POSTCOLONIALISM AND THE TWO PUBLICS IN NIGERIA: RETHINKING THE IDEA OF THE SCEPTICAL PUBLIC

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Abstract
The concept of the public occupies a unique place in the understanding of democratic governance in Africa. However, its uniqueness is mediated by the fact that it is a trans-conceptual notion with theoretical ties to many other concepts—nationalism, globalisation, popular culture, modernity, civil society, the political, democracy and so on. This trans-conceptual character is further interjected by the fact of the colonial intrusion in the conceptual history of African societies. The implication is therefore that any attempt at understanding the manifestation of this concept in its African context must be ready to follow it through its often convoluted path. Ekeh's (1975) and Mbembe's (2001) analyses constitute a firm grasp of the historical legacy of the notion of the public in Africa. However, Lawuyi's (2012) recent attempt to ground an understanding of the public as the core of a "proposal to a new understanding of our [Nigerian] society" actually undermines that proposal rather than contribute to it. And it does this basically because it flouts the essential conceptual necessity underlying any application of that term.

Introduction
The idea of the public in postcolonial Africa, just like many other ideas and concepts, has a convoluted and often intractable conceptual history due mainly to the colonial intrusion in the conceptual history of African societies. This has therefore imposed a strict code of clarification on any

scholar utilising any of these concepts—nationalism, popular culture, modernity, philosophy, cinema, feminism, civil society, postcolonial, theory, the political, democracy, the list is endless. The implication of this is basically that it does not serve any purpose for a scholar to simply talk about any idea or concepts without taking adequate care to excavate the provenance and historical context as well as the translocal capacity of such a concept.

The concept of the public is one such concept whose significance lies in its capacity to be transconceptual. In other words, it is a concept that straddles most other concepts. In Africa, its importance derives from the attempts by African states, since the 90s, to come to term with the exigencies of democracy and democratisation as well as the urgent need to transform the African societies for the challenges of the twenty-first century. To contribute to these political efforts on the part of the African leadership, scholars in Africa have confronted the intricacies of the concept in an African context. We have the seminal work of notably Achille Mbembe (2001), Peter Ekeh (1975), Karin Barber (1997), and recently Olatunde Bayo Lawuyi (2012).

This essay will examine briefly the career of the concept of the public in African scholarship, especially its recent theoretical excavation by the anthropologist, Prof. O. B. Lawuyi. This recent effort is significant simply because, for me, it constitutes a concrete sociological exegesis that further problematises and extends Peter Ekeh's seminal effort. While Ekeh's "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa" theorises the public within a continental framework, Lawuyi's inaugural lecture drives home its recent convoluted manifestation and implications within the democratic space in Nigeria.

However, it is my suspicion that his reading of the idea of the public, especially in its highlighted three dimensions, errs on the side of conceptual clarity which in the final analysis

hurts and undermines his central objective. My aim in this essay is to point out the bad side of an otherwise brilliant deduction about the career of the publics in Nigeria. I intend to rescue the baby of the sceptical public from the bathwater of rejection.

Postcolonial Africa and the scourge of the *commandement*

In his seminal work, *On the Postcolony*, Achille Mbembe critically outlines the architecture of an average postcolony in Africa coping with the ambivalent legacies of colonialism. For him, the post-colonial space is a space of political entanglement made up of a convoluted series of "discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another" (Mbembe, 2001: 14).

This entangled history of the postcolony results from two significant but correlated factors. The first is the malicious legacies of colonialism which ensured that the postcolonial realities in the postcolony would be such as to make the hope of independence fizzle out before it is ever realised. At the level of politics, economy and culture, Africans were left with an ambivalent desire for liberation which became short-circuited upon independence (see Griffith, 1995). The second factor of entanglement derives from the complicated conviviality between dying colonialism and nascent nationalism in Nigeria (See Chinweizu, 2007; Zachernuk, 2000).

