

ON THE QUESTION OF AFRICAN LOGICALITY AND THE PREVAILING SOCIAL ORDER

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Abstract

To be an African man is to be notoriously religious, so says J.S Mbiti. Hence separating an African man from his religion is like taking away one of the most essential parts of his existence. Religion, Emotion, empathy and instincts have been the domineering feature in the African Cosmic Order rather than rationality driven by logicity. It is on this backdrop that some scholars have argued that Africans are irrational and are not capable of governing themselves. Some have also seen this as the reason behind African Colonialism. Uroh Chris, observes “the hopelessness of African conditions thus: African alone parades 32 of the world’s 47 least developed nations. Hence the paper examines the meaning and importance of logic in social order, the paper queries into the effect of colonialism on the African continent. The paper attempts to evaluate what governs the social order of the African people. The paper carries out an x-ray on the prevailing situation in Africa in a bid to interrogate if logicity has a place in the present happenings and situations in the African society. The paper concludes by affirming that if African Societies must move forward, Africa must move beyond reasoning based on emotion, instinct and empathy to reasoning based on logicity.

Keywords: Africa, Logic Culture, Emotion, Cosmic Order.

Introduction

The question of African Logic ought not to be a topic of discuss or debate since, logic is an offshoot of reason and reason is an essential attribute of all humans, by implication, Africans ought to possess their logic. One fundamental question that is being asked is that, since reason or ability to reason is universal, why then the debate on African logic; ought not logic be universal? In answering this question, it is imperative to point to the reconciliation attempt of Immanuel Kant, in his bid to find a lasting solution to the epistemological debate of rationalism and empiricism. It must be

noted that both reason and experience have great role to play in epistemic judgment. Even when one wants to go by the fact that reason is innate, one cannot shy away from the fact that experience plays a major role in mental formation. Hence, geographical location, people, society, community among others have a great role to play in how a people reason. This birth the fact that even when reason is a universal trait, how we reason is not, neither is logic. Hence, the interrogation of African logic and its evidence in the African experience.

Logic is literarily defined as the science of reason, logic helps us to determine correct and incorrect reason, but then since mode of reasoning is not universal, it then mean that what is regarded as correct reason in location A, might be incorrect reasoning in location B, but the uniting clause remains that correct reason should or ought to be favoured irrespective of tribe and race. It is on this premise that Plato explains the hierarchy of the State and favours the guardian to be the most rational set of being who should lead the state. It is believed that they will be more accurate and precise in their judgment and leadership. Also, it is also construed that philosophy is a product of rationality, this birth the rational question in African philosophy and the existence of African philosophy itself, because some scholars are of the opinion that Africans are not rational and what comes out of Africa does not seems logical, which means Africans are not capable of having their own philosophy. Far away from the debate of African philosophy and rationality is the question of African logic and its lucid influence in African societies. It is important to quickly interject that racial discrimination contributed to the question of the existence of African philosophy, but it is worthy to also note that racial discrimination is not an holistic reason because prevailing situations in African society, then and now, puts

a question mark on the logicality and rationality of the African people.

Howbeit, we can critically point to the fact that no society is without her own barbarism, the African nations though possess some high level of barbarism, yet are not devoid of rationality and logicality. The subject of discuss of this paper however, is not the question of African logic or whether Africans possess a logic, but rather looking at the place and role of African logic in the cosmic governance of the African race and to see if present realities justify the existence of African logic. I find it unjust to the entire African race to drive quickly into the question of logicality in the sphere of governance of the African race without taking a look at the facts that has contributed to the distortion of this logic.

African Society and the Loss of Identity

It is worth of note that it was not as if the African society prior to colonialism was a perfect state, but then, colonialism has a lasting effect not just on the economic and political sphere of the African continent but also on the mental state. Needless to say that scholars in recent times, like Franz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, among other have advocated for decolonialism of the mind. The implication of the mental chain that has entangled the African man via Colonialism is the loss of identity or confusion on identity. If the mind is the seat of consciousness from which thought and reason flows, it then mean that Africans have become a victim of distorted thinking by implication an unpure logic. As if that was not enough, in a bid to rescue the African race from the effect of colonialism, the African race further fell into a deeper pit of globalization. Globalization did not only affect the African race but also re-engineered their thought pattern and by so doing, distorting their logic. At this junction, it is

important to probe into the possibility of African Logic vis-à-vis African loss of identity.

