Scientific
Research

Dukor's African Unfreedom and Moral Responsibility

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It is axiomatic for most African scholars that the colonizers are responsible for the present problems facing the African continent. This is given much credence by Maduabuchi Dukor citing a barrage of issues which in summary pointed to the fact that the legacy of the colonizers to the African continent was ill willed to create chaos and therefore to make the African perpetually dependent on the colonizers. This paper accepts this fact but insists that the African as a human being with free will and responsibility cannot continue to blame the colonizers when he has choice either to reject the colonial predetermined events or to accept them taking responsibility for his actions.

Keywords: Africa; Freedom; Unfreedom; Moral Responsibility

Introduction

The society generally demands that people take responsibility for their actions and in doing this, some particular actions are considered blameworthy or praiseworthy, morally right or wrong. The imputation of blame or praise makes a moral sense only when the agents are free to choose from available options following the principle of alternative possibilities (PAP). According to this principle, one is morally responsible for his actions only when there are alternative choices available to him. The principle is stated thus:

> An agent X is morally responsible for performing an action A only if X did something B (which might or might not be identical to A) such that 1) X could have refrained from doing B and 2) it is at least in part in virtue of X's having been able to refrain from doing B that X is morally responsible for performing B (Hunt, 2006: p. 126).

Following this principle, two theories are often considered in discussions about moral responsibility and freedom. The first is libertarianism and the second which is very common among ethical philosophers is compatibilism. With a preference for compatibilism, this paper will show that the African, though rendered unfree as declared by Dukor, is not totally bereft of free will and therefore to that extent should be morally responsible for his actions that continue to dehumanize him.

For a very long time, freedom or liberty has been in wide usage even by people in opposing views in different epochs. Sometimes freedom is demanded by the oppressed minority from their oppressors, sometimes by churches repressed by atheistic regimes, by sects facing a traditional monolithic church, nations repressed by colonial masters, workers resenting the monotony in an assembly line in an industrial plant, by children from parents etc. In most of these times, the freedom sought is a kind of specific freedom and in some other times, freedom is sought as such, equating freedom with life itself: give me freedom or give me death (Roshwald, 2000: p. 1)! In our present discussion, we will limit the understanding of freedom to the autonomy not of individual persons but to individual states and governments in Africa. Freedom is not often linked to morality in most typical academic discussions but we intend to show in the proceeding pages that freedom cannot be divorced from morals especially when we need to impute some level of responsibility to an agent. In our discussions of African freedom, we will consider to what extent the African is morally responsible for his woes as well as the culpability of the African colonizers to the African present problems.

African Freedom and Unfreedom

Freedom in simple terms is defined as the right and power to act or behave as one chooses. It is the absence of internal restraints and external constraints. African freedom as presented in Dukor's work, The African Freedom, the Freedom of Philosophy, is considered to consist in greater detail from the negative sense of liberty as the freedom from external constraints in making desired choices. African unfreedom is therefore her "lack of the capacity to choose, act and decide for herself what or what not to do (freedom to) and the capacity for cultural, political, economic and psychological independence (freedom from)" (Dukor, 2012: p. 50). The African incapacitating constraints include a barrage of issues emanating outside the African continent which make it difficult for her to organise, rule, and fashion out her life and future according to her desired choices. Among these external issues are the ones implanted by the colonial masters who like politicians of Lord Macaulay in 1827, laid it down as a self evident truth that "no people (in this case the African) ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom" (Thierstein & Kamalipour, 2000: p. xxi). Africans are considered by the colonizers unfit to be free or to be at liberty in making desired choices. To succeed in making Africans perpetually unfree they came in like a big brother and made sure that whatever value considered African is totally considered primitive, antiquated and unfit for humans. In replacement for the "primitive and antiquated' African values, they left for the African, crises of values and negation of values as an enduring legacy in the form of European education and religion which were all presented and are still being presented in the European language, conception and mentality (Dukor, 2012: p. 68). They came with a deceptive intent to civilize and modernise Africa

but Pennycook (1998: p. 24) points out that their colonizing mission "was to destroy African and Australian society and halt its natural progress by excluding the native people from any say in making the decisions that controlled their lives." The deceptive colonizing mission of Europe severely impaired the African values to the extent that she found herself confused on the ways to advance economically, politically and morally.