The postcolony therefore becomes a joint invention characterised by

> ...a distinctive style of political improvisation, by a tendency to excess and lack of proportion, as well as by distinctive ways identities are multiplied, transformed, and put into circulation. But the postcolony is also made up

of a series of corporate institutions and a political machinery that, once in place, constitute a distinctive regime of violence. In this sense, the postcolony is a particularly revealing, and rather dramatic, stage on which are played out the wider problems of subjection and its corollary, discipline (Mbembe, 2001: 102-103).

The regime of violence in the postcolony is continuous with that which colonialism instituted. This is because the postcolonial state inherited the logic of exploitation and subjugation essential to colonial administration. In this wise, Mbembe identifies two characteristic features of the postcolony in Africa. The first is that the postcolony and its dynamics generate state power—or the *commandement*—which is the sole instrumentality in the subjection of the citizens. This state power (1) "creates, through administrative and bureaucratic practices, its own world of meaning—a master code that, while becoming the society's primary central code, ends by governing, perhaps paradoxically, the logics that underlie all other meanings within that society; (2) attempts to institutionalize this world of meanings as a 'socio-historical world' and to make that world real, turning it into a part of people's 'common sense' not only by instilling it in the minds of the…'target population,' but also by integrating it into the period's consciousness" (ibid: 103).

The second characteristic of the postcolony is its capacity to be "chaotically pluralistic." In its attempt to create a system of meaning that will make the discipline of the target population possible, state power in the postcolony ends up creating a multiplicity of public spaces resulting from the equal attempt by the people to make sense of their collective predicament; their attempt, that is, to "rewrite the mythologies of power" (ibid: 108). The one dominant public space it desires

to enthrone is therefore bifurcated into several other public spaces with their own logics and common sense, and enabling the postcolonial subjects to bargain with state power in this "conceptual marketplace."

For instance, given that the postcolonial leadership had to choose the national question over the social question due to its failure to interrogate the colonial legacies, the postcolonial space became a space given to much obscene excess and magnificence of state power. The *commandement*, in other words, generates a regime of public meanings with its own rationality defined by the corruptive excesses especially around the misappropriation of public funds. State power becomes a framework for enrichment as well as for the perpetuation of poverty.

The basic difference between Mbembe's and Ekeh's analysis of the postcolonial state lies in their different understanding of the dynamics of the publics generated by postcolonial state power. Ekeh argues that the experience of colonialism created two publics rather than one that characterise the social order in the West. For him,

> When one moves across Western society to Africa, at least, one sees that the total extension of the Western conception of politics in terms of a monolithic public realm morally bound to the private realm can only be made at conceptual and theoretical peril. There is a private realm in Africa. But this private realm is differentially associated with the public realm in terms of morality. In fact there are two public realms in post-colonial Africa, with different types of moral linkages to the private realm. At one level is the public realm in which primordial groupings, ties, and sentiments influence and determine the individual's public

behavior. I shall call this the primordial public because it is closely identified with primordial groupings, sentiments, and activities, which nevertheless impinge on the public interest. *The primordial public is moral and operates on the same moral imperatives as the private realm.* On the other hand, there is a public realm which is historically associated with the colonial administration and which has become identified with popular politics in post-colonial Africa. It is based on civil structures: the military, the civil service, the police, etc. Its chief characteristic is that it has no moral linkages with the private realm. I shall call this the civic public. *The civic public in Africa is amoral and lacks the generalized moral imperatives operative in the private realm and in the primordial public* (1975:).

Mbembe's analysis, coming twenty six years after Ekeh's, expanded the universe of the publics in Africa. Given the penchant of those at the helm of state power to use the *commandement* for personal aggrandisement, the disillusionment of the people and the need to make their suffering sufferable led to the evolution of a "conceptual marketplace" populated by several, rather than just two, publics, "each having its own logic yet liable to be entangled with other logics when operating in certain contexts" (Mbembe, 2001: 104). The political and social ingenuity of the postcolonial subject lies in his/her ability to manoeuvre through the conceptual spaces to achieve a counter-meaning opposed to the "official" construction of sense and order. For Ekeh, most of the people found that sense not in the civic public constructed by government, but in their primordial

public with its own architecture of meaning and political etiquette.

