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**PYTHAGORAS' PHILOSOPHY AND THE GROWTH OF AFRICAN
 POLITICS: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT**

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ABSTRACT

Pythagoras, in the process of investigating the structure of the world order, addressed issues, some of which are: transmigration and immortality of the soul, conflict of opposites, tetraktys and the world like a game of festival. This research critically examines Pythagoras' philosophy in the light of these issues and submits that, though Pythagoras' philosophy is limited, perhaps, due to the fact that it is deeply rooted in mysticism, it contains some insights which can assist in the growth of African politics.

KEYWORDS: *Pythagoras, Philosophy, African Politics, African Political Growth.*

INTRODUCTION

Pythagoras was one of the most distinguished pre-Socratic philosophers, who, in his own unique way, contributed to the explanation of the structure of the world order, which was the focal point of the pre-Socratic philosophy. His explanation of the world and reality was based on mathematical and religious principles. These two aspects of thought gave rise to his philosophy. For this reason, it is difficult to distinguish Pythagoras' philosophy from other areas of his thought, especially religion. This explains why he conceives philosophy as a means of purification, which, for him, is a religious requirement aimed at giving the soul liberation. Also, Pythagoras' views and those of his disciples were inseparably linked together because of the disciples' doctrine of secrecy and the custom of attributing every teaching of the school to the master. Our discussion of Pythagoras, therefore, will be based on the views credited to him. It is, however, significant to note that an idea or a given knowledge makes much sense when it is contextually applied to certain practical situations. It is on the basis of this assumption that this

research intends to critically examine the relevance of Pythagoras' philosophy to the growth of African politics.

There may be various ways African political development can be understood. For instance, African political development could be seen in terms of the chronological highlight of the transitional phases in the history of political administration in African nations. This particular view, however, will not be the focus of this research. Instead, this research will examine the growth of African politics from the view point of political behaviours and activities that are common to African leaders and as they affect the welfare of the citizens and future leadership. This is because the idea of growth seems to be more concerned with progress and achievements, which, of course, depends on attitudes, behaviours and actions. In this sense, the growth or progress in politics depends to a greater extent on how political policies, actions or programmes are carried out, and how they are of benefit to the people. This dimension of African political growth will be the focal point of this study.

Political growth and leadership should be guided by sound principles, for effectiveness. The challenge of political growth facing African political leadership is due to failure of many African leaders to adopt or practice virtues and guidelines needed in piloting the affairs of the Africans in their various nations. Some of these virtues and guidelines are identifiable in Pythagoras' philosophy. This informs the necessity of this research on Pythagoras' philosophy in relation to African politics whose growth has remained a mirage for so long. While undertaking this task, reference will be made to Nigeria, because as a political entity, Nigeria is a product of diverse ethnic and cultural groups or nations that came together through the instrumentality of colonialism. As such, certain occurrences in the smaller society like Nigeria could be generalized to accommodate the larger and/or entire continent of Africa (Umotong, 2012:238). Thus, this paper is compartmentalized under the following headings: Introduction, Pythagoras' Background, Pythagoras' Philosophy, The Relevance of Pythagoras' Philosophy to African Political Growth, Critical Assessment and Conclusion.

Pythagoras' Background

Although much is said about Pythagoras, only few seem to be accurate and reliable; thus, most facts about his life are tentative (Wikipedia, Online). The birth of Pythagoras is said to have taken place in the island of Samos about 570 BC. He was known to be an Ionian Greek philosopher, mathematician and founder of the religious movement called Pythagoreanism. He is assumed to have travelled widely to a place like Egypt to seek knowledge. He is noted to have undergone Greek, Egyptian and oriental training, sequel to a large number of teachers that taught him. Among his teachers, a Delphic Priestess, Themistoclea, is considered to have exposed him to the principles of ethics; the Egyptian taught him geometry, the Phoenicians arithmetic, the Chaldeans astronomy, and the Megians, the principles of religion and practical maxims for the conduct of life. His religious views were considered the most significant for the people of his time. Divination and prophecy are said to have been part of his religious activities.

Around 530 BC, Pythagoras left Samos for Croton in Magna Graecia, where he established a religious sect and attracted a good number of disciples. His followers are said to have adopted his religious principles and attitudes and also studied his philosophical theories. He taught his followers religious life of purity, having diverted their attention from the life of luxury and corruption. His formation of the brotherhood was for promotion of religious and ascetic activities

and philosophy. However, for political reasons, Pythagorean meeting venues were set ablaze while Pythagoras fled compulsorily. His death is reported to have taken place in Metapontum in 495 BC. Concerning his writings, there seems to be no evidence that any text written by Pythagoras is available. Texts circulated in the Ancient era in his name were understood to be forgeries. His disciples learned from his oral teachings, which were only circulated among them in secret.

