normative concepts. Politics requires redefinition of various political issues. The political world therefore, cannot simply be restricted to a particular set of issues (security, taxation, and the like) and then left at that.

Furthermore, politics involves sometimes momentous redefinitions of what actually counts as a political issue. Mackenzie (18-19) further argues that given, however, that defining politics as a political issue, it follows that providing an overview of political philosophy is also a task that is rich in political decisions and motivation. (Mackenzie 19-20) observes that political philosophy, in short, may be the ongoing politicization of the norms that governed our interaction and, more importantly, we may not yet even be aware of some (many) of those norms as they are hidden within our normative assumptions about what counts as natural and what counts as political. Politics is broader and deeper than we may imagine. Politics is geared towards normativity. (Foster 6-7) rightly observes that a deeper meaning, significance and the understanding of politics from the ancient, medieval and modern political philosophers is paramount and daunting. It is germane to note that Thomas (293-294) gave an insight on debates between 'cognitivism' and 'non-cognitivism' about the normative possibility and the nature and character of moral and political knowledge. His defense of moral cognitivism as it relates to the contextual justification of politics is very robust and brilliant. His defense of moral cognitivism reflects the development and the contextualist approach to politics as an epistemological realism, what (Hoffman and Graham 95) called "political epistemology". Thomas's work reveals a kind of radical pluralism and the modern inspiration to radical freedom. The defense of politics is a deep reflection of rationality of moral reasoning across the normative frameworks of moral beliefs, cultures and historical periods.

Nevertheless, (Thomas 273) argues that the theoretical account of moral reasoning offers or reveals the service of an ever-deepening insight on Rawls's political liberalism exemplified in the most contextually justified, political theory of contemporary times. Rawls's political liberalism is the exclusive preserve of the communitarian commitment and it is centrally the concepts of democratic citizenship and civil society. Rawls's principle of justice rested on a single comprehensive conception of the good. Aaron reflects on the nature and limits of historical and sociological knowledge of politics using the Machiavellian paradigm. He maintains that the philosophy of history, power, freedom and the dawn of universal history from the Marxian and Machiavellian perspectives are fundamental and interesting. Aaron focuses on the theory of international relations, the liberal definition of politics, history, freedom and the philosophy of human rights. Drawing inspiration from the Machiavellian perspective, Aaron sees politics as that which is deeply rooted political realism. For (Aaron 90), as a political thinker, Machiavelli said repeatedly and with absolute candour that we must see human reality as it is and not as we would wish it to be. Politics is epistemic, historical, realistic, optimistic and pragmatic. For (Aaron 91), politics is a philosophy of progress as well as a dialectical assessment of human cooperative affair and association.

Aaron draws an inspiration from Machiavellian perspective. For Aaron (97-98), politics is characterized by a normative context and natural refinement. Political decisions are governed solely by the laws of practicality and the failure of politics should be oriented towards a radical transformation of history and society. For Wisnewski (90-91) the aim of philosophy, then, is not merely to document what is, but also to highlight what can be. Philosophy robs itself of any bearing on our socio-political existence. Philosophy is grounded in practicality condition and politics belongs to the realm of critical and ethical theory. Politics aims at what Odimegwu (48) calls a power game and a value game. However, Aaron (100-101) buttresses that the struggle for power occupies the normative background of politics. Politics is all about the defense of freedom and the people. According to Aaron, in a century during which so much blood has been spilled by those who hope for too much from politics and humanity, the Machiavellians sometimes appear as the defenders of freedom. Cohen (ix) gave a theoretical insight into ancient, modern, Asian and contemporary conceptualization of politics. Cohen argues that the fundamental problem of human society is deeply rooted in politics as "a power game" and "a value game (Odimegwu 48). His epistemological and existential dimensions of politics is quite new and unique because it showcases the contemporary significance of the core normative political concepts such as politics, the state, representative government, feminism, freedom and justice, law and order, crime and violence, social order and equality.