We then begin to fathom why the idea of the public plays a significant role in the understanding and effectiveness of any government. Indeed, as Ekeh points out, our earliest understanding of what politics is all about has to do with the activities of individuals, negative or positive, as they impinge on the public space (1975: 91). However, at another level, the idea of the public appears like an abstract entity which escapes our conceptual attention immediately we attempt to dress it up in clarifying words. In other words, we seem to hit a conceptual wall when we turn from talking about the public to attempting to clarify it. The question is: What is the public? This question is much more philosophical than asking 'Who is the public?" This is because, as Hannay notes, the "who" of the public refers to you and I:

> But as we will see, that answer, if true, although scarcely informative enough at first glance for the question to be worth asking, is in fact highly significant. It is also rather complex, but seeing the complexity will put us then in a position to ask that first question in a somewhat different way. We will be able to ask both 'what is the public?' and 'what became of it?' (2005: 2)

To answer the "what" of the public demands conceptual clarity. And this, as we have noted earlier, must take into cognisance, first, the transconceptual nature of the notion of the public and, second, the intrinsic relationship between the public and the political. The status of the public space, to reiterate, derives from the fact that it is a space within which individuals "encounter each other with the intention of determining how their lives in common shall be lived" (Hénaff and Strong, 2001: 1). The implication of this therefore is that

any inquiry into the meaning and nature of the public is an exercise that stands at the heart of political philosophy.

Given the state of the Nigerian society, and the unfortunate fact that we have not been able to answer this political/philosophical question adequately enough, then the attempt by Lawuyi to interrogate not only the public space in Nigeria, but also its unique configuration stands out as an urgent contribution not so much to anthropology but to philosophy; and more so, to the philosophy of national development in Nigeria.

Mapping Nigeria's public space: Between the public managers and the sceptical public

Rethinking the public space, or the public, becomes imperative given that Nigeria has been experimenting with democracy for quite a while now without any leeway. In fact, Ekeh's analysis of the malady of African politics as an attempt to draw loyalty away from the primordial public to the critically starved civic public resonates with the Nigerian political situation. We therefore welcome "a proposal to a new understanding of our society" (Lawuyi, 2012: 1). Lawuyi's concern with the idea of the public is rightly, though with a pinch of doubt, situated within the context of "managing democracy" as a badge of "global acceptability" as well as the necessity of national development.

One perplexing uniqueness—(the negative, which would soon be obvious, derives from this perplexity)—about Lawuyi's proposal is that we had to begin from the "concluding remarks" in order to get an inkling of what he actually intends. And this is to argue that "...the fault in our development is not in our stars but in our culture, a culture experiencing the gradual death of a moral public and thus of character as model to be embedded in practical context in distinctive ways" (Lawuyi, 2012: 21). In mapping the Nigerian

society and its public space, Prof. Lawuyi's theoretical strategy is to distinguish between the sceptical and the moral publics, especially with regards to the dynamics of public governance. And so, he argues that

> ...the sceptical public and not the cynical one, has a role to play in directing development, but...this does not make it a moral public, for both roles are kept distinct in culture to serve the public managers in their role of governance. Both serve as checks and balances coextensive with, and, indeed, constitutive of social life generally; the sceptical public checks the public managers, while the moral public supervises the goings-on between the sceptical publics and the public managers (Lawuyi, 2012: 21).

Let us make two quick points. The first is that Lawuyi's diatribe against the sceptical public actually forms the bedrock of his inaugural lecture and therefore is harsher than what this concluding concession projects. In fact, the body of the lecture rides this public *almost* out of court while lamenting the invisibility of the moral public. The second point is that the conceptual distinction upon which the inaugural rests seems a superfluous one as far as the architecture of public vigilance in a democratic context is concerned.

