A Critical Reflection of African Philosophy and decolonization of the educational discourse in South Africa.

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Abstract

Higgs (2003, 01 - 03) argued that the philosophical discourse in South Africa concerning higher education, teaching and learning has always been fragmented. Twenty-five years later the philosophical discourse in education remains fragmented. During the apartheid years, philosophical discourse about the nature of higher education, teaching and learning was dominated by Fundamental Pedagogics, providing the foundational landscape for apartheid education in the form of Christian National Education. As such, "Fundamental Pedagogics" was regarded as a crucial element of apartheid education, evinced through Christian National Education. With the dismantling of apartheid and the abandoning of the system of Christian National Education it became necessary to formulate a new philosophical discourse in higher education. But what should constitute such a re-vision of philosophical discourse? In this paper, I argue for the introduction of an African discourse into the conversation surrounding the revision of philosophy of education in South Africa. In other words, the paper seeks to extend African philosophical ideas in the debate of decolonization of South African higher education. Thus, providing a contribution to contemporary practical issues to African philosophy and African experiences, specifically, South African. Such a discourse will refer to the African philosophy body of literature and the recent calls for decolonization in higher education as seen by social media hangtags, #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall and media outlets.

Key words: African philosophy, educational discourse, decolonization, South Africa, apartheid and colonialism

Introduction

The years 2015 and 2016, saw "historically white" South African universities brought to disruption by mostly black students who were against the increase of student fees at their universities. South Africans saw students from disadvantaged to privileged universities stand together to fight against the increase of expensive fees, and other underlying challenges such as institutional racism, and the Eurocentric initial university curriculum. The fight against fee increment was labelled and hash tagged as the #FeesMustFall movement. The movement

started at the University of the Witwatersrand and rapidly spread to all government funded universities. Interestingly, government funded universities, also known as "historically black universities" students have conflicted with university management about the increase of student fees, accommodation and other basic student necessities without recognition by popular media outlets. Furthermore, before #FeesMustFall became a huge movement in late 2015, early in the year 2016, South Africa witnessed one of the most profound student movements after South Africa's democracy, labelled #RhodesMustFall. The #RhodesMustFall movement saw students express their unhappiness with the continued presence of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town. The movement expressed a number of concerns black students had been battling with at the University of Cape Town, concerns such as the praise of Cecil John Rhodes, language of instruction, the colonial nature of the university and the lack of diversity and racial nature and culture the university had continued to embrace. The two movements aimed to fight against and address expensive tuition fees, institutional racism and the Eurocentric curriculum.

However, the government and universities' responses to the movements showed that the South African transformative policies were failing the post-apartheid generation of African descent and white universities had the power to not only dismiss these concerns but they had the infrastructure and racialised system which continued to dominate and hold black students hostage. According to a research study conducted by Chetty and Knaus (2016) the #FeesMustFall Movement was a manifestation of a class struggle in South African universities. The research showed that the higher education system was not only racially biased but was also class-based. Le Grange (2016) also conducted a study which showed that only 15 per cent of the 60 per cent of black students who survived first year eventually completed their studies. A reflection on these two studies to shows that, not only do the majority poor university students struggle to stay at the university they are registered at due to expensive tuition fees, racism, discrimination and the Eurocentric curriculum they were exposed to but they also had to struggle with the financial and social likelihood that they might not complete their studies. These studies showed the conditions which most disadvantaged poor "black" university students had been struggling to address. Furthermore, such studies show that while white universities register and admit more black students, these students were thrown into the deep end because they were in a world that was not designed for them, a world that excluded them and a world that wanted a percentage of black skins so that they had the scores to "show" their diversity without the actual diversity.

The paper argues that the #RhodesMustfall and #FeesMustFall movement secured and solidified a more in-depth focus on the current Eurocentric curriculum, colonial nature of South African universities and most importantly the insistence on the introduction of an Afrocentric education. The paper will argue that African philosophy can be applied as a possible strategy to redress, address and acknowledge African knowledge systems, and challenge the racially biased knowledge systems of the West. To support my argument, the paper draws on Higgs' (2003,10) who had envisioned that African philosophy can play a critical role in redressing and addressing centuries of domination, power, discrimination and Western school of thought. He argued that the liberation of Africa as a whole and its people from centuries of racially discriminatory colonial rule and domination has far-reaching implications for educational thought and practice. In other words, the liberal and transformation agenda should be intentional

in (South) Africa to address, redress and speak the language of the indigenous people. The #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movement were intentional and clear about what students were not happy about and the changes they needed to improve their university experience. Students believed that the historically white universities, should be inclusive, diverse, acknowledge and accommodate different cultural backgrounds and expression. Such an embrace of diversity and inclusion is captured by Higgs (2003, 03) "The transformation of educational discourse in Africa requires a philosophical framework that respects diversity, acknowledges lived experience and challenges the hegemony of Western forms of universal knowledge and African philosophy acknowledges African knowledge systems and lived experience of the African people". Higgs' (2003, 10-11) argument of African philosophy as a framework that respects diversity, embraces togetherness and encourages the values of ubuntu, could also be applied as a methodology to push further the conversation of decolonization in higher education thus stripping away what is colonial about the higher education. This paper seeks to critically reflect on whether African philosophy, as a system of African knowledge(s), can provide a useful philosophical framework/methodology for the decolonization and re-construction of the higher education institutions. Thus, providing knowledge that would enable communities in (South) Africa to participate in their own educational development.

The history of Africa has been largely dominated by colonial power and Christian National Education. According to Wiredu (1980, 12) and Ramose (2002, 120) colonialism in Africa provided the framework for the organised subjugation of the cultural, scientific and economic life of many on the African continent. This subjugation impacted on African people's way of seeing and acting in the world. In fact, African identity, to all intents and purposes, became an inverted mirror of Western Eurocentric identity. This state of affairs gave birth to numerous attempts to reassert distinctively African ways of thinking and of relating to the world and was expressed in the call for an African Renaissance (Higgs, 2003: 06) and in the past two years, the calls for #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movement. Of course, the calls for a more African centred approach to education, also known as African Renaissance, had been present for several years (see, Diop, 1996; Maloka, 2000; Muiu & Martin, 2002; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2002). However, one may argue that the momentum of the African centred approach to education had been accelerated by the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movements which forced the Department of Higher Education and Training to revisit the curriculum taught in higher education institutions. In his speech at the Higher Education Summit held in October 2015 the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Blade Nzimande called for the Africanisation of universities. He stated, 'universities, all of them, must shed all the problematic features of their apartheid and colonial past'. At the summit the minister requested universities to investigate the issue of decolonising the curriculum. In the Western Cape province, for example, we have seen responses to the call for the decolonisation of the university curriculum: the appointment of a central curriculum committee to coordinate decolonising of the curriculum at the University of Cape Town, an all-day colloquium on the topic at the University of the Western Cape in May 2016.