While agreeing with Dukor that the freedom denied the African is responsible for most of her present woes, this paper is intended to show that the African is as well culpable and therefore morally responsible for most of her problems. The African should not be exonerated from most of her woes, even though true to Dukor's stand, the greater responsibility should go the colonizers. The colonizers are technically responsible for Africa's present woes while the African is morally responsible for them.

Moral Responsibility and African Freedom

Mark Bernstein in his work, Can We Ever Be Really, Truly, Ultimately, Free? (2006), narrates the tale of a woman–Dora, charged with stealing of clothing from a departmental store. She was found guilty by a jury and sentenced to prison. However after a short while, her defence attorney discovered that she was injected with a serum that fixed her will. This affected her neurophysiology in such a way as to deterministically cause her to desperately want to steal. On bringing this information to the jury the defence attorney urged that "since her client did not steal "on her own free will, "she ought to be exonerated." This did the magic, and the judge rescinded his earlier decision of a jail sentence (Bernstein, 2006: p. 1). To be morally responsible for one's actions is to have the power to be the ultimate creator of one's intentional acts or behaviour. Any lack in the power to be one's intentional creator of his own actions, ultimately implies that the actor is not free and therefore not morally responsible. Our concern here is to ascertain the level of freedom of the African in determining her affairs and consequently the level of responsibility that can be imputed to him in his actions. Like Dora, there are a number of indices but for which, the African would have acted differently. These include among other things, the colonial legacy enumerated by Dukor which has like the serum injected into Dora, been injected into the African to deterministically force her towards some set choices. He further states that:

> The state of things in Africa is never an accident of history. It is a historically designed legacy of turmoil left behind by the conquerors. The pendulum of dictatorship, military rule and militarism swaying across the continent of Black race is a necessary fallout from the selfish and long term capitalist policies of the colonial rule. There is of course no altruistic motive in the self-imposed civilizing mission of the white man (Dukor, 2012: p. 69).

Dukor's presentation of the African subjection under the colonizers' legacies of education and religion within the framework of European civilization is deceptively convincing and therefore could grant the African the leisure of blaming the colonizers for all her past and present problems. We will grant the African this leisure only if she agrees to be an "everlasting child" and therefore eternally "unfit to be free". The underlying question about African freedom, is whether the African has the free will to make other choice beyond her present state? An affirmative answer which I think is more reasonable will render him culpable for most of her present problems while a negative one will render the colonizers eternally responsible for the African misfortune.

The initial consideration of Mark Bernstein's "Dora" mentioned above as one acting under the influence of serum, made the judge rescind the jail sentence. In the same way, the initial consideration of the colonial legacies as noted by Dukor could be enough to grant the African the leisure of imputing the guilt of all her past and present misfortunes to the colonizers all things being equal. However, things are not always equal, further considerations of the story of "Dora" will put us in better perspective to appreciate better the complexities in an immediate imputation of guilt. A week after Dora's exoneration and acquittal, the prosecuting attorney on further discovery that though Dora was injected with the serum, volitionally allowed its use just to experience the state of being a thief hoping that she will be able to deal with the stealing force of the serum and avoid stealing. With this further discovery, the prosecuting attorney petitioned the judge who now reversed the acquittal and reinstated Dora's one year sentence in jail (Bernstein, 2006: p. 1). The judge in the first instance was very hasty in acquitting Dora and therefore lost sight of the fact that though the serum was the main driving force of Dora's stealing, Dora also has the stupid and unwholesome desire of experiencing the feeling of a thief even though she never intended to indulge in the act of stealing. We will neither be hasty in imputing blame to the African nor in exonerating her.