Right from the beginning of the lecture, and without any visible and adequate conceptual armament, Prof. Lawuyi launched a blazing criticism against scepticism and the sceptical public that seems to suggest a long-standing intellectual resentment. For instance, after a preamble about the evolution of democracy as a Western concept marauding as a global prerequisite for development, he immediately proposes what would be the direction of his argument in the lecture:

I will argue in this lecture that while democracy has opened up space for more public participation in decision making, and specifically provided the opportunity to challenge the authority for more inclusiveness and social reckoning, which takes into serious consideration different capabilities and needs, *it has also become a factor in the cultivation of a resistance culture which manifests principally as scepticism and social rejection of persons and ideas and holds every account and performance in suspect*. The increasing dominance of the sceptics on the public space ironically correlates with a decline in the population of the moral public; that is, of those with the moral capital to define the orientation of strategic influence and leverage on divisiveness and antagonism, and raise the moral imagination for new origination of development (Lawuyi, 2012: 2. Emphasis added).

What could have served as some sort of conceptual orientation only proves to be a furtherance of the hostility. For Lawuyi, the peculiarity of the sceptical public consists of their formation as an opposition "to official position within and outside of bureaucracies":

They think of their opposition as natural and commonsensical, and view any action from the public managers that may come later as rather late, prejudicial, sinister, incompetent and suspicious. *The solidarity of the sceptical public, when and if ever they come together, is inherently negative*; but they are individually and collectively unstable in their constitutions

and reconstitution, n their solidarity lasts as long as they share the notion of a perceived enemy (Lawuyi, 2012: 8. Emphasis added).

The supposed vigilance of the sceptical public over the activities of government, in the above reading, would therefore seem to be negative because that public essentially lies outside of government. In other words, the sceptical public's negative character arises from its vindictiveness as an outsider to government. For Lawuyi, the sceptical public and its membership are free at any time "to carve out a sphere of autonomy, to create a space where it can express the creativity, integrity and power denied it elsewhere on the public space or in the bureaucratic structure maintained by the public managers" (Lawuyi, 2012). Prof. Lawuyi goes on to claim that it is possible for a public manager to fall in with the sceptical public, and when s/he becomes such a sceptic, "he refuses appointment or promotion for the worker that was perceived to be in the opposition for, who knows, he can be dangerous!" (Lawuyi, 2012: 9) If this interpretation is correct, then the nature of the sceptical public has been grossly misinterpreted. In other words, if, for instance, an impugned public manager can conveniently find for him/herself a niche in the sceptical public, then Lawuyi must be talking about some other conceptual entity rather than political scepticism!

Lawuyi recognises the sceptical public as the civil society, joined in opposition by the other out-of-power political parties. Given this acknowledgement, he then goes on to charge this public with making "arriving at a public opinion difficult by their appeal to discourse of essentialising identity; and, also, an ontological predicating of social categories, and moving them into an absolute, metaphysical justification" (Lawuyi, 2012: 15). This, in the final analysis, for him, constitutes what the Yoruba call "atenumo", a euphemism for socially annoying nagging: "highlighting same thing often and

often in irreconcilable circumstances, to give the greatest credence to a representation and opinion" (Lawuyi, 2012).

This predilection of the sceptical public for "atenumo" contrasts sharply with the solid authority and content of the moral public. This public, for Lawuyi "serves as the ultimate critical and binding authority, and a conflict resolution body endowed with social responsibility and accountability that a composite community can develop" (Lawuyi, 2012: 4). To become a member of this unique public, there is the need for the

> ...immersion of most of private self totally in public affairs, resolving differences of opinion in the public, and without the slightest suggestion of selfishness and instrumentality. The moral public is empowered by society with the ritual of renewal and affirmation of 'national/community ideology, repeated several times in a community life, and finds itself within organizational modality primarily because it charts such paths and passages that others would leave to chance or consider a risky business' (Lawuyi, 2012: 4-5).

