Does Chimakonam stand up for Metz's defence of ubuntu at the expense of Matolino's criticisms? A response to Cees Maris

Kwanele P. MAGOSO

Department of Philosophy and Applied Ethics, University of Zululand
Email: MagosoK@unizulu.ac.za
ORCID: 0000-0002-6004-9944

Abstract

Cees Maris challenges Bernard Matolino and Wenceslaus Kwindingwi for not presenting an alternative to ubuntu following their claim that it is moribund for modern application and proposes political liberalism as the possible alternative. Although Maris discussed other scholars such as Mogobe Ramose and John Locke, I only respond to his reading of Chimakonam's intervention in the Matolino-Kwindingwi-Metz debate on the ubuntu discourse. Maris asserts that Chimakonam stands up for Metz's defence of ubuntu at the expense of Matolino's criticisms. In what follows, I argue that Maris misreads Chimakonam's intervention and reject the view that Chimakonam stands up for Metz's defence of ubuntu at the expense of Matolino's criticisms.
Keywords: *Ubuntu*, *Metz, Matolino, Chimakonam*, *Maris*.

Introduction.

Cees Maris (2020) has latched onto the philosophical discussions of ubu-ntu and ubuntu in recent years.[1] His contribution ignites controversy on the subject (MARIS 2020; RAMOSE 2022). For example, he acknowledges Bernard Matolino and Wenceslaus Kwindingwi's (2013) claim that ubuntu has no relevance in modern social theorising but challenges them for failing to present an alternative to ubuntu (MARIS 2020). He argues that ubuntu should not be a decisive constitutional model for applying state force in Africa (MARIS 2020). Maris, then, proposes the constitutional model of political liberalism as the alternative for ordinary South Africans (see MARIS 2020, 308; 322–323). Part of what goes into this model is the view that it is designed to solve the "problem of social plurality and ideological contest" (MARIS 2020, 308; 322).

---

[1] What is called "ubuntu" is, for Ramose (2022, 15), philosophically different from what he refers to as "ubu-ntu". He argues that ubu-ntu mirrors the philosophy of ubu-ntu that he espouses, and is quite different from the ubuntu that is discussed by Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013), Metz (2007, 2014), Matolino (2015), Chimakonam (2016), Praeg (2017), and Maris (2020) etc.

However, I observe that there is something awkward about Maris' reading of Chimakonam's intervention on the Matolino and Kwindingwi-Metz debate. The awkwardness is couched in his assertion that "Chimakonam (2016) stands up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino and Ramose" (MARIS 2020, 318). In this essay, I only respond to Maris' argument that Chimakonam stands up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino's criticisms. To do this, I will discuss Maris' approach to the Matolino and Kwindingwi-Metz debate before delving into my own argument. First, I present a brief overview of the Matolino and Kwindingwi-Metz debate. Second, I present Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's rejoinder. Third, I analyse Maris' reading of Chimakonam's contribution to the debate. Finally, I provide my argument to show that Chimakonam does not stand up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino's criticisms.

The Matolino and Kwindingwi-Metz Debate

In this debate that was appropriately christened by Chimakonam (2016), Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) argue that ubuntu has reached its end as an ethical theory and a way of life. They interpret ubuntu as the narrative of return that is similar to other failed narratives such as Ujamaa, Consciencism, Negritude, Humanism, Mobutuism, and Nyayo (MATOLINO & KWINDINGWI 2013). They suggest that ubuntu does not register its relevance and well-suitedness in industrialised, urbanised, large-scale, technologically advanced societies since it is obsolete and not applicable to modern African conditions. They argue that the liberal constitution governs the lives of modern South Africans. Instead, they locate ubuntu's relevance to rural, small-scale, traditional, and tight-knit communities. They contend that ubuntu works effectively in situations where communities are small, rural, tight-knit, and undifferentiated. Without the existence of traditional and rural societies, ubuntu becomes an appendage to the political desires, wills, and manipulations of the elite who are eager to coerce Africans towards the same ideology (MATOLINO & KWINDINGWI 2013).

They further make a case for a more inclusive ethic on the political front (MATOLINO & KWINDINGWI 2013) Their case comprises three enquiries. The first one enquires about the economic commitments of ubuntu, how they can be made to fit in with the current organisation of the individualistic society and the individualised goals and claims of social and economic players. The second one enquires about the political commitment of ubuntu, its regime of rights, articulation of the state and its subjects. The last one enquires about the significance of ubuntu in a globalised world. They contend that there is no need to advocate for the narrative of return since humanity in the modern age is increasingly bound together by the same kinds of concerns and fates over the globe. The narrative of return such as ubuntu is, for Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013), not suited for addressing the increasing globalised and sophisticated outlook of modern subjects.

