

The Sociality of Democracy

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Abstract

In this essay, we explore the idea of democracy beyond its political conception, by examining some structures and institutions of society that should nurture the ideals of democracy. This is with a view to broadening our conception of the space for entrenching a culture of democracy as a way of life and in the process, enhance its sustainability and performance on the African continent. Democracy we argued, in so far as it is anchored on the involvement and well-being of the people, must reflect the nature and quality of the character of people found in the polity; the character itself being the product of the people's engagement with the very many ideals of democracy in the various groups and institutions of society to which they belong. It is such democratic habits of thought and action that become part of the fibre of the people, that will eventually define their involvement in the democratic process at the larger society. For us in Africa therefore, to make meaning of our current democratisation efforts and thereby enhance the performance of democracy on our continent, the various groups and institutions of society where the ideals of democracy are first devolved, and where people start learning how to think, act and behave democratically in the first instance, must be fully explored and brought into reckoning in our conceptualisation of democracy. This, the paper concludes, is the only way we can maintain the struggle for democracy on as many fronts as possible - political, economic, educational, scientific, artistic, religious - and consequently retain its original essence as a way of life or a mode of associated living.

Keywords: Democratic ideals, Development, Non-political structures and institutions, Africa

Introduction

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.

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- John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1916, p. 87.

One of the very few intellectuals to have characterised the democratic idea in its social sense is the American pragmatist John Dewey. Dewey rejects the prevalent idea that democracy consists simply in voting, campaigning, canvassing, lobbying and other electioneering processes associated with political democracy. Democracy for him is a mode of social organisation that must affect all kinds of human association including the family, the school, industry, religion and so on. As he explains it, "The struggle for democracy has to be maintained on as many fronts as culture has aspects: political, economic, international, educational, scientific and artistic, and religious" [Boydston, 1969]. This way, not only does democracy touches the whole of our individual lives, all sectors of society - politics, industry, education, business – would become crucial to actualising the goals of democracy, since they all would be organised around some comprehensive democratic ideals. **Gradually**, therefore, democracy would become a mode of social organisation, and eventually, the culture of the whole society.

This position by Dewey has received its greatest attack from scholars, especially of the Rawlsian strand, on the ground that Dewey's view of democracy is inconsistent with the fact of reasonable pluralism and that it runs against the proceduralist conceptions of democracy which associate democracy primarily with the formal procedures of forming governments as well as the institutional frameworks that enable the smooth operation of such procedures. These objections, it has been shown, do not however betray those philosophical commitments that constitute Dewey's view of democracy as false, but merely show that Dewey's idea of democracy, like any other, could be rejected on grounds of reason. The concern of Dewey and his critics however, was with democracy as an ideal. Given the crises situation in many African states today and the apparent failure of governments in these states to remedy the crises despite their huge subscription to democracy as a mode of governance, there is the need to move beyond the issue of what an ideal democracy should be, to questing into grounds for its sustainability.

This is important because democracy is driven by the desire to enhance human flourishing in all spheres of life. Consequently, it must be promotive of positive social values like freedom, justice, tolerance, compassion and cooperation.

Since democracy in practice does not hang in space, it would in order to actualise its goal, require the involvement of all the various groups, organisations and institutions of society, which themselves actually constitute the foundation for the more apparent aspect of democracy as a system of government.