Lawuyi considers the moral public a "disappearing species" especially in our quest for development in Nigeria. For instance, in the recent Salami-Katsina-Alu controversy regarding the Supreme Court of Nigeria and the issue of judicial corruption, Lawuyi laments the culpable silence of this public which is facing decimation from cooptation into the sceptical public. On the contrary, the moral public ought to serve the function of de-essentialising identity, "free it from the entanglements which determine its biases and the biases towards it, create a moral posturing about the truth, which sets people free, and as centre of power and knowledge serve as leaders raising social consciousness to new ideals in the

process of harmonizing knowledge, wealth and power with social ends" (Lawuyi, 2012: 16).

One critical point that Lawuyi makes has earlier resonated in Ekeh's analysis of the two public in Africa. According to Ekeh, in spite of the old-fashioned ring of morality, any politics that eschews it becomes automatically destructive. This is revealed in the zero-sum politics which characterised the public space in Africa (1975: 111). In other words, the rivalry between the civic and the primordial publics is aggravated by the fact that the primordial public has enough supply of morality which is wanting in the civic public. Lawuyi equally recognises the significance of morality in the public space "because it is about character and it is about human beings and their images, as object of public knowledge... [In other words,] What it stamps on public discourse is the value of character or image to the understanding of man, his capability, and his development" (Lawuyi, 2012: 20). It is this moral content that recommends the moral public much more than the sceptical one. Finally, Lawuyi identifies three reasons why the public space cannot be left to the cacophonic noise or "endless disputations" of the sceptical public:

> One, the level of ignorance is increasing among the other masses made to learn half-truths and prejudices that incriminate opposition.... Two, the body and mental subjectivity of the public is agitated, destabilized and hurt by unending disputations raised at every mistake and even credible acts.... Third, they have so much politicized public discourse at the expense of the very need of the nation—the belief in the system. That is why an increasing number of the citizens are losing faith in her. Nothing in

nature is perfect, only faith, commitment and
hard work make it so! (ibid: 22-23)

Given these reasons, it becomes crystal clear the intention of
Lawuyi. This is that the sceptical public lacks the requisite
patriotic spirit given its commitment to what appears to
Lawuyi as spurious, and even amoral, disputations. Of course,
this public brings much pressure to bear on the public
managers in the spirit of democracy; yet, in the final analysis,
these same public managers receive "less praise and
acknowledgement from the sceptical public who ab initio had
consigned them to a position of distrust. In the final analysis,
there may be nobody who knows how to do things correctly"
(ibid: 23).

Since the epochal events of September 11, 2001, there
has been several political onslaught and supposedly democratic
issues that have led to a critical redaction of the public space in
the name of antiterrorist policies. These redactional processes
have culminated in the circumscription of the public space.
According to Smith and Low, "A creeping encroachment in
previous years has in the last two decades become an epoch-
making shift culminating in multiple closures, erasures,
inundations, and transfigurations of public space at the behest
of state and corporate strategies" (2006: 1). This invasion of
the public space and sphere is further compounded by the
experience of bad and authoritarian leadership which refuses to
play the democratic game. Lawuyi's concern is with protecting
the public space from those who will break down its hallowed
and democratic ramparts with "atenumo"; in this case, the
sceptical public. My worry is that we are still far from clear
about the theoretical contour of this sceptical public. It would
seem to me that, conceptually speaking, the distinction
between the moral and the sceptical publics is really in vain.
The sceptical public constitutes the moral voice in most cases,

without the essentialising garb Lawuyi robed it in. We will clarify this.

Democracy, political scepticism and *egemonia*

The public space is rightly the geography of the public sphere. To understand the public sphere and its burden of democratic possibilities, one must necessarily come to term with the public space and its geographical dynamics (Smith and Low, 2006: 6). Both involve the search for a political and moral effectiveness in the dynamics of living good life in an organised social community. It is within this public space that the democratic processes are crafted as the power arrangement which facilitate the quality of the life we live. In this sense, the public space becomes a geography constantly under contestation by often mutually opposed forces. These forces are often represented as the state and the civil society.