Pythagoras' Philosophy

As noted earlier, Pythagoras' philosophy seems to have been the conglomeration of all his views, the dominant of which was his religious views. This is informed by the fact that he was religiously oriented because of a high influence of Orphism on him. Orphism was a religious organization originated by Orpheus who was highly devoted to the worship of a god, known as Dionysus Zagreus (Idang, 2009:62). Orphism centered on the view that the human person is a composite of material and divine elements (body and soul). The divine element, which is the soul, is said to be the essential one.

In the light of Orphism, Pythagoras formulated the doctrine of the transmigration or immortality of the soul. This doctrine holds that the soul is in the prison as long as it remains in the body, and is expected to undergo a circle of rebirth and deaths, which is a continuous process until it receives purification (Omoregbe, 1991:7). While in the purification process, the soul could transfer itself from one body to another, including the body of an animal, depending on the spiritual status of the soul in the previous birth (Shand, 1993:8). In this regard, Pythagoras is said to have identified the voice of a departed friend in the cries of a bitten dog (*Wikipedia, Online*).

To ensure a complete purification, religious and ascetic life, full of rituals, was to be a watch word (Cavendish, 1964:6). Such life demanded obligations and abstinence, such as: not eating animals and beans, not touching a white cork, not picking a fallen object, and so on (Russell, 1979:51). It is after fulfilling all the religious, spiritual and moral obligations, as highlighted in the teachings of the Pythagoreans, that the soul is said to be liberated or free to return to the world of the gods. This is related to what Pythagoras referred to as the highest good (*Summum Bonum*), that is, the attainability of a god-like character (James, 1988:57). This is said to be unrealizable without purification. For Pythagoras, then, philosophy is a means of attaining this purification; it is the way of life, salvation and contemplation of truth. This means of purification or way of life refers to the life of self-denial, self-sacrifice and discipline, as contained in the Pythagorean religious and moral obligations.

Pythagoras is said to have also interested himself in science, with particular emphasis on mathematics. However, due to the fact that Pythagoras was religiously oriented, some sources have said that Pythagoras did not originate any mathematical principle, for all mathematical principles attributed to him were the works of others and those of his disciples (Sanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Online). Nonetheless, Pythagoras is associated with the view that number is the fundamental source of reality. In other words, mathematical principles are the first principles of all things. The implication is that every object in the universe consists of number, and can be explained in numerical terms. James emphasized this view of Pythagoras when he said: "All things are numbers, that is to say, that not only every object, but the entire universe is an arrangement of numbers; this means that the nature of any object is the number by which it is represented" (1988:58).

In a specific sense, Pythagoras is of the view that a body of an object is traceable to a point, which he considered the beginning component of a number. In his geometrical analysis, he stated that before a body is obtained, “point”, “line” and “surface” are involved. With respect to this, he said that combination of points produces line, and the multiplication of lines brings surface while juxtaposition of surfaces leads to a solid or body (Ozumba and Ukah, 2014:32). Pythagoras is also credited with the idea that a perfect number is ten (10). This is sequel to the fact that the sum of the first four integers – 1, 2, 3, 4 is ten and also because of his view that there exist ten bodies in the universe, including five stars, earth and counter earth (James, 1988:58). The idea of odd and even numbers is equally credited to him. Odd number, for him, is limited, while even number is unlimited. This is informed by the fact that an object is not divisible by an odd number, whereas, it is divisible by an even number.

Pythagoras is popularly known for the mathematical principle, called Pythagorean Theorem. This theory holds that in a right-angled triangle, the area of the square on the hypotenuse (that is, the side opposite to the right angle) is equal to the sum of the areas of squares of the other two sides. This is symbolically expressed as: $C^2 = a^2 + b^2$ (Purplemath, Online). This theory has been used widely in solving a lot of mathematical puzzles. In line with his view that all operations in the universe are mathematically based, Pythagoras constructed a triangular form of a mystical symbol, named, *Tetraktys*. It was by this symbol that the Pythagoreans had been swearing an oath, as part of their religious obligations (*Wikipedia, Online*).