The process of decolonisation that unfolded during the 1996 – 2002s saw Africa assert its right to define itself within its own African context in the attainment of independence. In other words, authors such as (Diop 1996, Maloka 2000 and Muiu & Martins 2002) began the process of

developing or re-constructing an African identity. WaThiong'o (1993) argued that Africans have the right to name the world for themselves and build a strong foundation for the current and future generation in African Philosophy, thus, participating in the educational discourse in South Africa. According to Makgoba, Shope & Mazwai (1999) "African Renaissance is a unique opportunity for Africans to define themselves and their agenda according to their realities and considering the realities of the world around them. It is about Africans being agents of their own history and masters of their destiny". Advocates of the African Renaissance in education such as Teffo (2000), Vilakazi (2002), and Seepe (2001), have shown that much of what is assumed to be education in Africa, is in fact European education and a mixture of what Europeans assume to be African. Higgs (2003, 07) also asserts that the African Renaissance has in the past couple of years taken on a much greater significance with the call for the recognition of indigenous African knowledge systems by such scholars as Hoppers (2000, 2002), Teffo (2000) and Seepe (2001, 2001a). Furthermore, the African Renaissance aimed to respond to an incorrect situation which according to Higgs (2003,07) assumed that Africans possess little or no indigenous knowledge of value that could be utilized in the process of educational transformation. The call for African Renaissance insists that all critical and transformative educators in Africa should embrace indigenous African world views and root their nation's educational paradigms in indigenous African socio-cultural and epistemological frameworks (Higgs 2003, 07 - 08). The African Renaissance argument implies that, the basic and higher education curriculum in (South) Africa should have African-ness as their focus, and as a result be indigenous-grounded and orientated. Failure to do so, particularly in South Africa, would mean that the agenda of transformation and diversity has not be achieved. And therefore, the education discourse continued to be alien, racially biased and irrelevant to an African child. To build on the purpose of this article I will discuss what is meant by African-ness because it is important to define and understand what we mean by African-ness, therefore leading an argument of contextualizing African philosophy in African and critically discussing how the project of educational decolonization shall be conducted.

What does African (-ness) mean

It is very important for issues that the paper discusses, understands and unpacks that the meaning of the adjective "African" in this paper be clearly defined. Understanding what African (-ness) means is crucial as it helps establish a uniquely African order of knowledge (see Masolo, 1995) and the basis of what is African. Dladla (2017, 103 - 109) argues that historically, "Africanism is understood as a philosophy of liberation". The argument of Africanism draws on the reflection of a moment in the development of the liberation struggle in South Africa, where certain younger members of the African National Congress tired of white paternalism and the reliance by the organisation on European ideas sought to redirect the struggle and its approach towards an African cultural basis which meant the reconnection of their contemporary struggle with the antecedent history of anti-colonial wars. The goal of the resistance struggle was to restore to the indigenous people their dignity and sovereignty. (Dladla, 2017: 104). While one of the most prominent African Philosophers - Ramose (2003, 114–116) argues that the term Africa(n) is contestable on at least two grounds. One is that the name is not conferred

by the indigenous people of Africa on themselves. Another is that the name Africa(n) does not by definition refer to the histories of the indigenous peoples inhabiting various parts of the continent from time immemorial. Higgs (2003, 06 - 07) understands Ramose's argument to mean that, the term (African) is geographically significant but, historically, its meaning is questionable from the point of view of the indigenous African peoples. Mudimbe (1988) and Hountondji (1985, 1996), on the other hand regard an intellectual product as African simply because it is produced or promoted by Africans. They, therefore, adopt a geographical criterion in their definition of the term 'African'. Mudimbe (1988) and Hountondji's (1985, 1996) view of the definition of Africa implies that they potentially regard as the contributions of Africans practising philosophy within the defined framework of the discipline and its historical traditions. Gyekye (1987, 72) understands African-ness to mean, something is 'African' if it directs its attention to issues concerning the theoretical or conceptual underpinnings of African culture. Gyekye (1987) writes: 'Philosophy is a cultural phenomenon in that philosophical thought is grounded in cultural experience'. Based on this view a study of the traditional African world in terms of views, ideas, and conceptions represents the unique substance of African philosophy and legitimates reference to what is referred to as African philosophy. In addition to Gyekye's definition of Africanism, Ramose, Serequeberhan and Okere, (as cited by Dladla, 2017) amongst others, argue that African philosophy in general, has its basis in "the culture and experience of African peoples" and the "African philosopher". In other words, the term African-ness (itself) at the very minimum should be arguing for the liberation of African Philosophy from the yoke of dominance and enslavement under the European (Western) epistemological paradigm (Dladla, 2017:107). The interest in this paper is with the nature of African-ness as a philosophy of liberation, decolonization and dismantling institutional racism and power, which has found expression in the indigenous people of Africa. In support of my argument, I adopt Dladla's argument that just like Western Philosophy describe the Wests' human nature and experiences, African philosophy should be doing the same in Africa. In other words, African philosophy should focus on providing Africans with the opportunity to discuss and describe their human nature, culture and experiences of African people. I also assert that African philosophy should provide Africans with an opportunity to reflect, redress and address the legacies of colonial power in (South) Africa, by refurnishing our minds, providing access to economic freedom to all and redefining our socio-economic realities. Below, I discuss African philosophy in an African context which aims at gaining an understanding of the African philosophy in Africa and how that speaks to the notion of decolonisation in Africa.

African Philosophy in an African Context?

> *"It would be a great day for African philosophy when the same becomes true of an African university, for it would mean that African insights have become fully integrated into the principal branches of philosophy"* (Wiredu 1998, 19).

The interesting quote above is from Wiredu's - Toward Decolonizing African Philosophy and Religion paper published in 1998. Kwesi Wiredu is a Ghanaian philosopher who has been involved in the project of "conceptual decolonization". Wiredu's view of Africa and African Philosophy is that for as long as African philosophy is taught and philosophised in English or

any other language that is not African it remains alien. For as long as African philosophy still follows the rules and application of Western philosophy, it is not African Philosophy. Wiredu pushes his argument to the extent that he argues that philosophers in Africa philosophy who philosophize using the western tradition style have not been de-westernised. Meaning the only true reflect or fashion of African philosophy in Africa, is if African philosophy is philosophized in an African manner. African philosophy will only be a true reflection of Africa when Africans philosophize as Africans and have de-westernized themselves from the Western traditions of philosophizing. Wiredu's view of how Africans should philosophize in African philosophy is aligned with Dladla's argument that just like Western Philosophy describe the Wests' human nature and experiences, African philosophy should be doing the same in Africa. It is such alignment and understanding that this paper seeks to achieve, that is, for the South African higher education to be decolonised and striped of its western traditions and have an authentic reconstruction of African. It needs to follow the rules and traditions of Africans, therefore embracing the nature and form of African logic, tradition and language. One must commend African philosophers who have been able to put their intellect to the service of the struggle and destiny of Africans (Higgs, 2003, 08) Their service has opened the door for the students at the University of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town to express the unhappiness and alienation that black students have endured at higher institutions which are meant to break down walls of discrimination and all forms of oppression including failure of the higher education to push forward the agenda of decolonization. The #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall only emphasised the calls put forward by African philosophers and African Renaissance scholars. The difficult conversation of understanding what African philosophy is has started and at this point those invested and dedicated to the work of Africa philosophy have to work towards using a realistic approach towards African philosophy in order to address African challenges. Thus, this section of the paper, discusses African Philosophy in an African context. Unfortunately, this will not be an easy task because I am an African and therefore, possess the insights to being African. Because of this I can share insights of what is to be an African in an African country, just like someone who is British can share their insights as genuine experiences of British people living in Britain. Whether, this is true or not, a question that could be asked is why the paper discusses African Philosophy in the African Context and not African Philosophy in general, whether in Africa or in Europe? The paper discusses African Philosophy in an African context because it is needed here in Africa. It is important here in Africa, because an African philosophy is expected to provide a service and philosophise not for its sake but for the development of an African identity which has been overshadowed by Western knowledge systems. African philosophy in African seeks to understand the origins of African(ism) or (ness) and their human nature. It speaks to philosophizing in African logic, language, traditions and experiences. African philosophy needs to be truly African, in Africa for it to be authentic to Africans first before it can be conceptualised by Europeans. Drawing from Wiredu (1998, 17) for as long as African Philosophy is still philosophised in the western forms and logics and traditions, it will not be able to address African challenges of decades of oppression, humiliation, discrimination and mental colonization, because it carries the energy and aroma of colonial power and discrimination. This means that if Africa philosophy does not decolonise itself first, strips itself of the colonial nature of the West then it will still be another form of African studies viewed through the lenses of Europe. African philosophy in Africa should