Colonizers' Culpability

Dukor rightly considered the whole gamut of the colonial legacies in Africa as a doom and a problem that needs to be solved. It is a misnomer coming from a "parent"—the colonizers to her children—the Africans. He describes the colonizers legacies succinctly in the following words:

> A parent gives her child the legacy of good training, good manner, religious values, and perhaps assets which may be educational or material establishment. A teacher gives his or her student education and requisite skill. A society grooms an individual with the mores, norms and values of co-existence. A state or nation now enhances these elements for proper development of the individual for his or her relevance to the nation and humanity. But the colonial legacies in Africa are a problem in the sense they are legacies of crises of values and negation of values. The "crises of values" is an index and measure of Africans' unfreedom from within and the cause of her underdevelopment from without (Dukor, 2012: pp. 67-68).

The colonizers came to Africa with some positive values but these were distorted because of their selfish intent. The African was made to throw away his nature, his real self and then wear the European cloak. None of her cultural, religious, political and social values were considered equal to the "gifts" coming from the colonizers. The traditional African cultures were maliciously considered inhuman and their religion, otiose. The political organizations of the pre-colonial African were not given better treatment. They were regarded as primitive and un-progressive. In fact, the African in the eyes of the colonizers and their commentators were encumbered with self serving myths and as a people without a history, culture and religion except

for the European intervention (Nkrumah, 1964: p. 62). In a popular work written in 1965 by the historian Trevor-Roper, Africa was presented as having no history and it has nothing to offer than "the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant quarters of the globe"(Wesseling, 1996: p. 25). This view was further expressed with much more emphasis a year after by the Hungarian Marxist Endre Sik thus:

> Prior to their encounter with Europeans the majority of African people still lived a primitive, barbaric life, many of them even on the lowest of barbarism … therefore it is unrealistic to speak of their "history"—in the scientific sense of the word before the appearance of the European invaders (Wesseling, 1996: p. 25).

Following this ugly picture created by the colonizers and most Europeans, the African is required to free himself from everything considered traditionally African and get himself emancipated into the religious, cultural, political and social orientation of the colonizers in order to be considered human. Various kinds of resistance put forward by the native Africans to freely choose the direction of their future were rebuffed by the colonizers with fiercer and stiffer resistance that "reduced populations, dispossessed people of their land, culture, language and history, (and) shifted vast number of people from one place to another" (Pennycook, 1998: p. 18).

If the traditional African is considered "a baby" at the onset of colonization, will he remain so on gaining independence and after independence? The affirmative answer, true to Dukor's position, is rightfully the intention of the colonizers for their "baby"—the African. The efforts of the African nationalists to assimilate the European values and the African culture into a distinct value that can be called African has not been fruitful because the colonizers never intended to give the African the level of autonomy to decide what to choose and what to keep. In order to make sure the African never stands on his own, he continues his interference in the African affairs through what is termed by the African Peoples Conference in Cairo (1961) as "neo-colonialism". The conference viewed the situation of the African after independence which they designated as "neo-colonialism" as "indirect political and; economic manipulation designed to perpetuate external control in Africa in more subtle ways" (Mazrui, 1998: p. 528). After independence, the Africans were basking under the euphoric state of freedom and independence until the colonizers came again to substitute the euphoria with what Christof Lehmann (1) referred to as choking massacres and conflict. He describes the indirect return of the colonial masters back to Africa thus:

> The old colonial rulers had returned with a vengeance. Over fifty years later, most African nations are, in spite of the richness of their resources and productivity of their population, still catastrophically under developed, impoverished, indebted, plagued by conflict, unrest and instability due to the return of the colonial powers influence. Those African nations who failed to comply with their returning rulers were and are mercilessly attacked. Libya and the Ivory Coast are examples for the new colonization's subversive influence and a warning for African leaders to face the lion in solidarity or be devoured one by one (Lehmann, 2011).