In this essay, we explore some structures and institutions of society that should nurture the ideals of democracy, with a view to broadening our conception of the space for the entrenchment of a culture of democracy as a way of life and in the course, enhance its sustainability and performance on the African continent. Democratic ideals like liberty, equality, accountability, transparency, human dignity and so on, have a perceptible value that help those who practice them achieve some shared ends. In so far as the idea of democracy is anchored on the involvement and well-being of the people, it must reflect the nature and quality of the character of people found in the polity; the character itself being the product of the people's engagement with the many ideals of democracy in the various groups and institutions of society to which they belong. It is such democratic habits of thought and action that become part of the fibre of the people, that ultimately define their involvement in the democratic process at the larger society. For Africa to make meaning of its current democratisation efforts and thereby enhance the performance of democracy on the continent, the various groups and institutions of society where the ideals of democracy are first devolved, and where people start learning how to think, act and behave democratically in the first instance, must be brought into beneficial relevance in the conceptualisation of democracy. This is the only way we can, in line with Dewey insistence, maintain "the struggle for democracy ...on as many fronts as culture has aspects: political, economic, international, educational, scientific and artistic, and religious", and consequently retain its original essence as a way of life. If in the opinion of Dewey, democracy, for it to be sustainable, "must be buttressed by the presence of democratic methods in all social relationships" [Dewey, 1937: 324], then the various groups and institutions of society where these 'methods' first find expressions should be brought into proper reckoning for a suitable conceptualisation of democracy as a mode of associated living.

The Politics of Democracy

A very significant attribute of the term 'democracy' is its ability to convey meanings within any context it is used.

On some occasion, a man may be accused of not being democratic in his approach. At some other time, a fellow may be advised to democratise the wares or goods in his possession. Yet at some other time, it will not be inconsistent to talk about democratic methods in social relationships. The implication of this unique feature of democracy is that the concept entails a lot of normative assumptions, principle, ideals and values which should guide attitudes of people as they relate with one another. Democracy therefore expresses principles, which those who believe in it wish to be given practical expression in the laws and institutions of society, and ideals which provides goals towards which men in society should constantly aspire for the betterment of the society. Unfortunately however, the history of the concept has always been foreshadowed by its political conception as a form of government, undermining the fact that political democracy, is but an instance of this more generic form of life.

In its political conception as a form of government, democracy has over the years come to attained the elevated status of the most popular among other forms of government, for the reason that it bestows an aura of legitimacy on governments.[Held, 1995: 3]. Due therefore to either reasons of “international pressures, people’s desire for security against arbitrary abuse, and their desire for economic development” [Shively, 1997: 130], there has been mass acceptance and popularity of democracy since it is believed to offer a more people oriented policies. No wonder we find many countries with opposing ideologies, operating on ideals, values and norms that are incompatible with those of democracy as we know it, laying claim to democracy. This explains the apparent confusion and ambiguity that surrounds the definition of democracy and the reason it has remained an essentially contested concept.

However, democracy as a concept etymologically derives from two Greek words - *demos*, meaning ‘people’ and *kratos*, meaning ‘rule of’ or ‘rule by’. Thus, democracy translates etymologically to mean ‘rule of the people or rule by the people’. This is the origin of the Lincolnian definition of democracy as ‘government of the people, by the people and for the people’. This relationship between the concepts ‘people’ and ‘rule’ has formed the nexus of most definitions of democracy given over time.

As L. A. Thompson observes, “the concept ‘democracy’ is inseparable from the notion of power in the hands of the people.

It connotes a system of political structures in which sovereignty belongs to the people" [Thompson, 1994: 3]. So, whether in its original Greek conception where power was vested in the *ekklesia*, or in its modern formulation as indirect representation, the emphasis is on the people's participation or involvement in governance, and most definitions of democracy have attempted to reflect this. For example, whereas Schattschneider defines democracy as a competitive political system in which competing leaders and organisations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process [Schattschneider, 1960], Philips Shively, sees democracy as a state in which all fully qualified citizens vote at regular intervals to choose among alternative candidates, the people who would be in charge of setting the state's policies [Shively, 1997]. For Joseph Schumpeter, democracy is an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote [Schumpeter, 1943]. Jean Baechler views democracy as an organised process of rule in which the people freely choose, exert influence and control on their rulers and subordinate politics to procedural guidelines [Baechler, 1895]. Reasoning along the same line as Baechler, Seymour Lipset defines democracy as a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office [Lipset, 1983]. James Danziger's definition is more succinct. Democracy, in his view, is governance by leaders whose authority is based on a limited mandate from a universal electorate that selects among genuine alternatives, and mostly has some rights to political participation and opposition [Danziger, 1998].