prioritize Africans, it should reflect on the years of mental oppression and colonialism which has taught Africans that they cannot think logically and with reason. African philosophy needs to take ownership of what is African to redress, restore Africans people's dignity and pride. Mostly, importantly, African philosophy needs to provide Africans with the tools to philosophize in their African state and sense and define themselves and their agenda according to their realities. African philosophy as a framework in the decolonization agenda should be self-love for Africans. We have seen the idea of addressing past injustices and pains of Africa's colonial past in scholars such as Serequeberhan (1994, 43) who adopts a hermeneutical perspective on African philosophy in Africa. The author argues that Africans reflecting and redressing the past   in what is traditional to Africa, will help them to seek to escape an enslavement to the past by using that past to open the future. Such an activity could be done through comparative analyses. A comparative analysis Wiredu believes is important for African philosophers, as they will have to be aware of their western traditions of learning and interpreting that information in their own languages and African context. In this regard, Serequeberhan (1994, 43) as cited by Higgs (2003) states that: "the discourse of African philosophy is indirectly and historically linked to the demise of European hegemony (colonialism and neo-colonialism) and is aimed at fulfilling/completing this demise. It is a reflective and critical effort to rethink the indigenised African situation beyond the confines of Eurocentric concepts and categories" (Higgs 2003, 10). Through the reflection and comparative process, African philosophers therefore have the responsibility to not only de-westernized themselves, but they also must philosophise as Africans.

Higgs (2003, 11-12) asserts that to completely appreciate the distinctive features of African philosophy, it is also helpful to compare its method and execution with other systems of philosophy. Appiah (1994, 144) discusses the difference between African and Western philosophy being mindful of the attitude of the West towards Africa. Appiah (1994, 145) argues that the West considers the issue of what philosophy is 'for'—that is, its social meaning and relevance— with intellectual and academic contempt. Undoubtedly, the West does philosophize in a different style and method from Africa, although this may be attributed to enormous resources and funding (Appiah,1994) & (Higgs, 2003). In other words, because of the years of perfecting philosophy, the West philosophizes differently or rather the West philosophizes from superiority and is concerned with perfecting philosophical discourse for its own sake, while Africa wants to use philosophy to address social challenges and remove what is colonial in the higher education space, as expressed by black students at the University of Cape Town thereby providing a student or scholar with an authentic African experience of being in the world.

The paper accepts that African philosophy should in one form, or another render a 'service' as it potentially can if done correctly and that if it draws it strengths, logic, language and tradition from Africans. If it decolonises and strips away what is western in African philosophy and philosophises to address social stigmas, violence and inherited pain and loss of identity. Wiredu (as quoted by Anyanwu, 1989, 127) concludes: '... we will only solve our problems if we see them as human problems arising out of a special situation'. Thus, Anyanwu (1989, 127) affirms that African philosophy 'invites people to take a stand on the issue of reality as experienced'. The paper concurred that our human problems are a special situation and our reality and

experiences mean something. Our experiences as Africans should not be denied as legitimate experiences just because they are from Africa. It is also these experiences that help re-build indigenous knowledge systems and show how these knowledge systems could be of expression in contemporary Africa. Higgs (2003, 13) asserts that these experiences of an African reality give rise to a sense of commonality which finds expression in the discourse of community in Africa, and the African ethic of ubuntu.

This paper accepts most of the African scholars' conceptualization of African philosophy and what is expected to come out from it. However, we need to be mindful of the fact that decolonizing the South African educational discourse might prove to be extremely difficult because our South African "transformative ideologies & goals" have not been able to carry us through the reflection, redress and address process, which contextualise and address the experiences of the poor, marginalised and uneducated. One of the contextual questions to be addressed in (South) Africa is how we can achieve and implement a decolonised educational discourse, which will be reflected by educational institutions such as universities, as the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movement envisioned. I pose this question because some universities are government funded and to some extent report to the Department of Higher Education and Training and are expected to fulfil promises made by the liberation movement to build and open the doors of learning to all. This expectation was based on the understanding that the government made education (basic and higher education) a priority and should have allocated adequate resources to make education a public good rather than a commodity accessible to those who are financially privileged. The paper believes that African philosophy shall not be limited to reflecting, redressing and addressing socio-economic challenges only but African philosophy should also critically address and philosophise our uncolonized government, which our educational discourse is aimed at functioning in or rather provide alternative methodologies of decolonizing the educational discourse within a colonised state. I shall now turn my attention to the notion of decolonization and the South African educational discourse.

Decolonization and the South African Educational Discourse

I shall now turn my attention to what the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movement aimed to redress and address about the colonial nature of historically white universities and years of studying Western norms and the way of life in an African university. There were several concerns which the students called to be addressed, but the most eminent challenges, were tertiary fee increases and a decolonised Afrocentric education. For the purposes of this discussion, it is important that I describe what the paper means by decolonization. Wiredu's view of decolonization is a form of epistemological practice. Meaning decolonization is a practice of removing colonial nature and stripping away colonial knowledge in the African educational discourse. It is a form of washing away what is not needed or something that does not serve others. Fataar (2018, 02) defines decolonization as a philosophy which "eschews static knowledge orientations". He argues that it is founded on a type of complex knowledge dynamism in fidelity to disciplinary and transdisciplinary foundations, and always alert to a type of problem-posing dynamism, writes Fataar (2018,02). While Sesanti (2019) was adamant

in his argument that for decolonization to truly mean something, African universities must use ancient Egyptian ethics and history as a cornerstone of an Afrocentric decolonial curriculum knowledge approach. Heleta (2018, 48) states that 'decolonization of knowledge implies the end of reliance on imposed knowledge, theories and interpretations, and theorizing based on one's own past and present experiences and interpretation of the world'. There is consensus amongst scholars that decolonization is a form of epistemic practice which aims to strip away what is colonial in the African discourse; thus working towards an Africanised framework of African philosophy which renders a service to address contemporary social challenges and develop in Africa. For the purpose of section, I will employ Wiredu's view of decolonization in relation to South Africa's educational discourse.

