

The Pathologies of Modernity: Liberalism, Nihilism, Conservatism, Postmodernism, Intersectionality/Identity Politics, and Secular Humanism

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In this article, Mocombe highlights what he calls the pathological-pathogenic purposive-rationalities (liberalism, nihilism, conservatism, postmodernism, intersectionality/identity politics, and secular humanism) that emerge out of modernity as constituted by the West under American hegemony. In the place of these pathological-pathogenic responses to the vagaries of modernity, Mocombe calls for an antihumanism, associated with what he calls libertarian communism, as a panacea to the aforementioned malaises.

Keywords: ideological domination, identity politics, postmodernism, modernism, intersectionality, nihilism, liberalism

Introduction

Globalization represents a Durkheimian mechanicalization of the world via the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism under American (neoliberal) hegemony. The latter (American hegemon) serves as an imperial agent, an empire, seeking to interpellate and embourgeois the masses or multitudes of the world to the juridical framework of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism, and in the age of (neoliberal) capitalist globalization and climate change this is done within the dialectical processes of two forms of fascism or system/social integration: right-wing neoliberalism and left-wing identity politics masquerading as cosmopolitanism or hybridization. Both positions represent two dialectical sides of the same fascistic coin in the age of (neoliberal) globalization and climate change. On the one hand, neoliberal globalization represents the right-wing attempt to homogenize (converge) the nations of the globe into the overall market-orientation, i.e., private property, individual liberties, austerity, and entrepreneurial freedoms, of the capitalist world-system. This neoliberalization is usually juxtaposed, on the other hand, against the narcissistic exploration of self, sexuality, and identity of the left, which converges with the neoliberalizing process via commodification and the diversified consumerism of the latter groups as they seek equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with white agents (rentier oligarchs) of the former within their market logic. Hence private property, individual liberties, difference, diversified consumerism, and the entrepreneurial freedoms of the so-called marketplace become the mechanisms of system and social integration for both groups in spite of the fact that the logic of the marketplace is exploitative and environmentally hazardous. In this work, I argue that these two contemporary processes, neoliberalism and

identity politics, for constituting society and the global world order under American hegemony, are a continuation of the pathologies of modernity under the umbrella of conservatism, i.e., neoliberalism, on the one hand; and liberalism, nihilism, postmodernism, intersectionality/identity politics, and secular humanism on the other. As pathologies of modernity, both positions are problematic and the enframing ontology of globalization should be supplanted with the antihumanism associated with what Mocombe calls libertarian communism, homeostasis (balance and harmony between the individual, society, and nature), and subsistence living, as a panacea to the aforementioned malaises.

Background of the Problem

Modernity/modernism, emerging out of the ideas, ideals, and values of the Enlightenment period in European thought, is usually associated with human reason, technological progress, change, and iconoclasm (Giddens, 1984; Habermas, 1984; Marshall, 1998). This Enlightenment position is usually juxtaposed against traditionalism, conservatism, and fascism (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]; Bell, 1985). The latter represents a reactionary and protective response to the liberalism, nihilism, postmodernism, identity politics/intersectionality, and secular humanism of the former (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]). In other words, modernity promotes a liberalism associated with rationality and liberation of the self, which has given rise to nihilism, i.e., meaninglessness, in the face of human reason's attack on tradition and authority; and a diversity of individual constituted meaningless practices, with no foundation or connection to nature, represented by the philosophies and ideologies of liberalism, postmodernism, identity politics/intersectionality, and secular humanism (Habermas, 1984; 1987). Historically, in response to the pathological-pathogenic practices (anomie, suicide, iconoclasm, identity politics, and secular humanism) associated with the liberalism, nihilism, and postmodernism of modernity, conservatism and a return to tradition, masked as fascism, emerge(d) to protect society and human beings from the cunning of reason and practices of modern rationalism (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]). In this work, I argue that these two contemporary dialectical processes are revealed in the neoliberal globalizing processes under American hegemony, and highlight the pathologies of modernity, under the umbrella of conservatism on the one hand and liberalism, nihilism, postmodernism, intersectionality/identity politics, and secular humanism on the other, as the basis upon which contemporary societies are forced to organize and reproduce their being-in-the-world. As pathological ideologies of modernity, both positions are problematic and the enframing ontology (neoliberalism and identity politics) of globalization should be supplanted with the antihumanism associated with what Mocombe calls libertarian communism as a panacea to the aforementioned malaises.