However, Metz (2014, 65) defends ubuntu's relevance as an ethical theory and way of life. He argues that we must "view scholarly inquiry into and the political application of ubuntu as projects that are only now properly getting started". Although he recognises that ubuntu has been used as the narrative of return in South Africa, he thinks that it is not limited to pre-industrial, traditional, and rural communities. Not only does he interpret ubuntu moral theory as sensitive

to modern African realities, but he perceives it as open to modern demands and the desirable facets of modernity. He defends the view that the several norms and values associated with ubuntu are a promising ground for a contemporary ethical theory, and expects Mogobe Ramose, Leonhard Praeg, Michael Eze, Motsamai Molefe and others to air their own views (METZ 2014).

Soon after this, Matolino (2015) responds and defends their original position. He argues that Metz's defence is dogmatic and unphilosophical. He interprets Metz as confirming that the modern African conditions do not favour ubuntu since they do not contribute to its applicability. He thinks that Metz's list does not complete the errands since Ramose (2007) and Eze (2008) do not share his interpretation as correct. He challenges Metz's moral theory, political objection, utopian advocacy of ubuntu, and unqualified approval and recommendation of consensual democracy (MATOLINO 2015).

In his contribution, Chimakonam (2016) provides the significance of the Matolino-Kwindingwi conundrum, the assessment of the debate, and an integration of ubuntu to conversational philosophy. Koenane and Olatunji (2017) attempt, in their contribution, to challenge Matolino and Kwindingwi and accept Metz's rebuttal as offering a more plausible account. They promise an examination of Matolino and Kwindingwi's and Metz's views with the aim to synthesise them. They challenge Metz's perspective and propose adopting a different perspective and articulating the way forward. Not only do Koenane and Olatunji argue that Matolino and Kwindingwi fail to provide a preferable alternative to ubuntu, but they contend that these philosophers fail to problematise it. They reject their understanding of ubuntu as the narrative of return and confirm that Metz is mistaken in his admission that it must be treated as such (KOENANE & OLATUNJI 2017). Matolino and Kwindingwi's and Metz's clashing views also attract the interests of Praeg (2017), Hadebe and Phooko (2017), Maris (2020), Ramose (2022), Molefe (2022), Sule (2022), Samuel (2023), Adeate (2023), and others. Unfortunately, I will not consider these contributions since my focus is only limited to Maris' reading of Chimakonam's contribution to the debate.

Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's rejoinder
In this section, I use Chimakonam's (2016) reading of Metz's intervention in the search to clearly navigate the unilateralist approach, which presents his position as standing up for Metz's moral theory at the expense of Matolino (2015). I limit the scope of this search to Maris' assertion that Chimakonam stands up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino's criticisms rather than the assertion that Chimakonam stands up for Metz's theory at the expense of Ramose (MARIS 2020). Though I identify through this search eight, but not the only, possible features for comprehending Chimakonam's modes of interpretation towards Metz's rejoinder, I will only employ the specific features that will help us challenge the path that Maris has taken about Chimakonam's arguments towards Metz's theory in the subsequent sections – *i.e.*, *features*$_{2;\ 4;\ 5;\ and\ 7}$. Each of these

features has to be taken seriously since they have a distinct role to play in how we think about Chimakonam's interpretations towards Metz's rejoinder.[2]

As a result, the first feature/$feature_1$ is based on his open agreement with Metz's arguments against "The end of ubuntu" (CHIMAKONAM 2016, 224). Although Chimakonam posits the significance of Matolino and Kwindingwi's work, he finds their supporting arguments to be indecisive. As such, Chimakonam's first agreement emerges from Metz's articulations of how indecisive Matolino and Kwindingwi's work has come to be (CHIMAKONAM 2016).

