

FINDING A PLACE FOR INTERROGATORY THEORY: A CRITIQUE OF CHIMAKONAM'S PATTERNS OF SOCIAL DECONSTRUCTION, RECONSTRUCTION AND THE CONVERSATIONAL ORDER IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

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Chimakonam's brilliantly pieced article on Interrogatory Theory is his idea of a viable social philosophy for postcolonial Africa. The article is structured into two broad aspects namely: (i) Interrogatory Theory and (ii) Conversational order in African philosophy. Our attention in this critique will be on the first.

Interrogatory Theory (IT) is a social philosophy that seeks a revitalization of institutions in modern Africa. Its purpose is a "reflective assessment or interrogation of social structures (tradition and modernity) in order to deconstruct, construct/reconstruct or synthesize where necessary in pursuit of the future which contains the ideal" (CHIMAKONAM 2014, 2). In its introduction, Interrogatory theory makes what I think is a specious and audacious claim that "No society would ever develop if its inhabitants are free to live the way they please" (CHIMAKONAM 2014, 3). Ideas such as this are unmistakably dangerous for any society and a danger to civilization. Chimakonam believes that as a developing continent, Africa needs to hobble, the freedom of citizens to a certain extent, in what he calls "positive repression of treacherous human freedom in Africa" (3). It appears that he mistook the true philosophical import of what liberty or freedom entails, which is a knowledge that "where my freedom stops, another's begins". Furthermore, insisting that the purpose of the constitution is to dominate and repress human freedom is a limpid example of a misconstrued notion of the principles of "reward and sanctions". Laws are put in place to reward the diligent compliant and punish or sanction the rebellious. Thereupon, it is not done with the intention to shackle freedom but rather as an attempt to secure it.

Chimakonam applies the tool of interrogation on three (3) of Africa's postcolonial institutions viz; Education, Religion and Democracy. Education in postcolonial Africa is a system in retro-gradation. It is in this pathetic state that the meaning of education has been replaced with schooling where "curriculum lay emphasis on certification rather than learning" (CHIMAKONAM 2014, 7). The root cause of this predicament unlike Chimakonam's claim is not a faulty colonially influenced structure or a succession of bad postcolonial leadership; but the importation of a capitalist system. Capitalist system in more than one way seeks to commercialize everything possible and this has devalued the quality of Africa's educational institutions. Consequently, primary, secondary and tertiary schools are more profit oriented than value driven; which in turn has placed Africa in such morbid condition as we find ourselves. Again, because capitalism has gained

unbridled root in modern Africa, and the African's inability to see the big picture, make it compelling for him to trade a thing of substance such as knowledge for a piece of paper (certificate).

In deconstructing the institution of religion in Africa, Chimakonam appears to vent his personal dissatisfaction against Islam and Christianity. He insists that the "ultimate trouble with the postcolonial Africa is "religion". The colonial religions are the root of all the evil that plague Africa" (2014, 10). This claim is inaccurate and in no way can colonial religion wield that much influence. In modern Africa, it will be noticed that, adherents of both aforementioned religions spend just a little fraction of their time in religious activities which will at best be less than fifteen percent (15%). For those who go for prayers and religious engagements, they barely spend up to ten hours (10 hours) in a week doing religious activities. A great portion of time, in fact the other eighty five percent (80%) is spent in the pursuit of wealth and a better life. Howbeit, there are some abuse of religion in Africa which must be acknowledged such as a few cases of extortion by religious leaders and the extreme stands by some radical groups. But these abuses are not sufficient to be the causes of the catastrophe of postcolonial Africa. Rather, the African's inability to put the society first, the rise in humanistic doctrine, his natural selfish proclivity and a capitalist mind-set make him put his needs above all else. This selfish tendency and the enabling environment of capitalism have given little room for the adherent to seek morality, largely because the system does not favor the honest, the upright and the moral.

Lastly, Chimakonam's critiques the institution of democracy. Notwithstanding a few structural problems with democracy, it remains a plausible system of government for developing societies. Chimakonam points out that precolonial Africanized democracy was suitable for Africa since it operated a communitarian and consensus form of governance and decision making. Furthermore, he believes that colonially influenced democracy has come to replace this. Well, this paper disagrees considering the fact that apart from a change in nomenclature, the principles are very much the same in practice. In modern parlance, negotiation and dialogue are terms used in the place of communitarian and consensus.

Conclusively, we insist that all three institutions studied by interrogatory theory have a basal and common characteristic which has led to their defect in postcolonial Africa. This is the unbridled human selfishness that has been endorsed by the wave of capitalism; these have undoubtedly exploited all institutions in postcolonial Africa.

Relevant Literature

1. CHIMAKONAM, Jonathan. "Interrogatory Theory: Patterns of Social Deconstruction, Reconstruction and the Conversational Order in African Philosophy" [Filosofia Theoretica], pp1-25, Vol 3. No 1., Jan-Jun, 2014. Paperback.