Theory and Method

Mocombeian (2019; 2021a; 2021b) phenomenological structuralism, which is a structurationist theory that views the constitution of society, human identity, and social agency as a duality and dualism, views the contemporary postindustrial social structure in the West and America as paradoxically constituted via the pathologies of Protestant neoliberalism and identity politics. Mocombeian phenomenological structuralism posits that societal and agential constitution are a result of power relations, interpellation, and socialization or embourgeoisement via five systems, i.e., mode of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse, which are reified as a social structure or what Mocombe (2019) calls a "social class language game" by persons, power elites, who control the means and modes of production in a material resource framework. Once interpellated and embourgeoised by these five systems, which are reified as a social structure

and society (social class language game), social actors, for their ontological security, recursively organize, reproduce, and are differentiated by the rules of conduct of the social structure, which are sanctioned by the power elites who control the means and modes of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse in a material resource framework. Hence, societal and agential constitution are both a duality and dualism: a dualism given the reification of the social structure (social class language games) via the five systems; and a duality given the internalization of the rules of the five systems, which become the agential initiatives or praxes of social actors differentiated by the rules of conduct that are sanctioned based on the economic mode of production. Difference, or alternative social praxis, in Mocombe's structuration theory, phenomenological structuralism, is not structural differentiation as articulated by traditional structurationists such as Bourdieu, Sahlins, Habermas, and Giddens; instead, it is a result of actions arising from the deferment of meaning and ego-centered communication given the interaction of two other structuring structures (physiological drives of the body and brain; and phenomenal properties of subatomic particles that constitute the human subject) vis-à-vis the mental stance of the ego during the interpellation and socialization or embourgeoisement of social actors throughout their life span or cycle in the dominant social class language game or social structure, which produces alternative praxis that is exercised at the expense of the threat these practices may pose to the ontological security of social actors in the social structure or society.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the age of (neoliberal) globalization the latter processes, neoliberalism and identity politics, according to Mocombe, are utilized by the American empire (operating through ideology, ideological apparatuses, communicative discourse, language, and the mode of production) to retrench and force nation-states to adopt the juridical rules and policies of neoliberal capitalism, i.e., private property, individual liberties, and entrepreneurial freedoms, for capitalist development and accumulation. Paradoxically, the (Western postindustrial) left utilizes these same processes, via identity politics and diversified consumerism, contemporarily, in order to promote equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with the white globalizing power elites (rentier oligarchs) of the right in spite of the anomic, fascistic, exploitative, environmentally devastating, secular humanistic, and identitarian problematics associated with, or caused by, the latter processes under capitalism and American hegemony. In fact, they project the identity politics and intersectionality of postmodern and post-structural theorizing as the end state of modernity and its secular humanist discourse.

Hence, instead of promoting an alternative form of system and social integration to the neoliberal fascism of the right, the cultural elites of the left, antagonistically, building on the concepts of postmodern and post-structural theories, seek to integrate within it using the same methods, i.e., radical authoritarianism, ultranationalism, forcible suppression of opposition, and strong regimentation of society and of the economy, of the fascist right to promote the narcissistic exploration of self, sexuality, identity politics, diversified consumerism, and equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with the white power elites, rentier oligarchs, (under the umbrella of secular humanism) as the counter-hegemonic alternative to neoliberalism in the age of globalization and climate change. That is to say, they have institutionalized the pathologies (individual liberalism, nihilism, conservatism, and identity politics) of modernity as the mechanisms of system and social integration through the logic of postmodernism. Under the two processes, neoliberalism and identity politics, America and the West promote globalization, which in essence represents representation and inclusion through the commodification of the self and (meaningless) cultural/sexual identity, for diversified consumerism, within

the capitalist world-system, without difference from the purposive-rationality of the white power elites, i.e., agents of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism as highlighted by Mocombe in his libertarian communism.