The second feature/$feature_2$ is composed of Chimakonam's interpretation of Matolino's response to Metz's rejoinder. In this feature, Chimakonam agrees with Matolino's criticisms of Metz's systematisation of ubuntu in African philosophy. Although he agrees with Metz that the supporting arguments for Matolino and Kwindingwi's work are indecisive, but the second agreement, for $feature_2$, involves another important variation for him (CHIMAKONAM 2016). It introduces his unconcealed agreement with Matolino's criticism of Metz's systematisation. In fact, he agrees with Matolino that Metz's systematisation is far from being impregnable. I, therefore, think that the second feature is marked by Chimakonam's effort to agree with Matolino's argument that Metz's system may not be as impregnable as he envisages (CHIMAKONAM 2016).

The third feature/$feature_3$ encompasses the manner in which the proper questions of African philosophy are to be formulated. Chimakonam suggests that the questions of African philosophy, for Metz's theoretical work, proceed in the light of two schemata. Namely, (*i*) they can be systematic in the sense that a foundation must be found for a new architectonic flight of thought; (*ii*) they can be framed in the form of a linear continuum, in which the worldview ideas of

---

[2] There is a certain passage that I exclude from what others may consider as part of Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's rejoinder. I extract the passage from what he construes as the significance of the Matolino-Kwindingwi conundrum. In this passage, he is advising us that "it may be instructive for one not to follow Metz in looking (neglecting) at [*Matolino and Kwindingwi as making*] an empty claim" (CHIMAKONAM 2016, 225). It is not clear how the instruction that Chimakonam provides positions itself within his interpretations of Metz's rejoinder. I take it as an instruction that does provide the reasons as to why the general reader should not follow Metz in neglecting or overlooking Matolino and Kwindingwi as making an empty claim. Aside from this being an instruction, what and where does it locate itself within the arguments that Metz (2014) has proposed against Matolino and Kwindingwi? Besides this, one may take this deliberate exclusion of Chimakonam's passage as constituting a strawman fallacy if and when s/he views my reading of his interpretations as suffused with distortions, and misinterpretations. If, by any chance, the reader posits my reading of Chimakonam's interpretations as fallacious in this way, then I would insist that all the features that I talk about are embedded in his interpretations of Metz's rejoinder, and not the instruction that he (Chimakonam) gives us. Though I do not attempt the holistic approach to Chimakonam's (2016) interpretations, I believe it would be pointless to imagine his interpretations of Metz's rejoinder without all the central features that I talk about. Hence, it is better to include this passage as part of the central features once we are clear about what is wrong with following Metz in looking at or neglecting Matolino and Kwindingwi as making an empty claim.

traditional societies are re-investigated in light of rational and analytic rigor (CHIMAKONAM 2016).

The fourth feature/$feature_4$ involves his appreciation of Metz's moral theory. He appreciates Metz's theorisation as the modern philosophical system which demonstrates the theoretical sophistication and proper mode of philosophising. An appreciation of this sort of theorisation involves, for $feature_4$, the characterisation of Matolino's non-theoretical, descriptive, understanding of ubuntu that is transacted in the pool of communal thought. Drawing from the two-folded schemata he attributes to Metz's thinking in $feature_3$, Chimakonam characterises, for $feature_4$, Matolino's understanding of ubuntu as the worldview version. He argues that the worldview idea is a version that lacks theoretical sophistication and proper mode of philosophising in this modern time. He buttresses Metz's modern version as endowed with a higher level of understanding relevant for capturing what he considers to be the modern philosophical system for ubuntu thinking (CHIMAKONAM 2016). He thinks that it is the proper function of philosophers, like Metz, to make the clear distinction between philosophy and non-philosophy and employ the tools of logic in re-articulating pertinent worldview ideas at a higher level of understanding.

That said, he argues that Matolino (2015) is incorrect in claiming that there is only one possible version of ubuntu, and that any attempt to construct another version would become an individual effort that must be removed from ubuntu itself (CHIMAKONAM 2016). He rejects Matolino's (2015) invocation of Ramose (2007), who identified some problems that beset Metz's thinking. He argues that Matolino's (2015) argument which emphasises that what Metz does has already been done by other philosophers (e.g., Michael Eze) is a solidarity argument. This is exactly what necessitates his assertion that Matolino's (2015) claim that Ramose (2007) and Eze (2008) do not share Metz's interpretation is a very weak argument (CHIMAKONAM, 2016).