During the #RhodesMustFall movement, a student from UCT by the name of Athabile Nonxuba was interviewed by the News24 team to explain what students meant by decolonised education and why it was important for them. Nonxuba noted that the current curriculum was Eurocentric and dehumanised black students, he was quoted as saying "we study all these dead white men who presided over our oppression, and we are made to use their thinking as a standard and as a point of departure for our own thinking as Africans has been undermined". He argued that we must have our own education from our own continent because decolonization can only happen if we take it upon ourselves to start the process. According to Nonxuba (2016) decolonization means advancing the interests of Africans, instead of advancing Eurocentric interests. Nonxuba (2016) as cited by News24 asserts that eurocentrism does not serve our interests culturally, socially and economically. It is not neutral; it only serves particular interests. For instance, the works of Karl Marx, which is considered worthy is offered repeatedly as a standard, instead of introducing new or even old ideas by Africans. White lecturers teach students African music and the base of music studies is classical European music. The curriculum does not accommodate creativity and expression in African languages. For example, drama students feel they are marked lower if they produce work in African language. Nonxula as cited by News 24 (2016) also makes an interesting distinction by arguing that decolonization of education is not the same as transformed education. While one may argue that these views may be from one student, it is worth noting that most students could relate to Nonxuba's views hence, the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movement. The paper purposefully chooses to include Nonxula's interview who is a student political leader because he did not only speak about what and how students feel about the nature of colonial power and oppression which they experience in "white" universities, he also spoke of the distinction between decolonizing education and transforming education, which is a profound distinction which has been overlooked. The distinction also showed that students understand the difference between the failed political transformation education we were promised by the African National Congress (ANC) after they were afforded political power and the new economic struggle the current generation finds themselves in and therefore question the education which has not "transformed" or offered them access to opportunities to which their white counterparts have access. .

Furthermore, it is worth noting that there seems to be consensus in South Africa, with regards to the need to decolonise the South African education as part of a broader plan, to strengthen our educational system and, indirectly, our society and economy. Ramogale & Le Grange (2016) share the views that the need to decolonise our education comes out of a recognition that

much of what is taught is a legacy from our colonial past, a past which was designed to entrench unequal power relations and privileges for a minority (Ramogale 2016). African knowledge and philosophising based on African logic, language and traditions is at the heart of this paper. This paper is of the view that what is required in Africa is a conceptual approach and languages of description that move the decolonising education debate towards consideration about the terms on which knowledge selection for a decolonial curricular approach ought to proceed. An approach that does not side-line and favour a certain aspect of ideology. The objective is to seek an approach/ methodology which brings forward an authentic African sense of African philosophy.

As I write this article and reflect on the RhodesMustFall and FeesMustFall movement, I am reminded of the former President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki who argued in a well-known speech, that South Africa still comprises two nations. The former President observed that South Africa is divided into two "nations", the one nation is black and the other is white. According to Lesteka (2011,52) Mbeki (1998) made a case for South Africa as 'Two Nations', drawing on Sir Benjamin Disraeli's (1980) novel Sybil, or Two Nations. He described one of these nations as white, relatively prosperous, with ready access to a developed economy, physical, educational, communication, and other infrastructures. The other he described as black and poor, with the worst affected being women in rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled, who live under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructures. As a result, while blacks can exercise the right to equality of opportunity, they live in underdeveloped conditions and with little possibility of exercising their right to equality of opportunity.

For making such a critical and necessary observation the former president was vilified. Nattrass and Seekings (2001) took issue with him for reducing inequality to race, that is, black equals poor and white equals rich. Nattrass and Seekings argued that by emphasizing interracial economic inequality Mbeki misunderstood the changing nature of inequality in South Africa. They posited that inequality in post-apartheid South Africa was driven by two-income gaps between an increasingly multiracial upper class and everyone else, and between a middle class of mostly urban, industrial, or white-collar workers and a marginalized class of black. In Letseka's view (2011,53) Nattrass and Seekings glossed over South Africa's racially skewed labour market in which whites continue to hold most skilled occupations and senior management positions while Africans continue to swell the ranks of juniors and support staff. Moleke (as cited by Lesteka 2011) argues that because of discrimination and acquired human capital ''South Africa's labour market is characterized by racial job segregation both between sectors and between occupational categories. Moleke contends that ''Whites are still overrepresented in skilled occupations and their representation at senior management level is also relatively high''. The point being made here is , twenty one years later, Mr Thabo Mbeki's observation of two nations is still correct and evident not only in rural areas where the majority of people living there are uneducated but in higher learning institutions, financially disadvantaged youth of South Africa still feel excluded and marginalised. However, the promise of studying and obtaining a degree makes them believe that access to opportunities is through education. In this way they hope that they can help fight economic inequalities; occupy skilled and senior management positions, where they will have power and voice to influence

change. But for most of us, reality is different, hence, the need for the youth of South Africa to re-group and begin a different struggle, a struggle of economic freedom and decolonization of education, power and authentic Africanism. The concerns raised by Nonxuba with the News24 team are legitimate and worthy of attention by educational institutions, government and the academic community at large. The concerns raised by the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movement were based on lived racial bias, instilled institutional exclusion of black African students, Eurocentrism curriculum which does not speak to black African people's experiences and disregard or failure to acknowledge African phenomena. This is the kind of redress and decolonization in a true authentic African sense that Wiredu (1998, 17 - 18) insists is required in African universities and African philosophy.

One of the commonalities which Africans continue to share is the understanding of unity in an authentic African experience. In the words of Diop (1962, 07), '... there is a profound cultural unity still alive beneath the deceptive appearance of cultural heterogeneity present in Africa which gives rise to certain commonalities in indigenous African knowledge systems.' One of the commonalities Africans shares is the ideology of unity and community. According to Letseka (2000, 181) the importance of communality to traditional African life cannot be overemphasized. In other words, community in an African setting is what binds and provides a sense of belonging and shared goals within a people. The notion of a true authentic African philosophy, which has been decolonised from the western norms and traditions, could be a vehicle to push decolonization in educational discourse by redressing the current Eurocentric curriculum, by accommodating the traditional African life, inform and promote a collective effort directed at the good of the community. This collective effort in turn would be characterised by a spirit of ubuntu which is expressed by the combination of shared identities and solidarity; it is characterised by a relationship in which people identify with each other and exhibit solidarity with one another. To identify with each other is largely for people to think of themselves as members of the same group; to conceive of themselves as a "we", as well as for them to engage in joint projects, coordinating their behaviour to realize shared ends Metz (2009, 352). For educational interests, this would mean that African educational thought and practice would be directed at fostering African logic, language and traditions; endowed with moral norms and virtues such as kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy and respect and concern for others. In support of Nonxula (2016) and Wiredu (1998) views on African-ness (South) Africans need to advance their own economic, social and educational interests by applying a pragmatic African or community centred approach where young people value diversity, unity, communalism, interconnectedness and acquire necessary skills for the (South) African job market (Lesteka ,2000). Such an approach according to Lesteka (2000) would mean that young people are part of communities, education discourse and job markets which fully embrace and value African-ness, understood as ubuntu. It is assumed that persons who aim to improve and strive towards better social, economic and educational discourse treat others with a sense of ubuntu, which entails treating them with fairness, shared goals and solidarity. This means, people who exhibit traits of ubuntu and African-ness share a relationship in which people identify with each other and exhibit solidarity with one another. The emphasis on communalism and ubuntu in African thought and experience also requires education in the African context to pay attention to interpersonal and co-operative skills (Higgs 2003,15).