Cohen's contemporary dimension of politics unravels the fundamental relevance of politics as a normative philosophy. Cohen's theoretical position reflects mainly on the normativity of politics in Plato, Confucius, Aristotle,

Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Adam Smith's political economic theory, Marx, Mill's optimistic liberalism, Durkheim, Benito Mussolini's concept of fascism, Hitler's doctrine of hate and Mao's little Red Book. Cohen adopts a very subjective view of what is politically significant and he concentrated on that (Cohen ix). Politics from an historical context reflects on the story of political society and the dialectics of history. It has been argues that:

The pragmatic dimension of politics is concerned with the practical questions: about the organization of social life, about the make-up of the government, the role and rights of the citizens, the duties and limitations of the state. Politics is therefore, characterized by an awareness of the social and political commitment in answering some fundamental questions: what is happiness? What is human flourishing? What is justice? And what is freedom? In an age of rampant political and social individualism, yet also a time when the lives of individuals are only possible through an increasingly complex web of collective efforts, it is more important than ever to return to the fundamentals of political society (Cohen 23).

Politics and ideology are interwoven. Ideology plays a crucial role in social organization. Politics indicates a social process that helps in ensuring the social coordination of every normative society. Baradat (8) sees the fundamentals of political society to be governed by an ideological construct. From his contemporary views on ideology, he argues that ideology is first and foremost a political term, though it is often applied to other contexts. Ideology is action-oriented. For Baradat (12) the terms radical, liberal, moderate, conservative and reactionary dimension of political ideologies are often used in political discourse. The broad spectrum of political society is understood by the variants of radical, liberal, moderate, conservative and reactionary ideology. Baradat discusses a broad spectrum of political issues such as nationalism, democracy, capitalism, the liberal democratic process, anarchism, socialism, fascism, and national socialism; ideologies in the developing world, ecologism and environmentalism. His political text reflects on the dangers of religious fundamentalism and violence that is becoming dangerously aggressive. All these are geared towards understanding the broad spectrum of ideology. Ideologies are oriented towards the masses.

Eccleshall (7-8), on his political standpoint, discussed certain ideological concepts such as nationalism, conservatism, democracy, fascism, socialism and liberalism. These scholars were more profound or broaden in their theoretical analyses on these broad spectrums of ideological constructs or variants. They viewed ideological constructs to go beyond a mere theoretical reconstruction. Eccleshall (8-9), give the epistemological status of ideologies as it concerns the validity of moral and political knowledge in society and the sociological

dimension of ideologies as it concerns the connection with the social process of society. These scholars observe that ideologies arise and fully developed from the specific social circumstances of contemporary society. Eccleshall (7) argued that dominant ideology operates through deception and they assumed that features of society were twisted into a false picture of an unjust and harmonious political order.

### **POLITICS, FREEDOM AND SOCIETY**

Politics underlines freedom and public responsibility. Hoffman and Graham gave a comprehensive insight/overview of certain political concepts such as power, the state, freedom, equality, justice, democracy, citizenship, violence, crimes and punishment. In their theoretical position, they identified certain ideological concepts such as liberalism, conservatism, socialism, anarchism, nationalism and fascism. Moreover, politics also deliberates on certain contemporary ideologies such as feminism, multiculturalism, ecologism or environmentalism and religious fundamentalism (Egu and Ilozobhie 17). It is therefore, germane to assert that the idea of politics as a political concept has a broader spectrum than what we normally can imagine or assume. Politics goes beyond the structure of the state. For Hoffman and Graham (xxvii) politics is far wider than the state. However, they argued that political affairs/activities are backed by reason. According to Hoffman and Graham (xxx) reason implies the development of humans and this is why political theory matters. Hoffman and Graham (xxxiv) tried to make political theory more clearer and interesting. They posited that freedom ought to be refined. They argued that “what we think of freedom today will necessarily be refined by the events of tomorrow. Freedom is still an absolute concepts, although, it can only be identified in relative form. Hoffman’s and Graham’s views on violence and crime are very fundamental and appropriate. Hoffman and Graham (23-24) posited that power is a social concept. Politics involves resolving conflicts of interest.