Usually, the modern state plays the overlord of the public space, mapping, controlling and legislating its boundaries. This is the essence of what is called the reason of state (*raison d'état*):

> In the imagery of the "nation", the plurality and antagonisms of "society" were moulded into a political entity. The nation became the "unitary" body in which sovereignty resided … "Governing" took on the form of managing the "networks of continuous, multiple and complex interaction between populations (their increase, longevity, health etc), territory (its expanse, resources, control, etc), and wealth (its creation, productivity, distribution, etc.)". The artful combination of space, people and resources in territorialized containment and the policing, monitoring and disciplining of the population within these spaces became the foundation, and

the manifestation of state sovereignty (Axtmann, 1998: 6, 8).

The reason of state therefore created the state as a bounded political community pursuing the rationalisation of social life in the service of national unity. In political philosophy, the civil society stands as the supposed nemesis of the state's rationalisation of the public realm. Yet, if our interpretation is correct that the sceptical public is, for Lawuyi, the civil society, or *a dimension of it*, then his characterisation sits uneasily within the theoretical universe of those, especially in the third world, who considers the civil society as more democratic than it is often conceived.

One useful, and popular, way of understanding the relationship between the state and civil society is to conceive the latter as being conceptually separate from and opposed to the constitution and operation of the governance dynamics of the state (Kenny, 2007: 92). However, the obvious problem with this approach is simply that it fails to recognise the complex interrelationship and interactions between the two in governance. In fact, in most instances, this relationship implies a significant tension between the state and the society:

> Civil society is simultaneously arrayed against the state and engaged with the state in setting the boundaries of public power and guarding its own prerogatives. While civil society intrinsically resists state encroachment, the various interests within civil society also seek to influence the state in the exercise of public policy and the allocation of valued resources. This engagement may be either cordial or antagonistic, but it does reflect a common recognition of state sovereignty and (at least implicit) legitimacy. State and civil society are

> engaged in a dialogue at arm's-length (Lewis,
> 1998: 141).

Such an engagement is supposed to serve as the template for measuring democratic progress in any state. In other words, state-society relationship in a democratic society is bound by three conceptual issues: "First, the degree of state *hegemony*, denoting the scope of sovereignty and legitimacy, provides a framework for assessing the cohesion and stability of the political system. Second, political *inclusion* denotes the extent of societal access to the formal political process, and consequently indicates the potential arena of participation. Third, the concept of *engagement* suggests the degree of societal involvement or commitment to the public realm" (ibid: 143). While these issues may serve the purpose of comparative analysis, they yield a different theoretical result in Africa. This is because, as Lewis notes, these issues do not measure up to the required framework necessary for democratic consolidation which makes the public sphere more of a consensual rather than conflictual space. According to him,

> In contrast to the newly democratizing regimes
> of Latin America, East Asia and East Central
> Europe, most African polities are distinguished
> by limited degrees of effective state hegemony,
> a narrow range of political inclusion and highly
> tenuous engagement with autonomous societal
> groups. This is evident from the structure of
> state-society relations in Africa and the trends
> of political and social change during the
> postindependence era (ibid).

> Of course, colonialism holds the key to the arbitrary mapping of the contour of the public space. However, its effect on the postcolonial state is such that the state could only exercise its authority as domination—as a hegemonic leviathan. The formation of a democratic public space

therefore becomes a matter of contestation. And the first rule of engagement for the civil society is that of political scepticism: the civil society essentially becomes a sceptical public. In this respect, I find Billy Dudley's analysis of the dynamics of the postcolonial society in Africa more enlightening than Lawuyi's as a valid contribution to "a proposal to a new understanding of our society". And my preference is both conceptual and substantive.

In *Scepticism and Political Virtue* (1975), Dudley reflects on the problem solving character of the state and the critical role that scepticism plays in generating political virtuousness on the part of the citizens conducive to political integration. His thesis is that "unless a people cultivate a sceptical attitude, or alternatively, unless a governmental system accepts and tolerates political scepticism on the part of its citizenry, that citizenry cannot exhibit the property of virtuousness..." (1975: 9). Nigeria is a plural state, and thus the significance of this thesis should be immediately obvious. The objective of Prof. Lawuyi is equally not too different from the goal of national integration emanating from a belief in the system itself. Yet, one obfuscates the imperative more than the other. In fact, in the final analysis, Prof. Lawuyi's proposal (is it really?) essentially undermines what he sets out to do.