In the fifth feature/$feature_5$, Chimakonam (2016) challenges Metz's philosophical system by arguing that it is not as impregnable as he (Metz) thinks. This challenge does not emanate from Chimakonam's (2016) open agreements which I locate in the first and second features. Neither does it proceed from the appreciation that he uses to denounce Matolino's (2015) position in $feature_4$, nor does it have the nerve to pinpoint whether it may be connected to his (Chimakonam's) concluding remarks that he has assessed the arguments of Metz. Instead, it proceeds from his dissatisfaction with Metz's theory. And that is the reason why he promises to build an elaborate criticism of Metz in the near future. He, then, tells the reader that he does not want to delve into the details of why Metz is mistaken since such an undertaking is beyond the scope of his major contribution (CHIMAKONAM 2016).

The sixth feature/$feature_6$ encompasses Chimakonam's interpretation of Metz's theory as one of the philosophical writings that manifest "hard reason" against "soft reason" (CHIMAKONAM 2016, 231). He thinks that soft reason involves philosophers who speak for themselves in tribal tongues and the narratives of protestations that are internally defensive than dialogically aggressive. He suggests that Metz's theory does not manifest the motive of those who are still psychologically guided by their narratives of protestations, which tend to be analytically defensive, protest against Western narratives and also serve

as a setback against the progressive development of the African episteme (CHIMAKONAM 2016). He tells us that there is a strain which soft reason confers on reason. The strain shows African philosophy as a discourse in a struggle – a perpetual struggle against the others "capable of softening reason" in African philosophy (CHIMAKONAM 2016, 231). He understands hard reason as something which is at the level of conversational thinking. This level involves thinkers (e.g., Metz) who completely speak for themselves (CHIMAKONAM 2016).

The seventh feature/$feature_7$ involves Chimakonam's claim that he has assessed the arguments of Metz (CHIMAKONAM 2016). This assessment is part of his one way of credibly assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments advanced in the debate. He thinks that clarifying Metz's theoretical understanding of ubuntu alone provides the reader with an accurate assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of his arguments against Matolino and Kwindingwi.

The last feature/$feature_8$ demonstrates that African philosophers must follow Metz's path of hard reason to drive the African philosophy mission forward (CHIMAKONAM 2016). In other words, this feature shows that, insofar as his moral theory is concerned, Metz must be identified as an individual philosopher who converses rather than defends a persistent traditional originary (CHIMAKONAM 2016).

Maris' Reading of Chimakonam's Contribution
In this section, I attempt a brief analysis to show that Maris' (2020) approach to Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's moral theory gravitates towards $feature_4$ above. The analysis, therefore, gives the reader some clarity – by using a specific passage – as to how Maris argues that Chimakonam stands up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino, amongst others. Besides Ramose's (2022) reply, there is, at this moment, no philosophical work which attempts to spearhead any critical dialogue with Maris' thinking. Though I recognise Ramose's reply as important on many counts, I do not take my contribution as competing against it or seeking to be in line with its claims.

Unfortunately, I do not plan to address the questions as to how my contribution compares with or supersedes Ramose's reply. Instead, I focus on a different set-up since my contribution does not provide anything either for or against Ramose and his reply to Maris. By so doing, I lead the discussion about creating new spaces of thought against Maris' mode of thinking in relation to his approach to Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's theory in the Matolino and Kwindingwi-Metz debate.

My proposed discussion, however, provides reasons for Maris' tendency to approach Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's thinking with recklessness. For that reason, I present the analysis, which focuses on a single passage from his most recent work on ubuntu (MARIS 2020). I do the analysis to locate his approach to Chimakonam's interpretations that I inspect and carefully dissect when he writes:

> *Jonathan Chimakonam (2016) stands up for Metz at the expense of* […] *Matolino* […]. According to Chimakonam (2016: 229), it is "the proper function of philosophers to employ the tools of logic in re-articulating

pertinent worldview ideas at a higher level of understanding". Such a forward-looking project around ubuntu has indeed only just begun. Metz gives it a good start by transferring the traditional African view into a modern philosophical system, says Chimakonam [*Author's emphasis added*] (MARIS 2020, 318)

By bringing into fruition the specific reading for the means by which his response to the question '*Does Chimakonam stand up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino's criticisms?*' may be sought, Maris (2020) suggests *feature*$_4$ as the major candidate for how Chimakonam's interpretations stand up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino amongst others. Such a candidate is tethered in a way that opts for the selection (or replication) of *feature*$_4$ as the only conceptual desideratum by which the possible answers are to be sought in reaction to the level of interrogation I sparingly propose against him.