Moreover, they argued that politics ought to reflect the case for global government. Globalization is to be positively conceived as an opportunity rather than as a source of violence and division. For Hoffman and Graham (31) globalization is a cultural, political and an economic phenomenon. Hoffman and Graham (36) further argued that freedom is synonymous with political value. Freedom is regarded by many as the pre-eminent political value. Political theory and politics are sometimes all about responding to conflicts of human interests. Hoffman and Graham (553) argued that what makes concepts political is that they respond to conflicts that arise in the world of practice. Machiavelli’s political thought, for instance, reveals political dishonesty and political immorality. The principle of Machiavellianism presupposes systematic and self-conscious statesmanship. Machiavelli’s political writing is political realism or political pragmatism. Politics is ultimately and fundamentally a constant struggle for power and domination. Machiavelli’s political philosophy is

characterized by the secularization of politics and the amoralization of society. According to Murkherjee and Ramaswamy (160):

Political theory is one of the core areas of Political science. Political theory is a personal endeavor to understand and experience the present political reality and also to evolve a mechanism in order to transcend the present imperfect society leading to perfection and a more just order. This includes a study of the evolution, nature, composition, need and purpose of the governmental apparatus, and also an understanding of human perception and nature, its relationship with the larger community.

### **POLITICS AND THE COMMON GOOD IN SOCIETY**

Politics requires normative order. For Hoffman and Graham (499) order means the stability in the possession of things, security against violence and a trust in others that promises will be kept. The political state carries out its structural or organizational principle or normative purpose by laying down fundamental laws backed by coercion or force. He argues that the state actualizes its normative outcomes when every individual is required to refrain from actions, crimes and violence that may cause harm or prevent the prevalence of the common good. Raphael (70) sees politics as that which is aimed at the promotion of the common good. Politics serves as the normative core of human association. Broadly speaking, contemporary political life forms the normative conditions of human existential-political relations. For Raphael (19) in consonance with Mackenzie (153), men and women must form the basic human association. Politics forms the normative basis for resolving conflict of interests; it is premised on foundational and normative assumptions of dialogical engagement, emancipatory and progressive movement.

For Mackenzie (155-156) politics is the normative justification of the ideals of emancipation, the fixity of meaning in the world, the belief that increasing knowledge (moral and political knowledge) will free us from the arbitrary abuse of power and many more. Politics is established on the normative grounds of reasonable and morally justifiable political consensus. Politics is not all about the common good but it reflects on the mode of dialogical engagement of human life. Political philosophy may really be underneath it all: a mode of engaging with life and a mode that is political because it involves the creation of new forms of norm-governed social interaction. Politics, therefore, is not just thought, but also truth and action: in other words, it is both thought and action. Politics is a process that is backed by the rational powers of conversation. Mackenzie asks one very fundamental question that what would the conversation of political philosophy look like if we were skeptical of the rational powers of conversation itself? The conversation of political philosophy thrives on difference. Political Philosophy is a normative

philosophy; it is all about thought and deliberate human actions, the common good, social justice, freedom and it is the dialogical engagement with the contemporary political world.

Politics stretches beyond norms. For Mackenzie (163-164) politics is an invitation to engage in political life by thinking through and acting on new forms of norm-governed interaction that will bring the challenge of difference to us all. Difference has been given a negative connotation. Difference is part and parcel of our humanity. It represents the fundamentals of our political discourse. Politics is all about resolving the conflict of human interest or settling disputes. For Hoffman and Graham (500), politics is a public process that involves resolving conflicts of interests. Politics is undermined by force and it is inherent at every level in all societies. Political issues could be quite challenging due to the new movement of crimes, violence, terror and terrorism or fundamentalism, feminism, ideology and ecologism or environmentalism. Mackenzie (164) maintains that it is interesting to notice, as one reflects on who is 'in on' the conversation, that the contributions deemed to be of real lasting value, those made by the 'great' political philosophers (ancient, modern and contemporary), are the ones that have fundamentally changed dominant habits of thought.

In consonance with Mackenzie (200) Odimegwu (119) asserts that the problematic, implications, examinations and recommendations that amount to renewed responsibilities for all involved in the political enterprise is deeply rooted in the normative foundation of politics as the pursuance of the common good in human society. He observes that the sources through which problems erupt from politics are enormous or numerous. His work actually reflects on or revealed some hidden roots of political harmony and conflicts. It is worthy of note that the present crisis of modern politics that philosophy should have a practical moral end. He maintains that the hidden roots of politics require fundamental solutions. For Odimegwu (6-7), fundamental problems require fundamental solutions. Politics requires ethical, fundamental wholeness and some consistent order. Politics will only throws on human social activity. Politics is based on a philosophic foundation of humane orientation. Politics is based on normativity and day to day human experiences. It reflects on the normative justification of human association and lived experiences.