More importantly, Pythagoras is held in high esteem for saying that the world is made up of conflicts of opposites, without which life would be boring and unprogressive. Such opposites include day and night, up and down, light and darkness, war and peace, male and female, hot and cold, sadness and happiness, etc (*Wikipedia, Online*). Constant alternation between these opposites is said to result in harmony, order and progress of events in the world. For Pythagoras, harmony in the universe is similar to harmony in music. In this sense, musical notes are combined at intervals to produce a perfect harmony. In his view, a pitch used to identify musical keys is numerically constructed. He is of the view that music provides nourishment and cure to the soul the same way food and medicine keep the body nourished and cured from ailments.

Pythagoras also contributed in the area of cosmology. He perceived the earth as spherical and as revolving alongside the sun and other heavenly bodies around what he called the “central fire”, which, according to him is at the centre of the universe. This view was insightful in the formulation of the heliocentric theory which placed the sun at the centre of the universe with all other heavenly bodies, revolving around it (Uduigwomen, 2011:192). He compared the world to an arena where a game of festival is conducted. In such festival, he noted that some are athletes competing for prizes or awards; some are business men who are using such occasion to make money, while others are spectators. He classified philosophers as spectators, saying that philosophers are mainly involved in contemplative activities aimed at seeking the truth, without any interest in reward or money. Having discussed Pythagoras’ philosophy to this extent, it is expedient to examine its relevance to the growth of African politics.

The Relevance of Pythagoras’ Philosophy to the Growth of African Politics

There are some aspects of Pythagoras’ philosophy that are applicable to the growth and challenges facing African political leadership. Pythagoras’ doctrine of the immortality of the soul which shows that there is life after death, seems to call to mind the need to look beyond the

present and project into the future. Situating this within the African political context, it means that visionary leadership is a necessary step towards good governance. This should be done through embarking on lofty programmes and policies that would guarantee the welfare of the citizens and that of the generations yet unborn. On the contrary, it appears that most African leaders are not committed to the implementation of visionary programmes needed for the development of African nations. Taking education as an example, there is no gain saying that education is human capital investment, and as such, it should not be compromised or handled with levity. That means, if the high rate of illiteracy is unchecked in Africa due to lack of visionary leadership, then Africa is doomed. This would be a serious setback to human development in the continent.

Using Iroegbu's ohacratic philosophy, Elijah John and Anthony Etuk capture this point vividly: "...Iroegbu's theory becomes very relevant in the face of high illiteracy rate confronting Africa, for which reasons Africa continues to rank lowest in all indices of human development" (2012:440 - 441). I doubt whether effective political development can be obtained without commitment to the education of the youths. When human development falls, political development and its future prospects are equally jeopardized. As such, African political leadership should ensure that education is properly funded. To this end free and compulsory education should at least be declared throughout the whole federation (Akpan, 2013:62). Stressing the need to give education a priority in our political ideology, Elijah John remarks that full funding and provision of sufficient facilities and teaching aids, together with proper management will add to making education sector attractive through minimization of teachers' and lecturers' strikes if undertaken with unparalleled passion (2009:132). Another instance in which visionary leadership is required is in economic sector. In Nigeria, there is total dependence on oil as the source of national income, while other sectors of the economy seems to be neglected, as little or nothing is being done to revamp them. In line with this, Maduka observes: "The economic problems facing the Nigerian state and indeed most African states lie in the fact that the major source of foreign exchange is from the oil sector to the overall neglect of other sectors" (2012:122).

The issue is that if Nigeria runs short of oil in future or buyers of oil have alternative raw materials to power their industrial operations, the nation's economy would come to a standstill, since there is no other meaningful source of the nation's income. Visionary leadership demands that other sectors of economy be adequately diversified. Mono-culture economy cannot augur well for a people. There is need for mechanized farming in such a manner that agricultural products can be exported gainfully like oil, in order to safe-guard future socio-economic and political quagmire, should there be decrease in or a stop to the demand for oil. Looking at development holistically, human development and economic development boost political development. The compromise of the education and economic sectors are typical examples showing that many African leaders do not look beyond the present or are not visionary as demanded by Pythagoras to project into the future

Pythagoras' philosophy can further be related to African political growth in terms of his view that the soul's transmigration is for the purpose of purification, through ascetic life, which demands observance of certain obligations. In our context, purification can be seen in terms of perfection, enlightenment and maturity, while ascetic life can be understood as living a life of

discipline and self-sacrifice in which patriotism for the State comes first. In this sense, the growth of African politics can improve for the better, if her leaders strive towards perfection, self-control or enlightenment and selflessness in their political pursuits. These qualities cannot be achieved without discipline and self-sacrifice, which, in the political circle, are determined by the ability to adhere strictly to the principles of governance, as entrenched in the constitution. When the constitutional principles are observed by political leaders, the welfare of the citizens are guaranteed, and when such is the case, there would be protection of the rights of the citizens, justice, fairness, equity, love, respect for others, and so on. When a political leadership observes these obligations, it means that there is a demonstration of political maturity, enlightenment and perfection.

