

Social History, African Identity and the Memory Theory

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KEYWORDS Philosophy. Identity. Self. Memory. Culture

ABSTRACT In recent times, one emerging controversy that border on anthropology, philosophy and social history is the nature of the African self. As discussed, the problematic of the African identity stems from the age-long view that Africans have no identity because it is believed that he had no history except the history of the Europeans in Africa. This paper discovers that, today, the task of constructing African identity through his history is challenging. In most cases, the wrong perception about the African identity stems from a deliberate neglect of the symbolic, practical logic of the normative perspective of the community concerned. This paper concludes that the memory theory, as a philosophical response to the problem of identity, has afforded a philosophical study of the African self in the light of reflective consciousness of his past. In its epistemological import, the memory theory has shed more light on the African identity in the sense that if the African is said to lack a history i.e. a memory, how come we can recollect them now? The memory theory has significantly emphasised the view that identity is not static. Given this state, the African identity appears empowering and manifests a qualifying ego.

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