In the light of the above, Kersting (342-343) argues that Kant's political philosophy provides an entirely new theoretical foundation for the normative justification of politics in practical philosophy. He argues that Kant frees us from the domination of theological absolutism and the bonds of teleological natural laws and likewise elevates us above the prosaic banalities of the doctrine of prudence. Human beings must obey only their own reasons, in that lies their dignity as well as their exacting and burdensome moral vocation. However, Kersting(343) argues that Kant's political philosophy provides the horizon of the practical philosophy of history and the highest political good and perpetual peace. Kersting (347) however, observes that the normative justification of



Kant's philosophy of right and his political philosophy therefore, lies precisely where Kant's moral philosophy is most vulnerable.

Broadly speaking, the normative justification of Kant's moral philosophy and political philosophy reveals a kind of proceduralism and republicanism. Kersting(355) argues that Kant's proceduralism is the theory of normative justification of democratic formation of the will. It stands for the rule or tests of justice. Kant's political philosophy is the politico- ethical conception of "discourse ethics". Kant's politico- ethical conception of discourse ethics is inspired by Habermas's communicative political philosophy. For Kersting (395) Kant's understanding of normative philosophy envisages historical world order. Kant understands that the realization of right, freedom, law, order, and reason can take place only in the historical world order and under normative conditions of our historicity. Pelczynski (84), argues that the ethico-political community has a historical context or trajectory of Ancient oriental empires; Greek city -states; the Roman republic and the modern nation-state. Pelczynski (10-12) argues that the Hegelian metaphysical conception of the state has a sovereign ethical character. He argues that man is a political animal by nature and he is a member of an ongoing and historical/democratic community. Freedom is the distinguishing feature of man. Freedom is fundamentally and quintessentially man's property. For Gewirth (83) the state is the actuality of concrete freedom. The essence of human liberty consists precisely in this voluntary acceptance. Freedom presupposes true- self-consciousness.

Muchnik (98) in his theoretical position analyzed certain teleological issues in Kant's moral and political philosophy. Teleological issues such as motivation, futility and the highest political good is grounded in Kant's practical philosophy. Kant's theoretical insight on contemporary political philosophy is deeply rooted in politics, freedom, social order, justice and revolution. Muchnik (4-5) engaged in a critical assessment of the mainstream reading of freedom in Kant's practical philosophy. He argued that all choices are free in the sense of not being directly determined by inclination. They must also be free in the sense of being autonomous. Kant's philosophy is moral anthropology. Kant's contribution to moral anthropology in the context of the emerging new science was illuminating and fascinating. (Muchnik 6-7) maintained that human nature began to break loose from its traditional theological shackles. He posited that particular conception of human nature and anthropology leads to better understanding of moral and political knowledge when properly pursued. He holds that the cosmopolitan conception of human nature has an inherently critical thrust. For Muchnik (12-13), Kant refuses to conflate moral necessity with the psychological necessity of the most effective motivating ground. To them, Kant's razing anthropological indictment, therefore, casts a skeptical shadow on the feasibility of the collective pursuit of the highest good. He concludes Kant launched a forceful defense of the principles of republican government, the common good, individual rights, freedom, equality, political

justice and the general justification of property rights and civil society. He asserts that civil society in the long run should be governed by the normative foundation of the common good and social order. Politics and ethics overlapped. Politics is grounded in ethics.

Ethics is based on regulative principle. Politics and ethics are geared toward human flourishing. For Carden (136), an adequate conception of human flourishing should emerge from the bottom up, so to speak, it should arise from the actual struggle of life rather than from airy realm of conceptual coherence. Accordingly, Warburton (67) argues that politics is an immense subject, overlapping with ethics, economics, political science and the history of ideas. He claims that political philosophers usually write in response to the political situations in which they find themselves. His theoretical position, therefore, focuses on the central political concepts of equality, democracy, punishment and civil disobedience, examining the philosophical questions to which they rise. Warburton argues that equality is often presented as a political goal; an ideal worth aiming at. Warburton (68) maintains that it would be ridiculous to argue that people should be absolutely equal in every respect. Complete uniformity has little appeal. He argues that equality is a political concept that has to do with redistribution of resources. For Warburton (69-70), redistribution of resources might be justified, for instance, on utilitarian grounds as the most likely way of maximizing happiness and minimizing human sufferings. Warburton's theoretical perspective poses some fundamental philosophical questions such as what is equality? What is freedom? Are these worthwhile goals? How can they be achieved? What normative justification can be given for any circumstances in which you should break the law? His theoretical insight on political philosophy is brief but very unique and illuminating.