Furthermore, according to Higgs (2003, 15), for Africans, what they know is inseparable from how they know it in the lived experience of their African culture. This sense of African-ness is, has built a deep socio-ethical sense of cultural unity that provides the African identity with its distinctiveness from the West. I believe that the aim for a decolonized educational discourse at the end of the tunnel is to build what the former first black president, Dr Nelson Mandela aimed to see in South Africa, which was a diverse country, coined the rainbow nation. The #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movement called for more inclusion in the curriculum and expression of creativity in African languages. In other words, the South African transformation agenda should not only ensure that inclusive decolonization takes place but also serve as a reminder for both blacks and whites to always aim towards a more integrated African identity and the values of ubuntu.

The purpose of the decolonised educational discourse in South Africa should be fundamentally concerned with ubuntu in the service of the community and personal wellbeing. In this regard Letseka (2000,188) also argues that interpersonal skills have been shown to be an integral part of educating for ubuntu and the promotion of communally accepted and desirable moral norms and virtues. The development of skills such as cooperative skills will, therefore, play a crucial role in promoting and sustaining the sort of communal interdependence and concern with the welfare of others that is encouraged by ubuntu. This sort of communal interdependence emphasises the fundamental principles of governing in the traditional African life (Higgs, 2003 & Lesteka, 2000). Thus, the paper endorses Okeke's (1982, 56) idea where he argues that traditional education in the African context, sought to instil desirable attitudes, dispositions, skills and habits in children by means of recounting the oral traditions of the community. In this sense, African educational thought and practice is characterized not only by its concern with the person, but also by its interweaving of social, economic, political, cultural, and educational threads together into a common tapestry. And as a result, education in an Africa context will be distinguished by the importance attached to its collective and social nature, as well as its intimate tie with social and communal life. It will also apply to an authentic African education, which philosophises in African logic, language and traditions. Maintaining a sense that an African setting cannot, and indeed, should not, be separated from African life and experience. It is a natural process by which a person gradually acquires skill, knowledge, and attitudes appropriate to life in his or her community—an education inspired by a spirit of ubuntu in the service of the community (Higgs, 2003). Thus, the project of decolonisation in the educational discourse should speak to shared identities, goals and solidarity; engage in joint projects for the good of the people. For people to fail to identify with each other could involve outright division between them, people not only thinking of themselves as an "I" in opposition to a "you" or a 'they', but also aiming to undermine one another's ends. As we have seen this is the outright division between #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall students, university management and the government. The ultimate aim for the improvement of African philosophy in the educational discourse is to improve and integrate Western and African knowledge systems. Inspire to build better and informed virtues of togetherness, interconnectedness and acting for the sake of others.

Conclusion

In closing, the paper reflected on whether African philosophy, as a system of African knowledge(s), can provide a useful philosophical framework for the decolonization and re-construction of the higher education institutions. The focus of this paper included a discussion on the nature of African-ness as a philosophy of liberation, decolonization and dismantling institutional racism and power. I argued that an authentic African-ness should provide Africans with an opportunity to reflect, redress and address the legacies of colonial power in (South) Africa, by refurnishing our minds, providing access to economic freedom to all and redefining our socio-economic realities. Therefore, the pragmatic African-centred approach of African philosophy should not be limited to reflecting, redressing and addressing socio-economic challenges only but should also critically address the uncolonized state of government, which our educational discourse is aimed at functioning in and provide alternative methodologies of decolonizing the educational discourse within a colonised state. The project of decolonisation in the educational discourse should speak to African life experiences, improve and integrate Western and African knowledge systems. Inspire to build better and informed virtues of togetherness, interconnectedness and act for the sake of others.

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Ruminations on the Debilitating Triad: Neo-Colonialism, Predatory Capitalism and Militarism

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Abstract

This paper outlines a philosophical Pareto[50] analysis of the socio-political and economic challenges that continue to stagnate large swathes of the African continent. If one can visualize these challenges as branches of a massive tree, then this paper maintains that neo-colonialism, predatory capitalism and militarism are the roots of this tree. By performing this causal analysis, the author hopes to lay the groundwork for an emancipatory discourse that does not chase after phantoms.

Introduction

In the year 1919, Edward Morel, deeply disappointed with the wanton exploitation of the Congo by the Belgian colonial government, observed that**:**

> *"The African is really helpless against the material gods of the white man, as embodied in the [triad] of imperialism, capitalistic-exploitation, and militarism. If the white man retains these gods (and if he insists upon making the African worship them as assiduously as he has done himself) the African will go the way of the red Indian, the Amerindian, the Carib, the Guanche, the aboriginal Australian, and many more."[51]*

In the year 2020, over 100 years after Morel's writing, similar problems continue to bog down many African countries. Imperialism has been replaced by neo-colonialism, capitalistic exploitation has morphed into more predatory forms, and militarism now includes subtle forms of biological warfare. I shall refer to these three challenges as the *debilitaing triad*. The devastating toll of this triad upon large sections of the African population cannot be lightly overlooked. I contend that a large part of the reasons why many African countries are "falling behind and falling apart"[52] can and should be traced back to the three-pronged machinations of the debilitating triad.

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[50]The Pareto Principle states that 80% of consequences come from 20% of the causes. The principle, which was derived from the imbalance of land ownership in Italy, is commonly used to illustrate the notion that things are not equal, and the minority owns the majority.

[51]E. D. Morel, *The Black Man's Burden* (London: The National Labour Press, 1919), 9.

[52]Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

My objective in this paper is to articulate the *modus operandi* of the debilitating triad, and to formulate general frameworks for addressing their catastrophic effects. My overall project here is emancipatory in outlook, hoping to lay the groundwork for a more progressive and humane future. In this discourse, I make many allusions to often neglected knowledge coming from traditional African cultures and religions.[53] The idea here is not to romanticize such knowledge but to engage them in dialogue with mainstream Western thinking. My arguments involve a certain distancing from the grand narratives of mainstream social, political and economic thought, pointing to long term unsustainability of Morel's triad. I will lean heavily upon the hermeneutics of suspicion, often concurring that "everyone who has ever built anywhere a 'new heaven' first found the power thereto in his own hell."[54]

The paper is structured as follows: first, I present neo-colonialism, the first member of the debilitating triad. I intend to showcase neo-colonialism as ultimately the master of the other two members of the triad. Second, I engage with thorny aspects of capitalistic economics which tend to cause economic thought and praxis to emanate from a platform of systematized greed. Third I engage with the last member of the debilitating triad: militarism in its many forms. Within each section, I will articulate high-level responses by way of looking inwards to African cultures and religions for dialectical sources of practicable and sustainable solutions.