Following this kind of manipulation, the situation of the Af-

rican on the exit of the colonizers rather than changing to the status of freedom, changed to the status of "neo-freedom". The African though free in general terms to choose the course of his future, is subtly dependent on the colonizers who now dictates what he is to choose by indirect political, economic and social manipulations. In recent times, precisely in November 2011, Nigeria and Ghana experienced neo-colonial threats from Britain, Germany and some other western countries for their insistence that homosexuality is an evil which is considered a taboo in both countries. The two countries stand the risk of losing economic benefits if they continue to legalize against homosexuals. The Nigerian country men and legislators rightly insisted that the act is profoundly immoral and consequently a taboo and therefore refused to extinguish from her law books the sections that criminalize homosexuality. Obviously aware of the implications of saying no to the wish of the colonizers', the response of the Nigerian senate president, David Mark to the German ambassador to Nigeria about homosexuality laws is considered great bravely. According to him:

> Any aid (foreign aid to Nigeria) tied to endorsement of same sex marriage is not welcome. It is unfair o tie whatever assistance or aid to Nigeria to laws we make in the overall interest of our citizens. Otherwise we are tempted to believe that such assistance comes with ulterior motives. If assistance is aimed at mortgaging our future, values, custom and ways of life, then they should as well keep their assistance (Folasade-Koyi, 2011).

Indeed, most of the supposed economic, political religious aids to Africa are as Dukor (2012: p. 69) rightly noted, not altruistic. They are geared towards total African unfreedom under the bondage of the colonizers and their social, political, economic and religious whims and caprices. Under this kind of manipulative bondage, the African may not be totally held morally responsible for all her problems. This does not however mean that he is totally exonerated, he has a moral burden to bear for such problems and to that we now turn.

African Culpability

In Africa, the concept colonialism and its related terms—neo-colonialism and imperialism are often the central themes in most academic discussions. Usually in such discussions, the blame is not commonly laid on the Africans but on the colonizers who are constantly projected as having exploited and are still exploiting the African continent. When Dukor (2012: p. 69) states that "the state of things in Africa is never an accident of history. It is a historically designed legacy of turmoil left behind by the conquerors", he is not imposing a new view on his fellow Africans. Indeed, this view is general among African scholars who see the modern day curse to Africa as having its clear roots in the colonial era. For example, the colonial state was fundamentally authoritarian and therefore the independent states of Africa have remained essentially authoritarian. The colonial leadership in Africa was entirely despotic; the current leadership in African countries has remained essentially despotic in democratic garb. The colonial administrators were corrupt; the present administrators in Africa have remained essentially corrupt. This has remained the most common way Africa has viewed colonialism, neo-colonialism and the African problems. Another uncommon way to see the African problems is to beam the searchlight not on the colonizers but on the Afri-

cans themselves.

Following our simple description of moral responsibility where imputation of blame or praise is made on the agent according to his choice, an agent bereft of the ability to make choice is not imputed any form of moral guilt or responsibility. Imputation of moral responsibility is made to the agent who is the ultimate creator of his intentional acts.

The description of the African under colonialism and ne-colonialism, on its first value just like the case of "Dora" depicts a state of unfreedom, a helpless state where only the bidden of the colonizers are the available choices. In the case of "Dora" the serum injected into her was enough for the judge to relieve her of the moral responsibility for her act of stealing. On further consideration that she intentionally wanted to have a feel of what it means to steal, the acquittal was withdrawn for a well deserved one year in prison. Are there further considerations based on the actions of the Africans that could make her culpable for her problems other than the influence of the colonial masters? In other words, was the African bereft of choices in her actions such that the actions that brought her doom are the only options before her?

The most fatal reason for the African problems is not the activity of the colonizers but the activity of her government and leaders. They have a number of options in which they were to lead Africa to a glorious future but ignored these options to pursue selfish interests such that they "emerged as worst nightmares to the advancement of the African person" (Chihuri, 2012). We can no longer continue to cry woe for the corrupt leadership of the colonizers. In fact African nationalists fought to gain freedom from such corruption. How do we explain the present situation where those who sought freedom under corrupt leadership have themselves become more corrupt? The essence of our humanity is our rationality and therefore we cannot continue to say that the colonizers led us through corrupt means and therefore we are replicating what they taught us. We were not happy with their actions and we criticised them because we felt that there were better choices before them than what they did. In the same way, we are also aware that there are other options rather than corruption but we chose corrupt leadership. We must therefore be morally responsible for whatever pains our corrupt practices inflict on our collective values as Africans.