Some scholars are of the opinion that the search for African identity is not feasible, since Africans are not one but many peoples and races with a diversity of cultural beliefs, languages and traditions. Emphasizing the truncated effects of African unhealthy contact with the West as the main cause and problem of African identity crisis; Dukor, M says; “Racialism, slavery and colonialism gave rise to the African psychological and cultural alienation which also gave rise to the loss of collective identity.”⁵Also, according to E. A. Ruch and K. C Anyanwu, “it is all this, this racialism, the slavery and the oppression of colonialism, the ambiguities of attitudes on the part of both whites and blacks which gave rise to the psychological and cultural alienation to the loss of collective identity of the Africans.”⁶ The West considered Africa as inferior and without reasoning. They felt that the colour: White is superior while Black is inferior and that the blacks were condemned to be primitives. According to M. Dukor, Africans of the first half of this century have begun to search for their identity because they had the feeling that they had lost it. The three factors which led to this feeling were; slavery, colonialism and racialism of all these, racialism is said to be the source of the colonialism and slavery. It was because Africans were considered racially inferior and culturally uncivilized that both Arabs and Europeans felt a moral justification in expiating them by reducing them to slavery. Therefore, the heart of the whole problem of African identity lies in Racialism.

African identity bears on the stuff of which any African can be identified and associated with appropriately and comfortably. It

⁵Dukor, M. 2010a. *African freedom of philosophy*. 160.

⁶Ruch, A. E., & Anyanwu, K. C. 1981. *Africa philosophical trend in contemporary Africa* . Rome: Catholic Book Agency. 168.

bears also, on that underlying element of unity in the plurality of all African peoples. It does not subsist on the accidental facts, may be, by the virtue, that one was born and bred or lives in the African continent. This does not qualify to be an original primary stuff of the being. However, Dukor asserts certain basic primary stuffs on African identity. He considers African mind or consciousness: “that we are persons and we can think which is the major activity here”. This is the fact of group consciousness, having common experience or goal. According to him, “we need to ask ourselves, if we have minds, we can then identify our thoughts by being conscious of our minds.”⁷ The issue of rising to consciousness is very important in the philosophical inquires and search for identity; it was the solid ground for Rene Descartes philosophical enterprises. This consciousness can help to unite the many peoples and races with diversity of cultural beliefs, language and tradition in the African continent. He explains further, “Then people who become aware of themselves as they imagine themselves as history has made them, who treasure their own past and who love themselves as they or imagine themselves to be with a kind of inevitable introversion. Hence identity is a function of culture, group and collective personality.”⁸ We take identity as something that is both physical and transcendental.

Clarity of cultural identity and its evolving continuity are essential to create an integrated and integrating cultural framework, which is a sine qua non for relevant, effective institutions rooted in authenticity and tradition, yet open to modernity and change. Cultural identity is essential for the self-assurance that societies need for endogenous development. Expanding the opportunities for the

⁷Dukor, M. 2010a. *African freedom of philosophy*. 157.

⁸Dukor, M. 2010a. *African freedom of philosophy*. 159

expression of people in these rapidly modernizing societies remains the only long-range solution to assist their cultural evolution. This space of freedom is linked to the issues of empowerment and governance.

Uroh Chris, observes “the hopelessness of African conditions thus: African alone parades 32 of the world’s 47 least developed nations. This is often betrayed by the fact that on the average, 1000 children are killed daily in the continent by some curable diseases such as dysentery, diarrhea, cholera and what have you ... added to the above is the mounting debt bill...”.⁹ Racialism is unholy understanding of West to be superior to the Africa (black), racial superiority there by making the African an object instead of a subject of his environment. Dukor, observes “Freewill inter-national relations and mutual co-existence of mankind therefore seems to be non-existence directly, because civilization and progress of mankind is a natural process and secondly in the interlocking Egos of races and nations, some wills of nations and races will superimpose on the will of others.” David Hume one of the serious advocates of racialism holds that blacks are naturally inferior. And inferior race is assumed to be incapable of great achievement. And for Dukor “it was because Africans were considered racially inferior and culturally uncivilized that both Arabs and Europeans felt a moral justification in exploiting them by reducing them to slavery.”¹⁰

Slave trade has its woes on African developmental dislocations. The number of able-bodied young male and female that were sold into slavery remain unknown. And the consequence of this is still visible all over Africa. Slave traders preferred their victims from the ages of

⁹ Uroh, C. 1998. *Africa and the challenges of development: Essays by Samir Amin*. Ibadan: Hope Publications. 2.