Accordingly, Ramose (103) argues from the African perspective that African politics is centered on the logical necessity of an emancipative political praxis and authentic epistemological paradigm. He argues that African politics begins from the specific concept of the human being and that normative basis to organize inter-human relations as well as existential relations between humans and other entities in the universe should be strengthened. Ramose (113-114) argues that African politics was communally-based and geared towards oneness rather than division or fragmentation. African politics is based on openness, shared objective and communal consensus. In consonance with this shared consensus, Asouzu (1) argues that the concept of *ibuanyidanda* which is one of the variants of African philosophy is a philosophical movement that represents the "we –consciousness" of the African peoples. The basic tenet of *ibuanyidanda* philosophy encapsulates some basic integrative ideas that direct human consciousness in the African settings. *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy reflects the normative core of mutual cooperation or human existential socio-political relations. The normative core of *ibuanyidanda* philosophy reflects the need for social harmony, equity, justice, fair play and egalitarianism among human beings.

Asouzu (19) argues that *ibuanyidanda* philosophy as an integrative philosophy, attempts to resolve some fundamental existential challenges within a global context of heterogeneity. It is invariably a normative outcome founded on heterogeneous multicultural context within African society. It is an integrative philosophy of lived experiences. For Asouzu (34) *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy, therefore, seeks ways of surmounting the difficulties inherent in human social, political, ethical and existential relations. The major task of *ibuanyidanda* philosophy subsists in the harmonization of African perception of reality in the face of a complex world that presents itself as divided and fragmented. It seeks to overcome any form of artificial divide we all sense in human consciousness and it represents the philosophy of mutual complementation in our existential and socio-political world.

#### **A REALIST APPROACH TO POLITICS AND THE COMMON GOOD: THE NIGERIAN PARADOX**

This subsection aims at exploring the normative possibility of the conceptualization of political realism in connection with the common good in human democratic society. Politics requires a realist approach which is a form of theory- driven and the explanatory model of Nigerian society. This subsection reveals the fact that politics is not just an abstract word but it has practical implication and democratic issues. These democratic issues are freedom, prudence, law, justice, security of life and property. The idea of politics and the contextualization of the common good revealed the real world situation in contemporary Nigerian society. The prevalence of the common good in Nigerian society can bring about societal unity. Politics has a realist approach. Realism is concerned with the way things really are rather than the way they ought to be. Political realism underlines the contemporary importance of public responsibility. Political realism reflects on the fact that politics is concerned with the public good of the people in society. Political realism reveals a kind of “political epistemology”. It means how we know what is just as far as human motivation is concerned. It deals with fundamental claims about the nature of human motivation and political epistemology. The concept of political realism reflects on the notion of social justice, common good, social order, human motivation, public happiness, law and order. Rawls, for instance, maintains that the principles of justice apply to a society characterized by moderate scarcity which people are in conflict over the distribution of those (moderately) scarce resources (Hoffman and Graham 95). It is worthy of note that one fundamental element associated with the political realism of Nigerian society is that apart from the fact that politics is a reflection of public process that involves resolving conflicts of interest, it also reflects on the idea of the common good, human motivation, human rights and human freedom.

The idea of the common good reflects the underlining factor of politics in human democratic society. The notion of the common good is a real matter in

political affairs. The idea of the common good reflects on real life issues in Nigerian democratic governance. It is one thing to refer to the common good as the legitimizing foundation of our interest and another thing for it to be really so. This exploration seeks, therefore, to remove the difficulty that might be associated with our understanding of our interest in relation to the common good in Nigerian society (Asouzu 79). The idea of politics as the normative foundation of the common good is deeply rooted within a context where its relevance becomes empirically relevant and perceptible enough to contemporary Nigerian society. The common good is the normative foundation on which any form of reciprocity is erected (Asouzu 79). Politics requires not only the objectification of the common good but norm governed behaviour of human action. Politics is a process that is anchored on human flourishing and the collective destiny of a people. It is invariably hinged on the need for the democratic interaction of the Nigerian people.