From the foregoing definitions, one can see that democracy has been conceived majorly in relation to political life. "Since the classical age" observes Norberto Bobbio, "the term 'democracy' has always been used to designate one of the forms of government; or rather one of the various ways in which political power can be exercised. Specifically, it designates that form of government in which political power is exercised by the people" [Bobbio, 1989: 133]. Most definitions of democracy have therefore been emphasising those features that present the whole idea of democracy as simply political.

But as Owolabi, rightly opines, every genuine conceptualisation of democracy must be reducible to its essential ideals, because a democracy can be said to exist only in so far as its ideals and values bring it to being [Owolabi, 1999: 6]. Dipo Irele corroborates this when he states that “any democratic form of arrangement should have certain basic ideals [and that] the extent to which a system exhibits these ideals shows the extent to which it truly qualifies as a democracy” [Irele, 1998: 83]. The point being made here by Irele and Owolabi is that every genuine conceptualisation of democracy must be reducible to its essential ideals; ideals that extend to homes, neighbourhoods, workplace and other institutions of society, suggesting that democracy is a wider generic concept of which the political conception is but a part. What then are these ideals that should define every genuine conceptualisation of democracy?

The Ideals of Democracy

Discussions of the ideals of democracy have over the years tended to dwell more on those features that define democracy as a form of government [See for example: Bello, 2002; Gogonta, 1988; Olajide, 1991; Sorenson, 1977]. Such features include:

1. The principle of majority rule
2. Free, fair and recurring elections
3. Male and female universal suffrage
4. Respect for fundamental human rights such as: freedom of expression, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, right to information about public issues, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of political association, right to fair hearing and public trial, right to be treated equally under the law.
5. Supremacy of the constitution
6. An independent Judiciary.
7. Individual worth and moral autonomy
8. Tolerance and respect for the views of others
9. Dialogue and compromise.
10. Due process
11. Accountability
12. Social trust and social justice
13. Free and independent press
14. Viable and effective opposition and

15. The rule of law.

Although the list appears unending, the fact however remains that these features of democracy as a form of government derive actually from the more fundamental moral ideals associated with democracy as a mode of associated living. These fundamental ideals include justice, "equality, liberty and human dignity" [Gitonga, 1988: 3]. It is these values that link and mediate among the various features of democracy enumerated above and they also generate a basis for addressing, at the various domains of society, important questions of the purpose of human existence and other issues relating to the good life.

Devolving the Ideals of Democracy

Hollingshead once remarked that "democracy is a social relationship, a conscious striving on the part of each member for the advancement of the common welfare" [Hollingshed, 1941: 17-18], and not some form of political organisation that is apart or above the members of the society. This means that democracy is essentially a mode of associated living and that its basic ideals should underlie relationships in the various groups and institutions to which members of the society belong.

One of the most basic instruments for organising life in any social relationship is language. Not only is language a means of communication, it is also a veritable instrument of thought. It is the tool with which we convey our thoughts, emotions, intentions and desires to the rest of the world. Language is used to convey information that is capable of creating a new state of affairs for both the speaker, as well as the individual for whom the information is intended. However, effective and profitable communication cannot be possible without the democratic use of language. According to John Searle,

...the essential thing about human beings is that language gives them the capacity to represent. Furthermore, they can represent not only what is the case but what was the case, what will be the case, and what they would like to be the case. Even more spectacularly, they can lie. They can represent something as being the case even though they believe that it is not the case [Searle, 2008: 35].

The implication of Searle's assertion above is that language is capable of causing serious social and political consequences when not put into proper use. But with the democratic virtues of tolerance and compromise, it becomes possible to create an enabling environment for the growing healthy interaction among communities, tribes and nations of different cultures through language. These democratic virtues have also led to the modification of language and the production of new vocabularies that make communication in a particular linguistic community possible. So, much of social existence depends on "a willingness to overcome the barriers to mutual understanding, including the linguistic ones" [Archibugi, 2005], and these barriers can be overcome through tolerance and compromise. When Davidson wrote that "If we want to understand others, we must count them right in most matters" [Davidson, 2001: 329], he apparently was thinking about tolerance and compromise within the context of language and communication.

