REFLECTIONS ON THE AFRICAN ORIGIN OF THE THOUGHT-CONTENT AND PRACTICES OF SOCRATES

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Introduction
The object of this paper is to reflect on the impact of ancient Africa’s experiences, ideas and practices on the origination and character of the thought-content and practices widely associated with Socrates. It argues that Greek classical political thought and theorisation and indeed the entire Greek epoch was ignited or better still a by-product, reflection, extension or unacknowledged beneficiary of the Egyptian breakthroughs in political thought and praxis – breakthroughs that followed ancient Egypt’s holistic and organic interaction with her social and physical environments.

Over the years, a wide range of ‘popular’ literature in Western scholarship and their contemporary African victims have propagated a belief that Africa had no past or heritage. How far is this true, or is it a product of Eurocentric stereotyping of Africa? Has this always been so? How far does this backward stereotyping tally with objective and authentic African history – in the last ten thousand years or so? In particular, how logical is the view that classical political thought and theorization symbolized by the emergence of Socrates originated or even gained significantly from the autochthony of the ancient Greeks? In response to these questions our primary task, is to present as a counter view on the widely held thesis that attribute origination of classical political thought to the ancient Greeks.

In order to generate adequate data profile with which to unravel the source and character of Socrates’ thought content and practices, we shall briefly dig into existing records on Africa’s socio-political standing before and during the time of Socrates. In doing this, we shall rely substantially on the documentary instrument of data generation and historical/descriptive analysis of generated data.

This paper is divided into six inter related parts. Following this introductory analysis of the objectives of the paper, is a discourse of some contextual and conceptual issues. The third part briefly explores Africa’s socio-political height before and during the time of Socrates, while part four addresses
the issue of who Socrates really is, historically speaking. In the fifth part, some convincing evidence that point to the fact that Socrates was a notable beneficiary of African thought-content and practices is highlighted and analysed. This is then followed in part six by a concluding analysis.

**Contextual and Conceptual Discourses**

A wide variety of literature on what constitutes political thought and indeed its character has been accumulated. A major characteristic of political thought is that it focuses on the political ideas or thinking of the articulate section of a social formation/community over a certain period. Along this path, Thomson (1969) points out that political thought is better understood by "relating it to the context of time, place and personality in which it occurred." The import of this is that political thought takes place within a specific environment or what Johari (1987) refers to as the confines of a “whole community.” Political thought is thus not logically detachable from the community in which it germinates because its essence and meaning derive from that specific environment. This notwithstanding, it must be pointed out straightaway that the ultimate value of political thought lies not only on its logical interpretation of events in relation to the specific community but really on the fact that those interpretations are also found applicable at other times and places.

Although as Thomson (1969) notes, a genius is seldom typical of any collectivity, nor is he or she (the genius) really the best source of information about that collectivity as a whole, it is also important to note that the ideas of a great thinker are not necessarily or even probably 'representative' of the thoughts of his time. This is typically the case with the treatises of Niccolo Machiavelli and Karl Marx. This notwithstanding it is still necessary to appreciate that he or she is a product of that collectivity. Thus, though the genius may not be the best source of information about the collectivity as a whole, his or her ideas must necessarily reflect part of the matrix in the interpretation of social reality within that specific environment. In other words, a thinker’s thought need not be an abstraction or ‘a strange event’ deserving to be propagated or expunged by force. This is the tradition we observe even within the tenets of ‘Western scholarship’ as attested to in the writings of St. Augustine, Niccolo Machiavelli, Martin Luther and Karl Marx. This is also to a reasonable extent, the case with social contract thinkers and so many others. Simply stated, a valid character of political thought is that it is organically related to its social reality and praxis.

With the above statements in mind, one might ask, "Is it possible for a specific political thought to be a product of other-influenced or other-ignited