The reason why Maris uses the above passage to account for how Chimakonam stands up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino's criticisms is primarily because its (the passage's) second line provides justification as to what argument, from Matolino's thinking, is Maris really picking out as surmounted by Chimakonam's appreciation of Metz's theory – *feature*$_4$. The literature tells us that Matolino's thinking, for instance, encompasses his argument against Metz's moral theory, political objection, utopian advocacy of ubuntu, and unqualified approval and recommendation of consensual democracy (MATOLINO 2015).

As a result, Maris' approach does not necessarily account for how, when, and why Chimakonam's interpretations stand up for Metz's theory at the expense of all the arguments that Matolino makes, except for the criticism of Metz's moral theory. If, for any reason, Maris were to pin down why, when, and how Chimakonam stood up for Metz at the expense of all the arguments that Matolino presents, then I wonder why and how that would even materialise or be adopted at any given context.

The above passage is, to my knowledge, couched in generalities, which Maris replicates and subsumes under the auspices of *feature*$_4$. In my view, it is not entirely clear why Maris places so much emphasis on *feature*$_4$ if, for example, he is serious, and means what he says, about Chimakonam's contribution to the debate. He does not even highlight or indicate the importance of locating, as much as he dislocates, Chimakonam's thinking within the ambits of *features*$_{1; 2; 5; and 7}$.

Even the attempt to present these features as how Chimakonam's thinking undoubtedly ensues or ought to be rightly comprehended strays from the comprehension that Maris attributes to Chimakonam's interpretation. He does not even spend some time trying to explain why and how the selection of *feature*$_4$, without the other possible selections of *features*$_{1, 2, 5, and 7}$, is so special for dissecting Chimakonam's interpretations towards this theory. He does not justify omitting other equally significant intricacies that emerge from the remainders that should also capture Chimakonam's interpretation (cf. *features*$_{1; 2; 5; and 7}$), nor does he even presuppose the complexities of having to limit Chimakonam's thinking within the appreciation of Metz's rearticulation of worldview ubuntu – *feature*$_4$.

Instead, he accepts *feature*$_4$ as retaining what he considers to be the philosopher's proper function for re-articulating worldview ideas of traditional

societies into a modern philosophical system. It is in this re-articulation that Metz's project ascends towards a higher level of understanding of ubuntu. Through the selective reading of Chimakonam's appreciation of Metz's theory that he (Maris) draws from the – *fourth* – feature under which his thinking about Metz's theoretical work is indisputably welded, Maris christens Metz's re-articulation as a forward-looking project on ubuntu philosophy. He then interprets Metz as offering a good start in modern African philosophy (MARIS 2020). For these reasons, he justifies why Chimakonam's thinking stands up for Metz's moral theory at the expense of Matolino's criticisms.

Why Chimakonam does not stand up for Metz's theory
In this section, I challenge the unilateralist, or alternatively one-sided, approach that I attribute to Maris' reading of Chimakonam's (2016) contribution to the Matolino and Kwindingwi-Metz debate. I, therefore, argue that Chimakonam does not stand up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino's criticisms. I consider my contribution as offering the reasonable, and no doubt the correct, view for accepting the reasons for why Maris' interpretation of Chimakonam's thinking misfires since it provides a very slap-dash approach to knowledge.

That said, it is important that I investigate why Maris is, at least in my own analysis, committed to this approach. The approach seems to me to be a clear indication that he reads Chimakonam's thinking with gay abandon. This investigation clarifies why and how Chimakonam does not stand up for Metz at the expense of Matolino's criticisms, especially concerning *features*$_{2, 5,}$ and 7.

As a matter of course, no one has ever investigated why Maris singles out *feature*$_4$ for navigating the most suitable knowledge for arriving at the possible response to the question which I find very useful for challenging his approach, *i.e*., *Does Chimakonam stand up for Metz's moral theory at the expense of Matolino's criticisms*? It seems to me that Maris does not attempt to clarify and explain why and how the idea of standing up for Metz's theory excludes the possibility of talking about Chimakonam's commitments in relation to thinking about Metz's theory. He does not point out any philosophical commitments and possible indications for why *features*$_{2, 5,}$ and 7 are not worth including in his critical engagement to forge the possible response to the above question. Had it not been Maris' selective reading, which not only fails to recognise and emphasise Chimakonam's philosophical commitments about *features*$_{2}$ and 5, but which also limits Chimakonam's thinking under the auspices of *feature*$_4$, we would not have bumped into any unilateralist approach in Maris' interpretation.