The Pattern of Neo-Colonialism

Neo-colonialism can be defined as the geopolitical practice of using capitalism, business globalization, and cultural imperialism to influence a country, in lieu of either direct military control[55] or indirect political control.[56] Despite the possible good intentions of neo-colonialists, long experience has revealed that sustained neo-colonial practice leads to tight corners and paradoxes. Some scholars hold the suspicious view that modern political systems strive to keep African countries perpetually embroiled in internal inter-ethnic strife, creating nation states that remain "aloof from indigenous or native society and enforce[s] its will through violence and repression, placing emphasis on the rudiments of law and order that [are] sufficient to ensure economic exploitation."[57]The irony behind it all comes to light when those that vehemently accused ATR[58] of engaging in human sacrifice turned around and sacrificed millions of Africans in order to appease the neo-colonial idols[59]that adorned the shrines of economic interest. Upon deeper examination on the basis of Critical Theory, this comes as no surprise since "the idea of the national community […], first set up as an idol, can eventually be maintained only by terror."[60]Given the realpolitik of our times, I do not imagine that these situations will magically disappear. Indeed, entire armies, treaties and armaments have long

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[53]I recognize that there may be close to three thousand flavors of African Traditional Religion (ATR) that are usually ignored in typical inter-religious dialogue.

[54]Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic*, trans. Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co, 1998), 82.

[55]Imperialism.

[56]Hegemony.

[57]Eghosa E. Osaghae, "Fragile States," *Development in Practice* 17, no. 4–5 (August 2007): 695, https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520701470060.

[58]African Traditional Religion.

[59]For example, preserving the "integrity" of nation states by eliminating people who hold dissenting opinions.

[60]Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (London: Continuum, 1947), 14.

been deployed to maintain the neo-colonial status-quo. Attempts to reverse some of these political structures remain at the root of many contemporary violent (and undesirable) conflicts. Well did Jean-MarcEla note that "in order to emerge from situations of misery and injustice in which the vast majority of Africans live after [many] years of independence, and which offend man's dignity, great is the temptation to repel such insults to human dignity with violence."[61]

Consequently, to address neo-colonialism, I propose an indirect route: focused on reducing the devastating effects of its two handmaids: predatory capitalism and militarism. Those who intend to struggle against extremely sophisticated external manipulations would do better if not bogged down in various forms of scorched earth warfare. The key here is to be able to thrive in spite of neo-colonial machinations, like a snail that gently climbs the thorny stem of a wildflower.

The Pattern of of Predatory Capitalism

Predatory capitalism refers to uncritical acceptance of domination and exploitation as normal economic practice. On the national and international levels, instances include unchallenged political corruption, the sabotaging of trade unions, the suppression of wages, the perpetuation of economic slavery, and wealth creation by means of imposing debt on vulnerable populations. The dire consequences of predatory capitalism are well presented in the documentary movie titled "The Wages of Debt"[62]:

> In the [1980s], trapped by the amount of debt, third world governments were forced to reimburse their loans with interest rates five to six times higher than those practised on financial markets. These countries then had forced upon them structural adjustment plans by the IMF, which led to the privatization of public services and the massive export of resources, with disastrous consequences for their development. In their wake, came corruption and subtle networking which left a long-lasting legacy.[63]

In light of these occurrences, the curious classification of countries into First World, Second World and Third World (with the Third World perennially taking loans in their attempts to upgrade their status and become just like the First World) countries become problematic upon further inspection. For instance, close analysis has revealed that "for every person in the world to reach the present [United States] levels of consumption with existing technology would require [resources from] four more planet Earths."[64] The emanating tragedy remains that those Third World countries that have worked hard to become First World countries have "joined the industrial world in erasing the last of the natural environments."[65]The depletion of the natural environment is once more identifiable with the disdain of [Nature's] ordinary providence. The proliferation of highfalutin ecological and theological discourse, without meaningful actions, will have little effect on improving the earth's environment. It is not surprising that the earth

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[61]Jean-Marc Ela and Robert R Barr, *African Cry* (Eugene, Or.:Wipf& Stock, 2005), 55.

[62]https://www.rt.com/shows/documentary/africa-wages-of-debt-799/

[63]Jean-Pierre Carlon, *Press Kit: The Wages of Debt* (La Ciotat: ARTE France, 2010).

[64]Edward O. Wilson, *The Future of Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 23.

[65]Wilson, 22.

begins to resemble an "immense pile of filth."[66] Attempts to implement the fuzzy concept of *economic growth* have caused human existence to adopt the dynamics of cancer cells. Some poor African countries have now jumped from the frying pan of debt slavery into the fire of environmental degradation. Small wonder Moyo classified the international debt enterprise as "Dead Aid."[67]

Awkward metaphysical[68] structures continue to animate economic misery in contemporary times. For instance, the over-emphasis on economic production remains blind to the question of demand-and-supply: Who will consume all that is produced? Will the market be free and fair? Why do we need *beggar-thy-neighbor*[69,70] tactics to ensure the real or simulated demand and supply? The myriad hermeneutical prejudices[71] of many *economic experts* have effectively become blinders imposed upon millions of people. Economic experts have hijacked the hermeneutical spiral, and theoretical economic models have replaced the received wisdoms that sustained millions of people in Africa from times immemorial.

Economic prophets have surreptitiously replaced the false religious prophets of biblical times. The tyranny of such prophets continues to dominate and dictate the lives of many. Modern economics, if it is not to lead the African economies to the edge of doom, stands in dire need of a hermeneutic of suspicion. Keen went as far as denouncing modern economics as "the naked emperor of the social sciences."[72] The myriad formulations of neo-classical economics are transcendental entities imposed upon human communities. The transcendental flaws in their formulation aid the construction and perpetuation of poverty. Africa is loaded with resources,[73] yet millions go hungry. Those who seek to help the hungry continue to resort to the transcendental economic constructs, and the cycle of misery is re-energized.

On an optimistic note, the myriad weaknesses latent in contemporary economic ratiocinations are the very things that can be exploited in the crafting of more viable economic solutions. All that is needed is a fundamental openness to dialectical discourse.

A Response: Hybridized Economics

Upon close examination, it can be shown that contemporary understanding of terms like '*wealth*' and '*poverty*' tend to be constructed upon shaky foundations, economic and otherwise. These concepts are quickly rendered empty of their presumed meanings upon serious critique. The uncritical reduction of the idea of wealth to narrow manifestations of paper money remains problematic. Questions abound: where does paper money get its value from? Why does vaguely

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[66]Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* (Rome: Vatican Press, 2015), para. 21.

[67]Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa*, 1st American ed (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009).

[68] Metaphysical here is meant in the broader philosophical sense, not limited to '*spiritual beings*.

[69]In economics, a *beggar-thy-neighbour* policy is an economic policy through which one country attempts to remedy its economic problems by means that tend to worsen the economic problems of other countries.

[70] See Adam Smith: *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* Book IV, Chapter III (part II): "nations have been taught that their interest consisted in beggaring all their neighbours"

[71]Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd Ed. (London: Continuum, 1989), 281.

[72]Steve Keen, *Debunking Economics: The Naked Emperor of the Social Sciences* (Annandale: Pluto Press, 2002), 2.

[73] See Resource Map of Africa in Appendix-1.

defined paper money continue to dominate the economic discourse? Do we need to elaborate more on the hermeneutics of paper money? The fastest way out of '*poverty*' is to undertake a radical re-definition of '*wealth*'.