African problems today have little to do with the colonial legacies. Her problems lie in the defective political and economic systems established by the African leaders after independence. George Ayittey (1998: p. 322) states that despite the diversity of cultures and ideological differences among African leaders, "the systems instituted across the continent were strikingly similar. They were all characterized by a great deal of concentration of power in the hands of the state and ultimately one individual." Even though the African leaders resented the authoritarian colonial masters, the political state after independence was not different, the black administrators especially the military rather strengthened the unitary and authoritarian system since it favoured them as individual leaders to the detriment of their subjects. Practically most of the actions of the leaders were self serving. Their actions after independence were aptly summarized by Ayittey (1998: p. 323) thus:

> They misused their parliamentary majority to subvert the constitution, declare their countries "one-party states" and themselves "presidents-for-life." Opposition parties were

outlawed. "Dissidents" were arrested and, in some cases, "liquidated." The rationale for this burgeoning repressive system was "unity." Multi-ethnicity precluded multi-party democracy, it was argued back then. Zaire, for example has about 200 ethnic groups and multi-party democracy would easily degenerate into "tribal politics." … Further, some African leaders such as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire argued, rather deviously that, the "one-party state system was derived from African tradition.

All these were in a bid to satisfy the selfish desire to remain in the seat of power notwithstanding the wishes of the populace.

Africans did not only go wrong by the selfish and corrupt actions of their leaders; they also went wrong in choosing an economic policy for the young independent states of Africa. The African nationalists were in a hurry to develop Africa and so failed to plan properly in order to choose a suitable economic system for the post-colonial African states. Because of the general distaste for the colonial masters, the nationalists were quick to reject everything associated with them. Capitalism being the economic system for the colonialists was for this reason rejected as evil. In its stead, socialism was a preferred economic option for Africa. States came to assume ownership of major enterprises which were hitherto managed well by capitalists. They managed these firms haphazardly and most of the firms went comatose while the ministers were busy sharing the loots and stocking them in foreign accounts. George Ayittey (1998: p. 324) reports that the socialist economic system never worked in Africa. In fact, "country after country, from Guinea, Mali, Ghana to Tanzania—the socialist economy turned out to be a miserable fiasco." In few countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi and Ivory-Coast where socialism was eschewed, the economy was still badly managed and the government were still involved in managing most of the firms.

Final Comments

The position which we subscribed to at the beginning of this paper—compatibilism remains our litmus test in determining whether the African is to blame for some of his problems or whether he is to be entirely exonerated. Compatibilists accept determinism with a slight modification in order to allow accountability for human actions. It upholds the view that humans are either free or they are not. If they have free will they must use it otherwise whatever they call free will can only be regarded as only the appearance of free will. That there are constraints do not matter but what matters is that one can still make a choice. Compatibilism allows for a free marriage of the ideas of determinism and free will and hold that it is possible to believe both without being logically inconsistent. It is therefore "possible to embrace compatibilism without denying that the past is fixed in a robust sense or that the natural laws are fixed in a robust sense (Fischer, 2001: p. 48). In the same way it is possible to assert that the colonial powers have deterministically fixed the events within the African present and future and at the same time assert that the African has a free will to alter the cause of her past determined events. The repercussions of altering these deterministically scheduled events should not bother us at the moment but what is important is that the African as human a being has a free will. Her decision to continue in the colonial set agenda is her choice and she should therefore

be morally responsible for whatever comes out of it.

Crying woes about the misdeeds of the colonizers is no longer necessary, she needs to stand up and be responsible for her affairs. It is not expected that the greedy colonizers will rescind their neo-colonialistic attitude in the African continent because doing that will amount to a great economic loss on their part. The African should, like China rise up and be a man for all her affairs!

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