As a result, I am not convinced by his interpretation of Chimakonam's position on Metz's theory. His interpretation does not situate Chimakonam's criticism against Metz's theory in its true light and what it is intended to mean for his future essay (cf. *feature*$_5$). If, for any reason, there may be some scholars who bid welcome to this approach to fully grasp what Chimakonam's modes of interpretation are supposed to mean to the general reader, then I wonder why and how they would understand Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's theory as failing to complement *features*$_{2, 5}$ and 7.

I, therefore, strongly believe that I am reading Maris correctly if and when I identify his thinking as emphasising that Chimakonam stands up for Metz at the expense of Matolino's criticisms. It is worth noting that no one has ever

questioned why and how Maris arrived at the position that Chimakonam stood up for Metz's theory. Not even the least important things about such a position have been considered to verify that nothing forces his position to go hand in hand with – or recognise what is currently taking place in – *features*$_{2,\ and\ 5.}$ If he is committed to the argument that Chimakonam stands up for Metz's theory, then I wonder why Chimakonam's argument can't be articulated in ways that show its rejection of some of Metz's positions. Or if, for Maris, Chimakonam stands up for Metz, then one could also wonder why Chimakonam defends Matolino's thinking in *feature*$_2$ and criticises Metz's theory in *feature*$_5$.

Worse of all, if Chimakonam is serious about – and reserves no room to ungrudgingly withdraw – the open agreement that we may glean from *feature*$_2$, then I wonder whether or not we should understand him as using *feature*$_4$ to adeptly militate against such an agreement since he is now re-interpreted (by Maris) as standing up for Metz at the expense of the philosopher (Matolino) that he (Chimakonam) already agrees with in *feature*$_2$.

Thus, to uphold the view that Chimakonam stands up for Metz at the expense of Matolino's criticisms is something which need not count as the main rationale for believing what Chimakonam provides as justification for how other scholars and potential readers may fairly interpret him in relation to Metz's theory. In fact, upholding such a view is not enough since we already know that Chimakonam is, as far as *feature*$_2$ is concerned, in agreement with Matolino's criticism of Metz's systematisation of ubuntu in African philosophy. It is not enough since we also know, according to *feature*$_5$, that Chimakonam aims to further interrogate Metz's systematisation.

Maris' (2020) approach is, to my knowledge, hard to take seriously. It scarcely tries to justify in *feature*$_4$ why Chimakonam's appreciation of Metz's theory counts as the only prominent feature that warrants the rationale for how Chimakonam stands in relation to this theory.

With that in mind, it is also important to worry about whether or not Maris would still argue that Chimakonam stands up for Metz if he could realise that there are possible senses in which we should understand Chimakonam as not standing up for Metz in *features*$_{2\ and\ 5.}$ If it is true in *feature*$_2$ that Chimakonam agrees with Matolino that Metz's system is problematic and also true for *feature*$_5$ that he (Chimakonam) criticises Metz's theory as not being impregnable, then it cannot be true that Chimakonam disagrees with Matolino and affirms the impregnability of Metz's system at the expense of Matolino's criticisms as Maris would have us believe.

However, a critic with an opposing argument might still find ways to justify the plausibility of Maris' reading of Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's moral theory. Such a critic could aim to austerely dismiss my line of argument and its possible grounds for convincing the reader about what I think should never be the case in any given context – *i.e*., the approach that misrepresents Chimakonam's thinking regarding Metz's theory. The critic might argue that Maris' claim is correct if *features*$_{2\ and\ 5}$ can be shown not to be part of Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's theory. Even if the rationale for this anticipation was justified, casting aside the comprehensiveness that I attribute to *features*$_{2\ and\ 5}$ does not necessarily mean that the features are false attributions to Chimakonam's thinking in relation to Metz's theory.