As a problem solving device, the state continually addresses one anomaly to the other in its attempt to approximate the common good which would make life more conducive for its citizens. According to Dudley,

> We can, if we want to, talk about the polity, in the jargon of system theorists, in terms of input, conversion and output functions, but whatever jargon we employ, ultimately, it is the state which defines which of the varied issues that confront a society at any given time are to b regarded as societal problems, how such

> problems are to be solved, with what tools and what are to count as solutions. In time, of course, rules are developed in the activity of problem solving to govern the processes involved, which rules then serve to differentiate one system from the other much in the same way that by examining the rules which govern normal scientific activity, we differentiate between paradigms employed by different researchers (ibid: 11).

The last statement in the quotation brings us to Dudley's employment of the Kuhnian idea of a paradigm as an analogy with which we can come to term with the problem solving capacity of the state. In this sense, and just like a scientific paradigm, the state and its framework of rules equally exhibit serious anomalies resulting from its inability to get past some problems. However, unlike the activity of normal science which tends to uncover anomalies, the state invariably suppresses them within the logic of system maintenance (ibid: 12). The problem with this logic of swallowing anomalies is that it makes it difficult for the state to articulate the progress of such a polity in terms of the political, economic and social improvement in the lives of its citizens.

This is where the ideas of scepticism and political virtue become critical for Dudley. It should be expected, within the theoretical thread woven by Lawuyi, that scepticism and political virtue would occupy diametrically opposed conceptual poles. Yet, for Dudley, scepticism constitutes an act of virtuous commitment to the state! Given that every polity has some measure of inertia which encourages giving up "the intractable for the tractable," then it stands to reason why paradigmatic anomalies would be suppressed especially when they do not fit into the structure of the already established rules. On the contrary,

> It is however the case that unless anomalies occur we cannot adequately test, or put differently, articulate, a paradigm. As I have sought to show, progress, in one of its senses, consists in the continuous articulation and elaboration of a paradigm through the resolution of anomalies. For the polity this can be possible...only through the inculcation of a sceptical outlook. For scepticism, as I have used it, the withholding of assent till justification is given, serves essentially to bring out anomalies in the problem-solving rules of the polity, and without anomalies being generated there can be no progress, only a deadening sterility (ibid: 14).

For a polity like Nigeria to make progress in its effort at national integration therefore requires the evolution of a sceptical public that would engage the anomalies generated by the rules of the state.

At the conceptual level, Dudley, unlike Lawuyi, begins his analysis through a clarification of the meaning of scepticism in his reflection. His understanding of scepticism is contrasted to the Hegelian "negativity of withdrawal or self-alienation" or the philosophical scepticism which denies the existence of the external world. Rather, scepticism implies "a general intellectual outlook...which does not deny assent but withholds it until justification is given" (ibid: 5). At this epistemological level, scepticism serves the purpose of making a state responsible for whatever decisions it makes on behalf of the citizens. To justify is therefore to render government's public acts—policies and programmes—legitimate: "[T]o justify would thus be to offer a statement (or set of statements) the acceptance of which not only enables us to understand why a given act was initiated or a policy promulgated, but also

enjoins on us, if not the obligation to accept the act or policy, then certainly the duty to suspend judgement about the act or policy, and therefore to react in a manner which could be construed, epiphenomenally, as acceptance" (ibid: 7).

Scepticism steps into the political interstice within which the state struggle to suppress anomalies through an active attempt to bring the leadership to the justification level that would motivate the assent crucial for integration. In this sense, it would seem that, just like the British example Dudley cites, the dialectics of Nigerian political history can be read in terms of a resistance to paradigm elaboration. And, fundamentally, this is what makes scepticism, and the sceptical public, a critical part of the public space in Nigeria. "Atenumo," or socio-political nagging then becomes a crucial democratic factor standing between the resistance to paradigm elaboration in the face of anomalies and the imperative of auto-commitment to the Nigerian state. Why does Lawuyi not acknowledge this role of the sceptical public?