Conversely, the afore-mentioned qualities and the conditions seem to be far away from the leadership of many African nations, as evident in the leadership imbalance facing Africa. In a democratic country like Nigeria, democratic tenets, such as respect for the rules of law, equality before the law and protection of the fundamental rights of the citizens are neglected by most, if not all, political leaders because they lack discipline and patriotic spirit. They, rather, allow personal interest and sentiments to dominate governance, resulting in blunt negligence of the welfare of the citizens, abuse of office, bare-face injustice, political and financial crimes, murder and other forms of vices (Uduigwomen, 2001:224). In the face of these problems, effective political growth cannot be boasting of. When political leaders do not imbibe discipline or carry out self-less services, through respect for the rules of law and other constitutional demands, it means that the seed of failure is sown for future leadership, as the youths tend to imitate the elders. Hence, exemplary leadership, by means of practical adherence to the Pythagoras' ascetic principles, contextually highlighted in the work, is needed in Africa to ensure that the general interest supersedes the individual's for a mature, perfect and enlightened political growth.

Another area in which Pythagoras' philosophy is applicable to the growth of African politics is in oath-taking. As noted earlier, Pythagoras constructed a triangular figure, called *tetraktys*, to serve as a mystical symbol by which the Pythagoreans swore to. The essence was to maintain loyalty and faithfulness among the members of the Pythagorean religious group. Similarly, African leaders take an oath of office in a special ceremony called "swearing-in". By the oath, they swear that they would discharge their duties in accordance with the provisions of the law, which demands, among other things, transparency and accountability. These require proper management of public funds and accounting for expenditure. Sincerity of purpose in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes, equal opportunities for all citizens and a fair distribution of resources and social amenities to all sections of the nation are also attributes of transparency and accountability.

On the contrary, the above attributes of transparency, accountability and social justices are not realized in many African nations like Nigeria because the leaders ignore the oath of office and rather rule arbitrarily in favour of corruption. Embezzlement of public funds and looting of the nation's treasury are common. For example, it is reported that Obasanjo's civilian administration introduced tactical methods of embezzling money without being traced (John, 2009:238). The point is that many African leaders do not respect the oath of office because of corruption, and as a result, all the demands of the oath-taking that would have favoured the welfare of the masses if implemented, are neglected.

In Africa, it is common to note political leadership awards contracts, inflates the cost and initiates a “kick back” policy that guarantees them certain percentage of the funds released for the contracts (Udoaka and Okom, 2011:24). Such corrupt attitudes are not in line with the principles of transparency and accountability. In Nigeria, key administrative positions are given to relations, close friends and associates, even when they do not merit them. This usually leads to incompetence in the service delivery in public service. If all African politicians in power were to respect the demands of oath-taking, as suggested by Pythagoras’ teaching, then African nations, especially Nigeria, would have been highly developed, because the leaders would have been transparent and accountable. Corruption is a major draw-back in the growth of Africa’s political leadership.

Pythagoras’ view that there is conflict of opposites for instance, war and peace in this sense, in the world is politically relevant to Africa. Although African political leadership is still distant from a commendable level of growth, it would not have even reached the stage it presently is today, if there were no conflicts. Right from the time of colonial occupation in Africa, certain individuals opposed the colonial masters to make them hand over political powers to the indigenes. In harmony with this view, Asuo has stated that Julius Nyerere, one of the famous nationalists, used his intellectual and political efforts to fight not only for the independence of his home country, Tanzania, but for the liberation of Africa (2012:116-117). Though this nationalist struggle resulted in serious conflicts with the colonial masters and the subsequent loss of lives of some Africans, but it persisted until certain African nations gained political independence. The point is that if conflict did not arise between the colonialists and the African nationalists, there would not have been any political independence for African nations. In this case, the Pythagoras’ conflict of opposites - war and peace - makes sense.