Having established the significance of the democratic virtues of tolerance and compromise to language as a veritable instrument of social relationships generally, let us now proceed by moving a little bit away from generalities to examine concrete units of society where the ideals of democracy should form the basis of action and inter-actions, beginning with the family.

Democratic Ideals and the Family

The family, in Hegel's view, is one of the three moments of social existence, others being the civil society and the state [Udefi & Ofor, 2009: 92]. However, Man's first port of call in the physical realm of the universe is the immediate family. According to Unah, the family is

...the kindergarten of life for the human person. All the dos and don'ts, all our elementary moral instructions begin from the family...it is at the family level that the values and virtues of society are inculcated in young persons [Unah, 2009: 54].

These values and virtues constitute the mould on which the young persons are fashioned, and in the final analysis determine how they turn out and who they become in the world [Udefi, 2009: 150]. A proper institution of the family is therefore structurally interconnected with the development of the right social conduct, and the kind of relationship that exists in the larger society is therefore a reflection of what obtains at the level of family.

It is at the level of family that certain ideals that are instrumental to the sustenance of democracy are inculcated. In a family where activities are moderated by the democratic ideals of tolerance, accountability, consensus and respect for individual worth, or where decisions are arrived at after due consideration of the views and opinions of others, the ensuing peace and harmony enjoyed by that family is most likely to find expression in the larger society.

Drawing this same conclusion, but this time around using the principle of respect, Sarah Smith explains that: “Without the principle of respect, democracy cannot exist [and that] when parents show respect to their children, children learn the value of respect in sustaining democratic ideals” [Smith, 2013: para 6]. Apart from the principle of respect, the culture of responsibility is usually inculcated in the children at the level of family. This virtue enhances their ability to make right choices and take good decisions much later at the larger society. Also, the democratic principle of checks and balances which help to curtail human excesses at the larger society is first given a significant expression at the level of family through the systems of rules, regulations, praise, blame, punishment and reward. All these help to remind the child and other members of the family that there are boundaries to the freedom they enjoy and that they are free only to the extent that the freedom they enjoy does not infringe on the freedom or right of others.

Democracy and Religion

Religion is one of the most prominent agents of social engineering. In nearly all cultures, human beings make a practice of interacting with what are taken to be spiritual powers. These powers may be in the form of gods, spirits, ancestors, or any kind of sacred reality with which humans believe themselves to be connected. [Paden, 2008] This is in the belief that these realities hold the solution or answer to human predicaments. As Polikarpos Karamouzis succinctly puts it,

The potential answer may be found in a realm that transcends the purely physical world. Such an answer could be conventional religious view or it could utilise some alternative way of reaching religious understanding, for example, perhaps, drawing on mystical experience, meditation techniques, altered states of consciousness and so on [Karamouzis, 2009: 120].

The religious sector is one aspect of society where democratic ideals of tolerance, individual autonomy and freedom are expected to play out. In some traditional societies especially in Africa, these ideals were accommodated by their religions. As Oyeshile affirms, "there was religious tolerance by adherents of the various divinities and deities," in the traditional African universe [Oyeshile, 2011: 55]. But with respect to modern societies, most especially in Africa, Tunde Bewaji is right in asserting that "there are very few traditions of...democracy in religious spaces, as religion intrinsically frowns on insubordination and diffusion of responsibility" [Bewaji, 2012: 176]. Given this lack of democratic ideals in "religious spaces", it would be difficult to see how religion could help facilitate human equality and peaceful coexistence in the larger society, which are the very goals of democracy as a mode of social organisation. But with the devolution of the democratic ideals of tolerance, individual autonomy and freedom in religion, the individual's capacity to be tolerant of the views of others and to make choices without coercion which are fundamental to the practice of democracy, will be greatly enhanced.