The surest way to sustainable '*wealth*' is to remember that "nature can provide for the needs of mankind, but it cannot provide for the greed of mankind."[74] In light of the preceding, it can be argued that the Enlightenment thought process[75] which sought to cleanse the world of myths and enthrone reason ultimately liquidated reason and multiplied pseudo-scientific myths. The greed of mankind has been synthesized in the most awkward thought processes that seek to impose ideas upon nature, rather than bow down and learn from nature. Africa has been reduced to a source of raw materials and a huge market of consuming non-producers.

I propose the adoption of a two-layered economic system within each African country that has been affected by poorly articulated economic ratiocinations. This hybrid economy will consist of two layers. First, an outward-facing economy that interfaces with the international (money-dependent) community. Secondly an inward-facing economy, directed toward optimizing the life of each ethnic group within the country. The idea here is to optimize those aspects of tribal life that ensure the continued availability of food, shelter and clothing; all without the excessive dependence upon money. Anta Diop spoke about two aspects of African traditions: one that has "remained intact and continues to survive"[76] and another one "that has been altered by contamination from Europe." The response I propose here must develop deep-rooted cultural competencies with regard to these two aspects and put them in dialogue with other traditions of the world.

This exercise will entail checkmating the routine demonization of ancient cultures; cultures that are usually poorly understood or badly misinterpreted (and many of these cultures subsisted for centuries with minimal need for money[77]). I concur with Sen as he argues that "poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of [monetary] incomes, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty."[78] I outline some key elements of this exercise in the following paragraphs.

Striving to make good education cheap and functional on several levels. I have already worked up a blueprint for linking schools to viable industries.[79] Schools will need a modified philosophy of education, one that is amenable to a hybridized economic system. Great cultural competencies will need to be fleshed out in these projects.

Optimization of local food production. Rural farmers should be encouraged and incentivized to produce whatever food they can in commercially viable quantities. Many of these rural communities provided for themselves in times past. The culture of encouraging them to depend solely upon imported food items should be heavily discouraged. It will be a good idea to return

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[74] Gandhi is supposed to have said this in Hindi in 1947 to his secretary, Pyarelal Nayyar, who reproduced it in his book, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, 2 vols. (Ahmedabad, 1956–1958), 2: 552.

[75] These Enlightenment thought processes ultimately produced neo-classical economic theories.

[76] Cheikh Anta Diop and Egbuna P Modum, *Towards the African Renaissance: Essays in African Culture & Development, 1946-1960* (London: Karnak House, 1996), 33.

[77] Several African tribes used cowries and manilas for currency.

[78] Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 87.

[79] Henry Ibekwe, "A Pragmatist, Progressivist Blueprint for the Twinning of Tertiary Education and Industry in Nigeria" (Course Work (Philosophy of Education), Arrupe College, Harare, Zimbabwe, 2013).

to the local traditions, to optimize their processes, and to ensure the availability of healthy food items.

Renewable energy like wind and solar power should be preferred for mechanized work. There has been enough damage done by the careless drilling for crude oil in places like Nigeria. Many African countries receive large quantities of sunlight each year. There is no obstacle to taking advantage of this freely available natural resource.

The Many Faces of Militarism

Given the rise of nation states in modern Africa, there will always be justification for the institution of armies meant to defend the territorial integrity of these states. In this sense, militarism has its uses. On the other hand, the many civil wars that have plagued African nation states continue to boggle the imagination. Appendix 1 depicts a resource map of Africa. It is of particular interest to note that the regions with the highest deposits of natural resources are frequently war zones and trouble spots. Harbom and Wellensteen tabulated the statistics of armed conflicts by region between the years 1989 and 2009, their results are tabulated in Table 1.

Table II. Armed conflicts by region, 1989–2009[a]

Region	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	1989–2009
Europe	2	3	7	8	9	5	5	1	0	2	3	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	23
Middle East	4	7	8	7	7	6	6	7	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	5	5	4	4	5	13
Asia	16	21	15	20	15	16	16	18	19	16	15	17	14	12	16	14	16	15	14	15	15	39
Africa	12	13	16	14	10	16	11	11	15	16	16	15	15	15	9	10	7	10	12	13	12	41
Americas	9	6	5	4	3	4	4	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	3	2	2	3	3	3	15
All conflicts	43	50	51	53	44	47	42	40	40	39	39	37	36	32	29	32	32	33	35	37	36	131

[a] For data back to 1946, see www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/data_and_publications/datasets.htm or www.prio.no/cscw/ArmedConflict.

Table 1: Armed conflicts by region 1989 - 2009[80]

The table reveals that there were 131 global armed conflicts that raged between the years 1989 and 2009. Focusing now upon Africa, the rightmost column of Table 1 immediately reveals that Africa (the supposedly poorest continent) had to contend with 41 armed conflicts between the years 1989 and 2009. Once more, the existence of 41 conflicts in a continent comprised of 54 countries, over a period of 20 years, remains something to keep pondering about. Based upon an examination of the rightmost column, one can boldly draw a statistical correlation between economic poverty and armed conflict: those places deemed economically poor tend to mysteriously devolve into armed conflict. The paradox here is striking. Feinstein has described the shadow global arms trade as "a sprawling web of networks,"[81] making the case that:

> *Unsurprisingly, Africa has been among the shadow world's most fertile ground. The continent's colonial history, independence struggles, Cold War battles, weak state formations and 'big men' rulers willing to plunder their nations to retain power and enrich themselves have ensured continuous conflict, violence and poverty.[82]*

The shadow arms trade animated the atrocities committed in the prosecution of Africa's most notorious conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo,

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[80]Lotta Harbom and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflicts, 1946-2009," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 4 (July 2010): 502.

[81]Andrew Feinstein, *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade* (New York: Picador, 2012), 435.

[82]Ibid.

Angola, Somalia, Sudan, Egypt, Libya and Ivory Coast. The scale of these conflicts has rendered Africa fertile ground for transactions involving shadow arms dealers.

I remember contemplating the photographs of ragged-looking African child soldiers, wielding sophisticated weapons whose financial value could pay their school fees and feed them for several weeks. Many more of such photographs abound of war-torn countries with "*financially challenged*" fighters armed with expensive military gear; all this despite the fact that Third World countries are often essentialized, in the media and elsewhere, using the adjective *poor*. There remains, however, the puzzle of how these essentially poor peoples are able to sustain long-running wars with the use of costly military gear. On the one hand I concur that nation-states indeed need armies, arms and ammunition in order to protect their territorial integrities. On the other hand, the subversive and illegal flow of arms and ammunitions (often into the hands of so-called rebel groups) must continue to raise eyebrows. When the exchange of gunshots and explosive ordnances remains the preferred mode of settling differences, then this modernized dog-eat-dog state-of-nature must be interrogated.