After independence, conflict was part and parcel of African politics (Igbinijesu, *Online*). The indigenous Africans in their different nations clamoured for one political office or the other, leading to conflict of interests and resolutions in some cases, from which they learned more about politics. This idea of conflicts of opposites and harmony also has a reflection on the formation of political parties and conduct of elections, which have become avenues for harmonizing certain conflicting interests. After the election, some political aspirants were elected and sworn into various offices on the platform of certain parties, while the defeated parties have become the opposition whose function is has been reduced to that of either watch dogs or detractors, which in a way, make the political officers to be prudent. Where they doubt the credibility of the election, they would not mind challenging the results of such elections through the tribunal, which can even help to bring credible candidates into offices, although corruption does not allow it to properly work in Nigeria. These are all manifestations of Pythagoras’ positive sides of conflicts of opposites, which can assist in the growth of politics in Africa.

The clash of ethnic interests in Nigeria’s political history is not an exception; at a certain point in Nigeria, it brought about the struggle for secession championed by Igbo nationalists under the name, Biafra. This culminated in the civil war that lasted for three years (*Wikipedia, Online*). However, the leaders of the Biafra surrendered after a serious pressure from both the Nigerian and other governments. Relative peace returned to the country through the process of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. We can equally say that Boko Haram terrorism

that has claimed thousands of lives would one day come to an end and give peace a chance, because it seems every conflict gears towards a peaceful resolution no matter how long it takes.

Conflicts of and/or oppositions would continue in Africa's political landscapes because it is through them that political differences are understood and resolved. Nevertheless, most African leaders the mindset required for conflict management; and that is why many conflicts resort to extrajudicial killings before the idea of peaceful management is considered. Again, Pythagoras' opinion that the world is like a game of festival that has three categories of people in attendance – the athletes for prizes, the business people for money and spectators for entertainment, can also be applied to African political growth. In this regard, some people struggle for one political position or the other, either to receive award or make money, while others are not interested in any political position, needless to mention the idea of engaging in any other meaningful political activities; they rather watch the political contestants or participators and discuss about them in an unprofitable manner. Some even spend long hours with the vendor, reading about political stories in the newspapers and discussing issues of politics as they arise, without any attempt to effect a solution or change the political situations. For Pythagoras, such people are spectators because of their inactive attitudes. Political growth as witnessed in many African nations needs the efforts of every citizen; that is, there should be political participation, at least in election or by way of public opinions. However, in many cases, it is the corrupt and hostile attitudes of the leaders that discourage people from political participation. African leaders should create an enabling political environment to ensure popular participation in political affairs. Having discussed Pythagoras' philosophy and its relevance to African political growth, it is necessary to subject them to a critical assessment.

Critical Assessment

Pythagoras' philosophy, like any other philosophies, is not immune from criticisms. Thus, the doctrine of immortality of the soul, in which the soul is said to transmigrate from one prison body to another, for the sake of purification, is questionable; that is, the processes involved in the transmigration lack clarity on account of inadequacies in explanation. Also, the doctrine is deficient in that it is incapable of describing the real nature of the soul. It equally degrades human dignity by stating that the souls in humans can transmigrate into animals, thus, reducing human beings to level of animals. Furthermore, by classifying philosophers as spectators in the world, that is, as those who are not engaged in activities that are materially rewarding, it seems Pythagoras was having a limited knowledge of what philosophers can do. His view may have been premised on the attitudes of the early philosophers (his contemporaries), who, perhaps, appeared to have been deeply involved in the life of contemplation, to the negligence of other issues of life. The sophists, who emerged later, broke away from this attitude by teaching people logic and rhetoric, for pecuniary gains. Similarly, many philosophers have researched and published their philosophies competitively, for prizes, awards and money, contrary to Pythagoras' view.

Pythagoras' view that the world is made up of conflicts of opposites needs to be cautiously followed by African political leaders, so that it may not lead to the provocation of further conflicts in a trivial situation that does not call for it. People who have a superficial understanding of Pythagoras' conflicts of opposites might always be at logger heads because of their extreme tendency to oppose things uncritically. In the same way, conflicting politicians might wrongly buy this philosophy to justify their hostile and senseless tendencies. It is

demanded that African leaders be cautious in their interpretation of Pythagoras' "conflicts of opposites" by not taking undue advantage of this view thereby perpetuating conflicts with their political opponents.