Democratic Ethos and the Financial Sector

Takis Fotopoulos once remarked that poverty is the most important explanatory factor of the differential fertility rates between countries and among individuals, and that poverty is determined by the distribution of income [Fotopoulos, 1997: 121]. The banks and other financial institutions of society are the ones saddled with the responsibility of managing 'income' and finances. One cannot but underscore the import of democratic ideals like social trust, transparency and accountability in the activities of these institutions. It is only when these ideals underlie the operations of these institutions that they would be able to develop "a social fabric in and around the economic system which would, at the very least, make such interactions as are bound to exist between economic units and government and society more open, constitutional and accountable" [Fotopoulos: 288]. Such a fabric would not only nurture a balanced, sustained form of economic development, it will also facilitate fraternity, inter-institutional associateship and democratic participation (ibid). This way, the financial sector makes significant contributions to actualising the ideals of democracy in the larger society.

Democracy and Education

Education plays a major role in shaping the minds of individuals from childhood to adulthood through the inculcation of values. Values are themselves structurally interconnected with behaviour. To this extent, the adoption of wrong values will result in wrong pattern of behaviour by persons and groups and wrong behaviour will eventually result in the negative unfolding of events in the larger society [Unah, 2009: 52]. There are many agencies of education, but of focus in this essay are the formal institutions of learning (such as the school), where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed [Dewey, 1916]. It is these institutions that prepare young citizens for the roles and responsibilities they must be ready to take on in the larger society, when they attain the age of maturity [Kelly, 1995: 101]. Such important sector of society that prepares young citizens for future public life, through the inculcation of the ideals of democracy, would itself need to be democratised in the areas of control, administration, pedagogy and organisation. As Akilu Indabawa explains it:

The educational structure in Africa can be liberated by democratising not only its contents but necessarily also its form, defined in terms of control, administration, pedagogy and school administration [Indabawa, 1998: 152].

The point being made by Indabawa above is that education can intervene in the democratic process at two levels. First is at the level of inculcating the ideals of democracy and second is at the level of democratising the educational system itself through the popular participation of people in the control and management of education. Education prepares the citizens to participate in consciously reproducing their society. Such "conscious social reproduction" according to Gutmann, "is the ideal, not only of democratic education but also of democratic politics" in the larger society [Gutmann, 1987: 287]. In other words, the values inculcated by education prepares the citizens on how best to lead civic life; how to be orderly in the society; how to be obedient to the law; how they can be leaders or participate in the process of election of leaders in the society and how they can do many other things expected of citizens in a democratic society.

Education is therefore key to the availability of knowledge that enhances the capacity of individuals and groups to engage in activities that encourage the growth of democracy in the larger society. This makes education and democracy inseparable. Singling out the democratic principle of equality, Kenneth Kaunda expresses his opinion on the inseparability of education and democracy in the following manner: “hand in hand with education goes the principle of equality of opportunity, which must be another pillar of democratic institutions...” [Kaunda, 1964]. It is on the basis of this relationship between education and democracy, and of the cardinal role of education in the practice and sustenance of democracy at the larger society that C.C. Okeke recommends that, “the different agencies of education ... be galvanised to propagate the democratic ideals” [Okeke, 1989: 167].

Democracy and Science

Since the Copernican revolution that orchestrated the paradigm shift in the mode of understanding the universe from an anthropomorphic conception and revealed knowledge about gods and deities to the modern world of science, science has continued to evolve in great leaps and has come to be regarded as the most effective means for fixing our most stable beliefs and programmes of activities. There is now the general belief that if there are areas of human endeavor in which the scientific method is inapplicable, then such areas transcend the scope of human knowledge [Copleston, 1980: 12].

Since the end of the Second World War, scholars the world over have intensified the call for science to be infused with certain democratic ideals. This was occasioned mainly by the reinvigorated interest on the issue of rights, triggered by the massive civilian suffering during and after the war, as a result of scientific equipment used during the war [Edmundson, 2004: 105]. In 1964, there was this *Declaration of Helsinki* which emphasised the democratic principles of ‘liberty’ and ‘informed consent’ in scientific research. Excerpt from the declaration reads:

In any research on human beings, each potential subject must be adequately informed of the aims, methods, anticipated benefits and potential hazards of the study and the discomfort it may entail. He or she should be informed that he or she is at liberty to abstain from participation in the study and that he or she is free to withdraw his or her consent to participation at any time. The physician should then obtain the subject’s freely given informed consent, preferably inheriting.