¹⁰Dukor, M. 2010b. *African philosophy in the global village; theistic panpsychic rationality, axiology and science*. Germany: LAP LAMBERT Publications. 139

15 to 35—these were mostly in child bearing age bracket and generally productive ages—the active labour force of the continent. Their shipment abroad meant a massive loss to agriculture and all other economic sectors, on this Oguejiofor, observes “the importance of strong and balanced population in economic development cannot be overestimated. It is the mainstay of productive labour; it provides market for what is produced and by exerting social pressure on many fronts, leads to more economic advancement and general inventiveness.”¹¹ Slave trade as it were led to a lot of socio-cultural dislocation in Africa. It also contributed to human right abuses prevalent in the continent now. Slave trade dehumanized the human person.

Colonization came with its destruction and distortion of African psyche, traditional identities, value system and world-views thus it opened another phase in the disorganization of African economy in order to suit the economic interest of the colonial powers. Where the Africans protested, force was used on them for colonial economic interest. Bertrand Russell, provides an insight into how the Congolese were made to work for their Belgian masters: “Each village was ordered by the authority to collect and bring in a certain amount of rubber as much as the men could bring in by neglecting all work for their own maintenance. If they failed to bring the required amount, their women were taken away and kept as hostages ... if this method failed, native troops were sent into the village to spread terror, if necessary, by flogging some of the men.”¹²

¹¹ Oguejiofor, J. O. 2001. *Philosophy and the African predicament*. Ibadan: Hope Publications. 30

¹²Russell, B. (1934). *Freedom and organization: 1814-1914* . London: Allen and Union. 453

The concept of “brain drain” is another malignant cancer plaguing the African continent. This is event of continuing loss of citizens of high intelligence and creativity through emigration. According to Dukor, “The phenomenon of brain drain has eaten away the man power and intellectual resources that would have been the bedrock and galvanizing motif for African citizenship and freedom from the international capitalist system controlled from Europe.”¹³ It is on this basis of this loss of Identity, that the next section shall attempt to probe into the identity of the African People in Relation to the pre-colonial African society. Do the African people put precedence on rationality in social issues even in the pre- colonial times?

African Mode of Thought

African identity centers first and foremost on the African self-hood. It is important and proper to assert that the African is easily identifiable ontologically. In African metaphysics, the self is conceived essentially towards other, that is, a “being- with-others”. The African is not just a human being but essentially a “being-with”. Consequently, it is the community which makes the individuals, because of his relationship with other in the community. The African self is defined in terms of “We- existence.” Furthermore, Julius Nyerere calls this distinctive African trait simply “African brotherhood” with its root in the African extended family system. It is discovered in African metaphysics that “the self” is conceived essentially towards others, that is a “being-with-others”. Life for the African personality is an integrated network of artistically harmonious daily rhythm. In its ontological relationships, the self in African metaphysics is attained to both the visible and invisible worlds. In his words, Placid Temples, says in Africa we: “... cannot

¹³Dukor, M. 2010a. *African freedom of philosophy*. Ger-many: LAP LAMBERT Publications. 179.

conceive of man as an individual as a force existing by itself and apart from its ontological relationship with other living beings and from its connection with animate or inanimate forces around.”¹⁴ Also according to Panteleon Iroegbu, “the starting point of the definition of personality is not the individual atomic or autonomous self, but the social, communal and relational self.”¹⁵

According to Dukor, “The theory of communalism is clearly applicable to different groups and norms of traditional African societies”. The concept of “being-with” is in fact the fundamental idea or explanation of African identity. It is the community which makes the individuals, that is the African self is defined in terms of “WE”. It is an ontological relationship. The discovery of African identity is pertinent for a holistic emancipation of African. It is for the African thinkers to assert authoritatively their unique personality in the world and to find self-knowledge from within and not outside their culture. Hence from the forgoing one could draw out some critical implication on the thought pattern of African Prior to the colonial Experience.

It is imperative to say that more than rationality and logic, the African man place precedence over, emotion, instinct and empathy. Reason is not the first point of call for an African man while taking decision. An African man places emotions, instinct and empathy ahead. This are evident in African cultures, Proverbs and religion. Their practice cannot be thoroughly rationalized. An African man does things not because it is right, but because his emotion drives him to do so. *Spiritism* is dominant in African religion because, an average African man desires more to be moved by spirit not by

¹⁴ Temples, P. 1959. *Bantu philosophy* . Paris: Presence Africaine.. 60.

¹⁵Iroegbu, P. 1995. *Metaphysics the Kpim of philosophy*. Owerri: International University Press. 79.

reason. One could perhaps want to see reasons behind the colonialism of the African race. The African mind was not thinking logically but thinking emotionally. At the beginning of this work, I asserted that while reason is universal, how we reason is not. The way an African man reason is emotionally, based on instinct and empathy. This mode of reasoning has contributed to the backwardness African continent both before colonialism and after colonialism.