As such, it is difficult to overlook Chimakonam's (2016) known and unhidden arguments that: (*i*) agree with Matolino in *feature$_2$*; (*ii*) provide an elaborate criticism of Metz's theory in *feature$_5$* and (*iii*) assure us that he (Chimakonam) has assessed the arguments of Metz in *feature$_7$*. Any investigation of the extent to which one may agree with Maris' claim in relation to *features$_{2,}$ $_5$* must appreciate that such an argument is too difficult to sustain. This is precisely because Chimakonam did not – and by no means am I insisting that he did – stand up for Metz at the expense of Matolino's criticisms, especially if we were to disclose all the remaining features in Chimakonam's arguments. For example, he (*i*) agrees with one of Metz's criticisms of Matolino and Kwindingwi in *feature$_1$*; (*ii*) agrees with one of Matolino's criticisms of Metz's reply in *feature$_2$*; (*iii*) appreciates the trajectory of Metz's theory in *feature$_4$*; (*iv*) argues that Metz's theory is not impregnable in *feature$_5$*; and (*v*) claims that he has assessed the arguments of Metz in *feature$_7$*. Therefore, to think that Chimakonam stands up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino's criticisms is to broach unnecessary and unilateralist articulations that have no serious bearing on Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's theory.

Conclusion

To sum up, I have provided an overview of the Matolino and Kwindingwi-Metz debate. This debate plays an important role in Maris' reading of Chimakonam's interpretations of Metz's theory and Koenane and Olatunji's argument that Matolino and Kwindingwi fail to provide an alternative to ubuntu. I have not interrogated his attempted dialogue with Ramose's views and discussion about racism and political liberalism. Instead, I responded to his reading of Chimakonam's interpretation of Metz's rejoinder and argued that Chimakonam does not stand up for Metz's theory at the expense of Matolino's criticisms.

Declarations
*The author declares no conflict of interest or ethical issues for this work

Relevant Literature

1. ADEATE, Tosin. ""The end of ubuntu": An extension of Matolino's skepticism", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 325–336, 2023. Vol 41. No. 4.

2. CHIMAKONAM, Jonathan. "The end of ubuntu or its beginning in Matolino-Kwindingwi-Metz debate: An exercise in conversational philosophy", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 224–234, 2016. Vol 35. No. 2.

3. EZE, Michael. "What is African communitarianism? Against consensus as a regulative ideal", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 386–399, 2008. Vol. 27. No. 4.

4. KOENANE, Mojalefa. & OLATUNJI, Cyril-Mary. "Is it the end or just the beginning of ubuntu? Response to Matolino and Kwindingwi in view of Metz's rebuttal", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 263–277, 2017. Vol. 36. No. 2.

5. MARIS, Cees. "Philosophical racism and ubuntu: In dialogue with Mogobe Ramose", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 308–326, 2020. Vol 39. No. 3.

6. MATOLINO, Bernard & KWINDINGWI, Wenceslaus. "The end of ubuntu", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 197–205, 2013. Vol. 32. No. 2.

7. MATOLINO, Bernard. "A response to Metz's reply on the end of ubuntu", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 214–225, 2015. Vol 34. No. 2.

8. METZ, Thaddeus. "Just the beginning for ubuntu: reply to Matolino and Kwindingwi", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 65–72, 2014. Vol 65. No.

9. METZ, Thaddues. "Toward an African moral theory", [Journal of Political Philosophy], pp 321–341, 2007. Vol. 15. No. 3.

10. MOLEFE, Motsamai. "Reflections on Bernard Matolino's contribution to philosophy in Africa", [Arumaruka: Journal of Conversational Thinking], pp 77–85, 2022. Vol. 2. No. 2.

11. PRAEG, Leonhard. "Essential building blocks of the Ubuntu debate; or I write what I must", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 292–304, 2017. Vol. 36. No. 2.

12. RADEBE Sibusiso, & PHOOKO, Moses. "Ubuntu and the law in South Africa: Exploring and understanding the substantive context of ubuntu", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 239–251, 2017. Vol. 36. No. 2.

13. RAMOSE, Mogobe. [African philosophy through ubuntu]. Harare: Mond Books, 1999.

14. RAMOSE, Mogobe. [African philosophy through ubuntu], 2005. Revised edition. Harare: Mond Books.

15. RAMOSE, Mogobe. "Better see than look at Ramose: A reply to Cees Maris", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 1–27, 2022. Vol. 41. No. 1.

16. RAMOSE, Mogobe. "But Hans Kelsen was not born in Africa: a reply to Thaddeus Metz", [South African Journal of Philosophy], pp 347–355, 2007. Vol. 26. No. 1.

17. SAMUEL, Olusegun. "Ubuntu and the problem of belonging", [Ethics, Policy, Environment], pp 1–24, 2023.

18. SULE, Peter. "Xenophobia and the end of ontological ubuntu", [Acta Academica: Critical Views on Society, Culture and Politics], pp 51–68, 2022. Vol. 54. No. 2.