For some others, science should be infused with democratic ideals because of the relationship that exists between science and democracy at a certain level. According to Mark Brown, both science and democracy function through representation. But whereas "...scientific representations stand for entities and phenomena in the natural world, political [or democratic] representation stands for the voices of the many, with devices such as elections authorising a few to speak legitimately for wider communities" [Brown, 2009: para. 3].

Given the fact that scientific findings are meaningful to the extent in which they are able to respond to or resolve basic human problems, democratic values, which to a large extent are basic human values, should form the basis of scientific investigations. This is the line of thought of recent researches championed by scholars like Philip Kitcher. In his three of his great works: *The Advancement of Science* (1993); *Science Truth and Democracy* (2001) and *Science in a Democratic Society* (2011), Kitcher not only pointed out the social dimension of science, since science is done by people with a variety of personal and social interests, who cooperate and compete with one another, he also argued for science to imbibe the ideals of democracy for it to evolve into what he labelled a 'Well-ordered Science'. According to Kitcher, a well ordered science refers to scientific enquiry whose research agenda and application are subject to public control guided by democratic deliberation. As he explains it, "science is well-ordered when its specification of the problems to be pursued would be endorsed by an ideal conversation, embodying all human points of view, under conditions of mutual engagement" [Kitcher, 2011: 106]. Kitcher describes the condition of mutual engagement as an ideal situation of democratic deliberation featuring an idealised set of representatives who are completely informed about each other's desires and preferences, meeting some ideal of empathy and with the desire to reach consensus. Such condition would

...be based on genuine appreciation of the possibilities, on recognition of the felt needs of others, on understanding how the options would bear on those needs, on tracking the ways in which all of us modify our views in learning about what others want, and on a determination to avoid an outcome that someone would find unacceptable [Kitcher, 2011: 114].

Since scientific representations and researches in science are not only about entities and phenomena in the natural world, but more importantly about human agents in the larger society, Kitcher is of the opinion that the ideals by which science should be governed should be the good of the society democratically determined. This good is encapsulated in the ideals of consensus, deliberation, freedom and fairness.¹

Institutions as Frameworks for Building a Culture of Democracy

In his recent work titled *Narratives of Struggle*, Tunde Bewaji raised a very fundamental puzzle regarding the extent to which undemocratic institutions could be instruments for democratic development or for entrenching a culture of democracy in a society [Bewaji, 2012: 177-178]. Notwithstanding its many variants or institutional forms, the general idea of democracy encapsulates “a system whereby the whole of society can participate, at every level, in the decision-making process and keep control of it” [Boutros-Ghali, 2002: 9-10]. Since the society itself is made up of groups and institutions, the participation of individuals at the various levels of society would be informed by their moral commitment and emotional allegiance to those ideals which they would have imbibed over time in the course of their active involvement in the activities of the various groups and institutions of society to which they belong. But if these groups and institutions are themselves undemocratic in nature, then where will such steps toward entrenching the ideals or establishing the features of democracy in a state, which many have described using the term ‘democratisation’, lead to? This puzzle by Bewaji is significant because successful democratisation requires sound democratic institutions that would ultimately reflect the character of the political society [Diamond, 1988].

Although, there are a set of criteria or ideals which present a minimum standard for the best practice of democracy as a form of government, and quite a number of these have been identified earlier in this paper, nevertheless, democracy also requires certain institutional infrastructures for survival. These institutions, however, do not all have to be basically governmental. There are a host of private networks of non-governmental, self-governing institutions that provide the essential foundation where citizens form those needed democratic dispositions, required for the pursuit of the ideals of democracy in the larger society. Jean Bethke Elshtan defines democratic dispositions to include:

...a preparedness to work with others different from oneself toward shared ends; a combination of strong convictions with a readiness to compromise in the recognition that one can't always get everything one wants; and a sense of individuality and a commitment to civic goods that are not the possession of one person or of one small group alone [Elshtan, 1995: 2].