This sceptical public serves one final function which, it seems to me, critically undercuts the distinction on which Lawuyi erects his inaugural. I argue that in the face of the amorality of the civic public and its resistance to paradigm elaboration and articulation, then the sceptical public assumes a moral mantle similar to what Gramsci calls intellectual and moral leadership. This type of leadership generates *egemonia* contrasted to the hegemony or domination by the state. And the egemonia of the sceptical public becomes imperative in the face of the hegemonic deficit of the Nigerian state and its leadership.

The concept of hegemony has an interesting history. In Aristotle, the *hegemon* constitutes the fundamental basis of politics which is regarded as "the art of ruling a republic according to justice and reason" (Viroli, 2001: 2). Within this context, the hegemon becomes a form of rule "directed to the

interest of the led, and not to the establishment of a general system of slavery" (Aristotle, 1995: 287). In other words, the hegemon is a ruler whose exercise of power derives from the consent and interest of the people. However, given what Viroli calls the "revolution of politics" between 1250 and 1500, hegemony's original meaning became transformed alongside the diminution of the meaning of politics as "reason of state— in the sense of the knowledge of the means of preserving domination over a people" (Viroli, 2001: 2). Hegemony is eventually rescued by Antonio Gramsci in the twentieth century through his rearticulation of the meaning of politics and hegemonic leadership, or *egemonia*.

For Gramsci, the concept of hegemony involves the quality of moral and intellectual leadership (or *direzione*). Beginning from what he calls *politica attiva* (or, active politics), Gramsci argues that it is politics and the political "that gives meaning and purpose to the world, and that establishes the conditions and goals through which the social and historical transformation of reality is attained" (Fontana, 1993: 69-70). Following from this, the intellectual and moral reform championed by Gramsci involves the excavation of a new conception of reality away from the existing structure of the established system. Hegemony, for him, consists of two roots, *dominare* (to dominate) and *egemonia* (leadership); or a balancing of force and consent. The Nigerian state, as it is now, fits Gramsci's characterisation of hegemony as domination. On the contrary, the attempt by the sceptical public, or the civil society, to press the state into paradigm elaboration involves moral-intellectual leadership of the masses. This leadership essentially involves the establishment of a philosophy of praxis and a new democratic culture around which the redefinition of reality is founded. At this point, Gramsci's egemonia meets not only Aristotle's idea of the hegemon, but also his concept of *politike koinonia*, an ethical-

political community of free, equal and diverse citizens who participate in ruling and being ruled, as well as the constraining and challenging of intrusive state power (Lewis, 1998: 140; Kenny, 2007: 92; Cohen, 1998: 1481).

This analysis implies that the relevance of the sceptical public lies in its constant attempt at rupturing the hegemonic framework of the Nigerian state in order to get the paradigm to work itself off its mounting anomalies rather than the supposed essentialising of identity identified by Lawuyi. In fact, as Laclau insists, the task of the popular leadership that the sceptical public provides "consists...of providing the marginalized masses with a language out of which it becomes possible for them to *reconstitute* a political identity and a political will" (1996: 49. Emphasis added). In other words, this popular leadership constituted by the sceptical public attempts the transformation of the masses from an unruly one into what Gramsci calls an active and organised people (*populo armato*) capable of initiating moral and intellectual reform. The popular leadership, in its united front against paradigmatic anomalies, also achieves the consensus formation critical to *egemonia*.

In the final analysis, we may not be able to escape the conclusion, identified within Dudley's analysis of scepticism and political virtue, that "those who deny a place for scepticism in politics seek not to preserve the State; they in fact undermine the State" (1975: 21). This, indeed, may be a far too extreme conclusion to attach to Lawuyi's intellectual effort in *Sceptical Public, Public Managers and the Decline of Moral Public on Nigeria's Public Space*. However, given the glaring conceptual vacuum in the inaugural, the charge becomes inevitable.

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