Furthermore, politics is deeply rooted in political realism. Machiavelli's political theorizing is political realism and it is anchored on the idea of the public good. The novelty of Machiavellian writings was that it considered political power and leadership as the most realistic element of human cooperative affairs. Political realism aims at the promotion of human right and human freedom. Freedom was the effective exercise of political rights that was possible among public-spirited and self-respecting individuals. (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 152). The idea of political realism reflects on a devotion to the public cause as a necessary precondition for claiming and enjoying private freedom without fear or interference. The contextualization of political realism involves a kind of political system whereby the common interest of the people is guaranteed. The idea of the common good thrives in an atmosphere whereby there is a robust political system. A political system is the institutions that regulate the use of and access to power that is essential to articulating and realizing individual, local, regional, national, international or global interest and agendas (Ferrante 542). The concept of political realism aims at ensuring the collective interest of the people rather than the mundane and selfish interest of the democratic man. The democratic man gave more importance to his desires and appetites (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 82).

The notion of political realism in connection with the common good aims at ensuring the basic premises of liberal democracy, namely equality, freedom and self-government (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 85). The contemporary significance of political realism is that it aims at the collective interest of the Nigerian-state. A state was necessary, for it existed to fulfill the desire for security of person and property (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 157). If a state had to endure and be stable, people's participation, respects for right and in particular, property and adherence to laws and customs were very empirically important in order to guarantee the normative possibility of social order. A well-ordered society and stable state could be successful if it had a strong government at the centre and integrated public authority recognized by all

individuals. According to the Machiavellian perspective, a state is an organized force aimed at the maintenance and security of possessions (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 158). The concept of political realism aims at the normative foundation of the common good and it reveals the idea of the comprehensive conception of the good life and human flourishing.

The primacy of the common good is deeply rooted in human reciprocal and existential relationship. The common good shows itself as the necessary condition for any form of meaningful interpersonal relationship (Asunzu 79-80). The idea of politics and common good are conceptual analysis that has to do with human interpersonal interaction. Philosophy, itself, is often seen as an intellectual endeavour where conceptual precision is both a prerequisite and an objective for the democratic man. (Vassilopoulou 116). However, the concept of epistemic democracy reveals the need for political participation, truth and action. It reflects on the need for good laws to regulate the behaviour of people in Nigerian society. Since an individual was good only by necessity, the fear of punishment and the coercive power of law would ensure good behaviour, and the restraining of unruly ambitions (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 158). It is germane to note that the other ways of ensuring that self-interested individuals were willing to risk their lives for the liberty of their democratic community was to make them take an oath binding them to defend the state at all cost (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 153).

Moreover, political realism aims at the common good of people and people in general were more stable, trustworthy, and grateful, capable of looking to the common good and promoting it (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 154). The epistemic realism of human existential relation reflects on the Machiavellian paradigm. It tries to distinguish ought from is. It is worthy of note that politics reflects on the normative assumption of addressing the limitations of scarcity of resources and human unlimited desires. Political realism is deeply rooted in the normative foundation of the common good. It reveals the normative possibility of law and order. Society requires morality, law and the normative ideal social order. Politics is aimed at the normative possibility of the common good and social order. The idea of politics is not only conceptual or theoretical but is has practical reality and an epistemological significance. It reveals an existential consideration on realistic political affairs. It demonstrates the tendency for practicality condition (Wisniewski 93-94). The common good reveals socio-politic-existential consideration of human interpersonal relationship. The common good is deeply rooted in the politics of inter-subjective recognition. Politics is all about the inter-subjective recognition of people. It, therefore, reveals that difference is not a barrier to human politico-existential relation or human flourishing.

Nevertheless, there is nothing like the prevalence of the common good in contemporary Nigerian society due to the endemic nature of corruption. Democracy in Nigeria has failed the masses. The Nigerian people are subjected

to an untold economic hardship. The Nigerian people can barely feed their stomach. There is abject poverty and hunger in the Nigerian society due to political and economic corruption. Unfortunately, corruption has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the contemporary Nigerian society. The problem of Nigerian society is the problem of ineffective political power and political leadership. Political power in Nigeria is not people oriented.