Since these non-governmental, self-governing institutions provide the essential foundation for the forming of these dispositions, there would definitely exist, some kind of link between these institutions or associations on the one hand, and the entrenchment of democracy in the society on the other hand. Refusal to fully reckon with these institutions and associations in our quest for democratisation therefore amounts to failing to reckon with a basic fact about democracy, as a continuum that exhibits at many levels, all of which must be explored.

Although, political democracy as practised in the world today is the indirect or representative form, in which citizens periodically elect officials to govern the state on their behalf, it is however important to realise that democracy is now more than the business of electing some officials of the state at periodic elections; it is more also than adhering strictly to those ideals that prescribe the minimum standard for the practise of democracy; it involves all the processes of the transformation or the reconstruction of the entire society in line with democratic ethos; it is the entire culture that defines associated living and shared experience; it is a people's way of life. It is for this reason that democracy places power ultimately in the hands of the people, in the belief that the people will always have something good to offer in the governance of their society and that it is through their collective efforts and contributions that democracy will be better secured, improved and promoted.

Africa has been unable to present herself as a very good example of a continent where the practice of democracy has translated into one that fosters development because those vital locutions of people – groups, associations and institutions in society - where the ideals of democracy are actually devolved, and where people starts learning what it means to think, act and behave democratically in the first instance, have been treated as if they are innocuous to effective democratisation.

But as Olusegun Oladipo rightly notes, such institutions which regulate social life in its various manifestations and which inculcate those values that make social cooperation possible, are very central to the organisation and sustenance of social life and national development [Oladipo, 2008a: 85]. Unfortunately, Oladipo laments, we in Africa "...are still lagging behind in the task of pointing the way to those principles and institutions which should provide the guide to the conditions for the reconstruction of society... [and this has engendered] widespread confusion about the principles of action in politics, the economy and conduct" [Oladipo, 2008b: 1]. These institutions should therefore be brought into more reckoning in our understanding of the democratic process, in order for us to be able to confront the more fundamental challenge of sustaining our democracy, not merely as a form of government but more fundamentally, as a way of life. This is the only way we can, in line with Dewey insistence, maintain "the struggle for democracy ...on as many fronts as culture has aspects: political, economic, international, educational, scientific and artistic, and religious".

Conclusion

So far in this brief contribution, we have explored some structures and institutions of society that should nurture the ideals of democracy, with a view to broadening our conception of the space for the entrenchment of a culture of democracy as a way of life and in the process, enhance the performance of democracy on the African continent. In so far as the idea of democracy is anchored on the involvement and wellbeing of the people, it must reflect the nature and quality of the character of people found in the polity, the character itself being the product of the people's engagement with the many ideals of democracy in the various groups and institutions of society to which they belong. For Africa to make meaning of its current democratisation efforts and thereby enhance the performance of democracy on the continent, the various groups and institutions of society where the ideals of democracy are first devolved, and where people start learning how to think, act and behave democratically in the first instance, must be brought into beneficial relevance in the conceptualisation of democracy. This is the only way we can, in line with Dewey insistence, maintain "the struggle for democracy ...on as many fronts as culture has aspects: political, economic, international, educational, scientific and artistic, and religious", and consequently retain its original essence as a way of life.

Notes

The place of the democratic principle of fairness or fair-share, in the evolution of a well-ordered science is very instructive in Kitcher's analysis. For instance, Kitcher is of the opinion that the principle of fair-share should be applied in scientific researches on diseases, as many of the diseases currently receiving large support are those affecting the rich, whereas, a large number of diseases that even lend themselves to a more systematic program of research remained understudied because they are diseases of the poor. Consequently, he argues that the tractability of diseases should be waived, instead, "each disease should be investigated according to its contribution to the total suffering caused by disease."

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