African leaders knowing this has the weak point of the African people have constantly played on their emotions and psyche to achieve their aims. The African leaders though bad and terrible have the emotional tools to control the African people in achieving their aims. One of the strong tools used by African leaders is religion. In the words of J. S Mbiti, he said Africans are notoriously religious. This notoriety is born out of emotions and this has been a powerful tool in the hands of the African leaders just as Marx has posited. A lot of Africans might disagree with this thesis based on their emotions as an African but it is imperative to look at some of the prevailing situations in African in a Bid to see the place of logical reasoning.

The African Logicality and its question in African Cosmic Order

The fact that this work is written by an African man makes it paradoxical, it is like saying that all Nigerians are lairs as a Nigerian, for if he is right, then it means that what he is saying could also be a lie, and if what he says is not true, it attest to the fact that his assertion is true confirming that all Nigerians are lairs. This section is born out of Plato's arrangement of the state, Hegel's dialectics, Levy Brule's assertion and a whole lot of scholarly claim that has associated development, growth, and wellness of beings to good mental state. It is upon this premise that this section aims to interrogate the

prevailing situation in African society in a bid to attest if Hegel, Burl, Hume's assertion of the African race is totally wrong, if the actions and occurrence within the African state showcase logicity and intelligence.

At this junction permit me to make my first derogatory but needed remark about the African continent. There is high level of mediocrity and irrationality that engulfed the knowledge based system and scholarship in the African continent. The gap between the gown(academic and scholarship) and the society is very wide in the African continent than in any other continent of the world, and even the bit of scholarship being promoted constitute imperialism This was the assertion of Claude Ake. The African logic is only in pages of books and not been evident in social structure and life of the African people. The knowledge base in Africa has being distorted; hence it becomes very difficult to process true African epistemology or logic. By logic here, I do not mean formal logic, but rather ability to come out with correct epistemic knowledge that is African qua African devoid of errors and western influence.

Furthermore, logic becomes irrelevant if it cannot be used to at least govern one's self. That is, logic should reflect in the life of an individual who claim to possess it. Howbeit the possession of African logic is not evident in the African society. The African society is largely underdeveloped and has been bewildered by so many problems ranging from terrorism, kidnapping corruption among other social vices, hardly can a day pass by in any African society that some inhuman happenings won't be heard in the news and one is forced to ask if this set of people think at all. But then, one might interject that inhuman acts happens in every part of the world, but then, it will be worthy to respond that, these inhuman acts have become the order of daily existence in most African societies.

They are gradually becoming part of life and one cannot but ask if Africans think not to talk of having logic.

More so, one of the plagues that have befallen the African continent is the problem of poor or bad leadership. In most African nations what exist are rulers(Leviathan) and not leaders. While a whole lot of scholarship have attributed the cause if African predicament to colonialism and westernization, it is imperative to note that the problem of leadership has been a perennial problem in Africa, African history have been able to point to the fact that, rulership and dictatorship is the African system. History has been able to sight several terrible rulers in African both before and after colonialism. Rulers like Sani Abacha, Mobutu Seseko, Idi Ami among other. Does it mean that the African people have not had good leaders, definitely No, but a wise man in the midst of 10 foolish people can do nothing than to be called foolish. The leadership problem in Africa both before and after colonialism is such that has questioned the rationality of the African race, by implication the relevance of the African logic. In fact, one of the reasons the colonialist gave as a reason for colonizing Africa is the fact that, Africans are not capable of governing and administering themselves, and up till date Africans still persists on the problem of governance. Perhaps, Hegel might be right when he said that the absolute spirit, bypassed Africa.

Another issue needed to be considered when discussion the logicity or logical ability of an African man is the aspect of religion. According to J.S mbiti, to be an African man is to be notoriously religious. Previous researchers have also been able to prove that African religion and culture are intertwined. From the foregoing having the backdrop that religion which is rooted in faith and reason are two antithetical axis, one is forced to ask could the African man poses logicity within a cultural setting that is

intertwined with religious bigotry. One is forced to ask if Africans truly possess a special form of logic, and if they do, why is this logic silent in their cultural and religious practices.

Lastly, we can say that it is through emotions that favouritism, nepotism and corruption are born. Africans over glorify the past and are sentimental in handling present situations.

Conclusion

Although African societies have been plagued with several unfavourable predicaments, hence African societies must move beyond acting based on instinct, emotions and empathy to reasoning logically. The African society if they must soar must learn to take the bull by its horn and avoid prejudice, favouritism, nepotism, sentiments born as a result of empathy, emotional affinity and instinct.