Added to this is the fact that certain aspect of Pythagoras' philosophy that African leaders should not adopt, for it might not promote effective political growth. This includes the belief in secret circulation of intellectual ideas to certain group of persons. In our earlier discussion, we noted that Pythagoras argued in favour of imparting philosophical views to people in secret. In other words, his views or teachings during his life time were not opened to public consumption, but were circulated only among the members of his group. This secretive attitude is said to have been the major reason for the difficulty in distinguishing between the thoughts of Pythagoras and his intellectual descendants. Who knows, there might have been vital ideas of Pythagoras that would have been very useful for public consumption, but were hidden simply because of the belief that knowledge discovered within the sect should not be made public. Pythagoras' attitude of secrecy is not the best and cannot constitute a good lesson for African leaders. If imbibed in its entirety, it can hinder the virtues of openness, transparency and accountability which are demanded, especially, by democratic governance for the purposes of knowledge transmission.

In Nigeria, for example, where democratic system of government is practiced, many political issues and views which should have been opened for the contribution or acceptance are rather discussed and resolved secretly by few political caucus members, while the majority is left only to comply with the decisions reached in secret. Recently, President Muhammadu Buhari has ordered the dismantling of the military check points across the country. This is one of the resolutions reached at the secret meeting which he is reported to have had with few top security personnel, excluding the attendance of the Vice President. It could be recalled that military check points were set up by the previous administrations to assist the police in checking armed robbery and kidnapping and other criminally motivated tendencies when it was obvious that the police could not combat such crimes alone. If there are good reasons to review security strategy, it should have been scrutinized by public opinion. Although there exist certain security secrets that should not be opened to public discussions, it is doubtful that this particular instance is inclusive because it is an issue that stimulates public curiosity and could lead to a season of insecurity since the public was not properly briefed, neither was the public a party to it.

When the populace is not duly briefed or the required awareness is lacking before decisions on matters that affect its existence are taken, then there might be chaos and anarchy. It is this secretive tendency of insincere political leaders in Africa that has opened door for corruption, leading to political or social injustices, mismanagement and embezzlement of public funds which are antithetical to effective political growth. However, this research is not losing sight of the fact that there are certain secrets that should be kept as demanded by one's duty or office, but is stressing that African leaders should avoid unnecessary secrecy, so that it may not impede the desired (political) transparency and accountability in public matters, and this secrecy appears to be encouraged or promoted by Pythagoras' attitude of hiding his teachings from public consumption,

Another important aspect of Pythagoras' philosophy that African leaders should be very careful in adopting is mysticism in the truest sense of the word. We had noted earlier that Pythagoras' philosophy is rooted in mysticism, as evident in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul which

appears to be the central teaching in his philosophy. Although a critical view of this doctrine and the mystical symbol, “*tetractys*” reveals some rational insights for effective political growth, but mysticism in its deeper sense exposed the members of the Pythagorean School to cultic practices which could stimulate more controversies and misunderstanding, if adopted by African political leaders. Occult and mystical practices of Pythagoras’ thoughts are not necessary for the growth of African politics; they can push African leaders into taking hasty or uncritical decisions in public matters.

Taking Nigerian political leadership as an example, cultism is against her constitutional provisions. In fact, religious beliefs and practices are taken as personal issues that should not be allowed to interfere with one’s public ethics or office since it can bring unfavourable effects on the generality of the citizens, given that all the citizens do not belong to the same religious faith. Moreover the occult practices embedded in Pythagoras’ philosophy are said to be fundamental to the spread of secret societies and cultism the world over (Luke Mastin, *Online*). Many of these secret societies and cult groups are noted for ritualistic killings and exploitation of human beings. Even if Pythagoras’ occult and ritualistic group did not engage in practices that are harmful to humanity, it provided foundational insights that have amplified the existence and practices of such groups, even to the detriment of humanity and the communalistic life of the people. In Nigeria, cultism has taken different dimensions, some of which have promoted destruction of lives and properties, and have attracted wide condemnations. Any African leader that patronizes cultism is likely to expose his subjects to danger, capable of destroying their lives and moral virtues. This is why the mystical aspect of Pythagoras’ philosophy, especially, as it pertains to criminal rituals and occult practices should be avoided by all African leaders.

CONCLUSION

To say that Pythagoras’ philosophy is politically didactic is an understatement. A critical and contextual application of his philosophy in the face of the developmental challenges afflicting African politics would bring remedy. Although some aspects of Pythagoras’ philosophy appear unsuitable for African political growth, as highlighted above, but there are others that are very useful and can be equally helpful, from which African leaders should learn. Effective political development demands, among other things, discipline, truthfulness, loyalty, maturity, transparency and accountability, which are all observable in one form or the other in Pythagoras’ philosophy, when subjected to critical observations. Adopting them is a step towards the eradication of the politics of ethnicity, corruption, bitterness and assassination.

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