Globalization represents the discursive practice, “spirit of capitalism”, of American agents of the Protestant Ethic, rentier oligarchs, seeking to interpellate and homogenize, through outsourcing, mass mediaization, and consumption patterns, “other” human behaviors, cultures and sexual identities, around the globe within the logic of their metaphysical discourse, “The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism”, so as to accumulate profit, via agricultural, industrial, and post-industrial/consumerist production, for the predestined from the damned. That is, via globalization social actors around the globe are socialized, through state ideological apparatuses such as education and neoliberal market forces, funded by the IMF, World Bank, etc., via the US nation-state, to become agents of the Protestant Ethic so as to fulfill their labor and consumptive roles in the organization of work required by their nation-state in the global capitalist world-system under American hegemony and its multisexual, multicultural, etc., rentier oligarchs.

Integration via the retrenchment of the nation state under American global hegemony subsequently leads to economic gain and status for a few predestined, administrative bourgeoisie, comprador bourgeoisie, or transnational capitalist class, that in-turn become cultural consumers, given the mediaization of society, of commodified identities, and bourgeois goods and services from postindustrial societies like America while the masses (whose identities are commodified) are taught (via the church or school) the Protestant work ethic to labor in agricultural, industrial, or tertiary tourist or financial industries. Hence, proper socialization of the other in the contemporary capitalist American dominated world-system is tantamount to hybridization, i.e., the socialization of the other as a liberal bourgeois Protestant *other* seeking equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with their white counterparts within the neoliberal framework of the global capitalist nation-state world-system under American hegemony by commodifying and servicing their cultural, sexual, and self-identities for capital accumulation and representation. This left-wing process of integration via hybridization and commodification is just as fascistic as the right-wing integrative measures of the globalizing nation, i.e., America, which governs the world through its rentier oligarchs, and does not proffer an alternative social praxis or purposive-rationality to the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism, but instead allows the other to integrate the latter via its demystification under the umbrella of secular humanism.

Secular humanism with its Enlightenment emphasis on human reason and secular ethics that undergird the neoliberal order, naturalism, and rejection of religious dogma is no less pathological-pathogenic than the reactionary conservatism that emerged to protect the individual and society from the nihilism, liberalism, identity politics, etc., of modernity and globalization (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]). That is, secular humanism does not attack the ontological and epistemological assumptions of modernity; in the hands of the other seeking equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with the white rentier oligarchs of the neoliberal order, the emphasis is simply to push for a more perfect modernity despite its exploitative and destructive logic revealed by the climate change problematic and the proletarianization of the world’s masses.

For Mocombe (2019), the alternative to the latter processes, neoliberalism, identity politics/intersectionality under the logic of postmodernism, and secular humanism, by which the West and America attempt to constitute their societies and the global capitalist world-system amidst their conservative neoliberalism, ought to be an antihumanism associated with what he calls libertarian communism. Against secular humanism, Mocombe calls for an antihumanist philosophy and psychology that emphasizes a metaphysical reason that seeks to tie human

agency to the nature of reality as such as revealed by a substantive rationality, which seeks homeostasis, balance, and harmony between the individual, society, and nature, and subsistence living as opposed to the instrumental rationality of the Enlightenment. At the sociopolitical economic level, individual liberties and equality would be maintained by constituting a state wherein its resources are used by the people for the effective redistribution of societal resources, for subsistence and sustainable living and development, through the provision of an extensive safety net of public services like publicly supported education, health care, transportation, child care, housing; a progressive tax structure that reduces and redistributes the wide disparities of income between rich and poor; and the guarantee of a living wage to all members of the community so that they can experience total liberty within the limits to growth logic of the earth itself.

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