How did acceptable levels of militarism give way to irresponsibly fragmented militias? What made it easier to build up mutually antagonistic militias than to provide roads, hospitals and other infrastructures? Why was it easier to recruit child soldiers than to build schools and buy textbooks for children? How is it that supposedly poor African tribes are suddenly able to purchase seemingly inexhaustible quantities of arms, ammunition and other military hardware for the prosecution of nearly perpetual wars? Aptly Kasomo observed that "the contemporary multi-ethnic states have not yet succeeded in creating a pluralistic and homogeneous state that is able to overcome inter-group rivalry and conflicts."[83]

The advent of monotheistic religions (especially Islam and Christianity) can also be statistically linked to armed conflicts in many parts of Africa. Problems abound: if such violence became essential to the spreading and maintenance of monotheism, then perhaps the time is long overdue to call out all those that have converted monotheism into an idol that demands human sacrifices. Schwartz has noted that "monotheism is a myth that forges identity antithetically – against the other."[84] The potential for great violence against the *other* has never been more palpable: *my monotheistic god is better than your monotheistic god, thus I must coerce you to serve my monotheistic god.* The progressively intractable misdeeds of groups like *Boko Haram*, *Al-Shabab* and the Christian-Muslim conflicts in Central Africa and the Sudan are but few examples.

In addition to militarism animated by firearms, I must also mention a sinister form of *militarism* animated by biological micro-organisms. As if to darken an already dire state of affairs, some schools of thought have long been suspicious of the rise of so-called epidemics like AIDS[85] and Ebola in various African countries. Scientists like Moore have agonized over the curious origins of the AIDS virus. Moore outlined four mutually contradicting theories about the origins of the AIDS virus, concluding that "the solution almost certainly will come from one or more of four competing theories."[86] Add to this scientific confusion the immense amount of political and economic gimmicks that have been played around medications and vaccines for AIDS, and

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[83]Daniel Kasomo, "The Position of African Traditional Religion in Conflict Prevention," *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (February 2010): 23.

[84]Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 16.

[85] Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

[86]Jim Moore, "The Puzzling Origins of AIDS," *American Scientist* 92 (2004): 540.

what results is a humanitarian disaster waiting to happen. In the year 2013, a documentary titled "*Fire in the Blood*"[87] detailed the process by which "millions of Africans with AIDS […] have died because they couldn't afford the antiretroviral drugs that could have saved their lives."[88] Add to this quagmire the COVID-19 pandemic (that will ensure the long-lived infamy of the year 2020) and the painful politicization of scientific research work.

Responding to Multi-faceted Militarism

With respect to the proliferation of arms and militias, I contend that a certain lack of social cohesion continues to bedevil many African countries. The race-obsessed tendency to see everyone as "black" loses sight of linguistic, cultural and religious differences that morph into weak links in nation building. What is worse, these differences were hardly accounted for in the political philosophies that animate many African countries. I take the position that some of the political philosophies need to be re-imagined. The totalitarian political philosophies that depend upon violence for their legitimacy are in dire need of critique. This will take massive levels of education and re-orientation. In addition, alternative means of dispute resolution need to be looked into. African tribes are already richly blessed by the various flavours of ATR which teach adherents to seek to avoid "resolving […] conflicts through war and violence, […][but] learn from our traditional religion which advocated peace, justice and reconciliation at all cost."[89] To this end, I highlight the need to involve the local priests, priestesses, shamans (and so on) in the formation of the social contracts in African countries. Furthermore, it would be necessary to involve the myriad traditional societies, which "served to strengthen male prestige"[90] in dialogue toward the formation of a more just and peaceful social contract. Magesa devoted several pages to this issue,[91] citing examples from the eastern regions of Africa. In this manner, the social contract will be seen to contain symbols, linguistic or otherwise, which convey deeper meanings to the Africans themselves.

With regard to the deadly spread of micro-organisms, I propose a more intense study and application of medicinal plants. African countries are noted for the diverse array of plants thriving in well-preserved forests. The time has come to appreciate the medicinal treasure latent in these plants, rather than see the forests as obstacles to so-called 'development'. Thankfully, many people have already begun looking into the optimization of homeopathic[92] remedies of African Traditional Medicines.[93] This step will drive down the cost of healthcare due to the fact that homeopathy strives directly to strengthen the body against the onslaught of infectious microorganisms. Linked to the philosophy of education, homeopathic training will augment the

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[87]http://fireintheblood.com/

[88]Miriam Bale, "Where AIDS Steals Life by the Millions," *New York Times*, September 5, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/06/movies/fire-in-the-blood-spotlights-aids-in-africa.html?_r=1.

[89]Dickson Nkonge Kagema, "The Role of the African Traditional Religion in the Promotion of Justice, Reconciliation and Peace in Africa in the Twenty-First Century: A Kenyan Experience," *International Journal of African and Asian Studies* 15 (2015): 9.

[90]Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo, and Kindred Peoples.* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf& Stock Publishers, 2014), 128.

[91]LaurentiMagesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 234–40.

[92] Homeopathy is the practice of medicine that embraces a holistic, natural approach to the treatment of the sick. Homeopathy is holistic because it treats the person as a whole, rather than focusing on a diseased part or alabelled sickness.

[93]Maurice M. Iwu, *Handbook of African Medicinal Plants*, 2nd ed (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2014).

dominant medical worldview linked with high costs of implementation. Tied to this is the avoidance of GMO,[94] given the suspicion and controversy that has plagued these food items for decades now.[95,96,97]

Conclusion: Toward an African Renaissance

I conclude by making a brief reflection on the African Renaissance:[98] a re-birth of the continent. Originated by Cheikh Anta Diop[99] in 1946, this idea was later to be popularized by Thabo Mbeki during his tenure as president of South Africa. I contend that engaging the debilitating triad (beginning by checkmating their deliterious effects) will put the continent on the path of the much-discussed renaissance. However, being strongly influenced by analytic philosophy (admitting that it is not the panacea for resolving all societal quagmires), I further contend that the African Renaissance must necessarily inherit and embrace the density that is at the heart of the reality called Africa. This means, for instance, that the renaissance of the whole of Africa must depend on the renaissance of the various portions and segments within the continent. I also maintain that this renaissance be seen "as an agenda for modernization, an agenda for neo-traditionalism, and an agenda for *Africanisation*"[100], proceeding by the rigorous interrogation of colonial grand narratives.

Finally, I contend that a clear distinction must be made and maintained between *civilization* and *Westernization* (or indeed any manifestation of cultural imperialism). Heidegger described the *dasein* as the "*shepherd of Being*."[101]It is up to African *daseins* to retain life-giving entities within their worldview, and to throw out life-denying idols. The time has come to jettison Afro-phobic thought processes and embrace Afrofuturism.

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[94] Genetically Modified Organism

[95]Ntomba Reginald, "The Zambian Example: Green and Unfarmed," *New African*, no. 537 (March 2014): 26–27.

[96]Monbiot George, "Beware of Greek Bearing Gifts," *New African*, no. 537 (March 2014): 20–21.

[97]Regina Jane Jere, "How Africa Can Feed Itself: Beyond Food Aid and Corporate Greed," *New African*, no. 537 (March 2014): 8–34.

[98]The African Renaissance must not imitate the Renaissance of Europe which took place between the 14th and 17th centuries of the Common Era.

[99]Cheikh Anta Diop, *Towards the African Renaissance: Essays in African Culture & Development, 1946-1960*, trans. Egbuna P Modum (London: Karnak House, 1996).

[100]Ineke van Kessel, "In Search of an African Renaissance," *Quest* XV, no. 1–2 (2001): 43.

[101]Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," *Journal of Global Religious Vision* 1, no. 1 (2000): 91.

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Appendix-1: Resource Map of Africa