### EVALUATION

It is germane to assert that politics demands the common sentiments of the people in their cooperative political affairs. For Rosen (75) politics is grounded in a common sentiment which forms a family and a city. Politics is contextual. For Ferrante (537) the word context means the larger, historical circumstances and social forces that bring people together. Politics in Nigeria is bastardized and balkanized. Politics in Nigeria is simply money-bag politics where corruption reigns supreme. The contemporary Nigerian society is faced with so much economic hardship and poor political programmes. Maathai in her book *"The Challenge for Africa: A New Vision"* has already highlighted the myriad of challenges facing Africa. These challenges are poverty, corruption, deforestation, leadership crises, national indebtedness and trade imbalance. In consonance with Maathai (29), Oguejiofor (21) posits that African continent is facing serious fundamental challenges of poverty, hunger, high level of illiteracy, political instability, poor democratic governance, poor economic system, corruption, diseases, low life expectancy, poor health care system, poor road networks, poor power supply, religious fanaticism, poor educational system, tribal sentiments, or ethnic crises and so on.

Oguejiofor (38) argues that some fundamental challenges facing Africa include political instability and incompetent leadership, economic crisis, cultural alienation, religious crisis and the problem of African development. He argues that philosophy has a practical role to play in human society and that African predicament is multifaceted. It is historical, economic, political, cultural, religious, and psychological. He argues further that African leaders engaged in the concomitant alienation of government from the people. It is germane to assert that politics as a political concept has a human face and it reflects the normative core of society. According to the Aristotelian tradition, everything in life is aimed at the idea of the good. Politics is an epistemic, cognitive, and a realistic human affair. For Howie (16-17) cognitive reflection is assimilated into political function. Politics has reflected in an increasing tendency to define practical problems in such an instrumental way in what Habermas would describe as technocratic consciousness. Politics is aimed at the pursuance of the common good. For Lawhead (290), "... the power of government may not extend beyond that required by the common good in the democratic state." For Howie (20) politics reveals the liberal-humanist ideal of personhood.

## CONCLUSION

We have attempted and critically examined the contextualization and the conceptualization of politics as that which is aimed at the objective dimension of human society. Politics is a process and it guarantees shared objectivity. This theoretical discourse therefore, concludes that politics demands order and it is deeply rooted in human existential constants or relations. Politics is aimed at the common conception of the good in normative society. Politics is a political concept that is aimed at the social integration and the social coordination of any democratic state. Politics is characterized by norm governed interactions of human persons. Politics is aimed at resolving conflict of interests in human cooperative activity. It reveals the normative foundation of the common good. The common conception of the good is the guiding principle of human existential relationship. The normative possibility of politics is grounded in the ordering principle of the democratic state. It presupposes the normative context of the social coordination of the political state. Politics reveals the problem of human nature. Politics enhances the normative context of the common good in contemporary human society. Politics showcases the fact that the problematic of human nature is as old as our humanity. Our humanity is at crossroads due to the problem of human nature. Man is not completely bad and he is not completely good.

Politics is characterized by a process that is fundamentally designed for the betterment of our global world and human flourishing. Politics has a moral end. The contextualist approach to politics as the pursuit of the common good is characterized by struggle of man's quest for power and domination. Politics is aimed at the formation and the radical transformation of human character. Politics is a form of cooperative human affairs. Politics is governed by the application of reason just like law. It has rational implication. Politics is grounded in the secularization of society. It represents the normative foundation of the common good. Politics is built on human freedom. Politics rests on freedom and justice. Freedom is one the most driving concepts in philosophical discourse. Freedom is man's distinguishing feature. Man is an autonomous being with rational or cognitive faculty. Politics is contextualized in nature and it is built on an epistemic foundation.

Pragmatic politics in Nigeria can be used to address the myriad of challenges facing Nigeria. The contemporary Nigerian society lacks social order. Nigeria is currently battling or grappling with challenges such as kidnapping, herdsmen-farmers clashes, leadership crisis, corruption, terror and terrorism, poor health care system, poor road network, lack of rule of law or due process, poor educational system, police brutality, social disorderliness, get-rich-quick-syndrome, brain drain due to emigration, tribal sentiments, god-fatherism, pre-bendalism, ritual killing, national indebtedness, trade imbalance, armed robbery and the prevalence of weak government institutions.

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