

Decolonization and African Philosophy: A Critical Synthesis

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Abstract: Decolonization, broadly construed, has to do with the cultural, psychological, and economic freedom of indigenous people to achieve indigenous sovereignty. At the core of decolonization is true independence from an alien way of life and influence. By proscribing colonialism and the racism that accompanies it, decolonization assumes a reversal of those norms, such as respect, empathy, and dignity, which shaped the relationship of peoples and states. Applying the method of critical analysis, this paper interrogates decolonization and African philosophy on the basis of the freedom it bequeaths and its task of bringing about the desired development to the African continent.

Keywords: decolonization, colonialism, Africa, freedom, development

Introduction

Decolonization designates a specific world-historical moment, yet it also stands for a many-faceted process that played out in each region and country shaking off colonial rule. The term has been attested lexically since 1836 when some theoretical elaboration was found in the writings of the German émigré economist Moritz Julius Bonn in the inter-war period. It was used significantly from the mid-1950s onwards (Jansen and Osterhammel 1). Decolonization, as an ideology, started because of the need to end colonialism and to heal the harm it has caused. Colonialism ended for a variety of reasons. One of the most important causes of its dissolution was that it gradually lost its *raison d'être* in the eyes of a growing number of people both in the colonies and the metropolises. This transformation in the worldwide climate of opinion had already become apparent and legally binding in 1960 when the General Assembly of the United Nations, in its epoch-making Resolution 1514, declared that “all people have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right, they determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” (Oelofsen 130).

So, decolonization sent shocking waves that went far beyond the dissolution of formal colonial rule. Thus, it has been argued that African philosophy ought to be instrumental in the project of decolonizing the African mind (136). Decolonization is the change colonized countries undergo when they become politically independent from former colonizers. Decolonization is not merely a matter of getting political independence. It entails changing or dissolving governmental and economic structures, institutions, and organizations. It is also about changing how former colonial subjects were encouraged to think and act, which are often still determined by former colonial powers due to the economic and cultural influence they wield.

To this end, black persons, following Fanon, have to liberate themselves from the arsenal of complexes that germinated in the colonial situation, overcoming the psychological effects of colonialism. On the flip side, and according to Oelofsen (140), African philosophy aims to restore health lost by the colonial heritage of violent oppression and exploitation by exploring truths articulated within the context of Africa, even though this may still be far from being realized. Again, African philosophy draws and creates concepts from the place of Africa and, hence,

can be an instrument in the decolonization of the African mind. This is possible, however, through providing an alternative framework for knowledge, which “de-centers” the assumed (Western) center of knowledge. This does not mean advocating for ethno-philosophy but for concepts that can be drawn from it so that African philosophy will advance from a philosophy of place to one with universal relevance. Such concepts include *Ubuntu*, *Igwebuike*, *Ibuanyidanda*¹ and others. African ethno-philosophers record and aim to recover the folk philosophy of specific African cultures. Though ethno-philosophy focuses on the peculiarities within the African context, it does not align with philosophy in place, as philosophy in place utilizes the particular as a starting point for critical engagement. Hence, African philosophy in place urges African philosophy to be current for it “to maintain both the Africanity and Philosophicality as its essential characteristics, for in them it receives its particularity and universality” (Osugwu 28).

This paper attempts to examine the normative structure of decolonization as a concept so that the proper emphasis can be placed on the knowledge and contribution of Africa to the intellectual landscape. It wishes to help Africans overcome the belief that they are inferior (Enaifoghe 63). Thus, understanding African philosophy as postcolonial philosophy-in-place² is crucial to the decolonizing project. The methodology is to start from the individual’s particular place not only geographically but also contextually, as Africa³ denotes more than a geographical location, and to recognize that this could affect one’s ideas, and so to focus on what the individual’s specific context can offer for understanding, creating, and investigating concepts.

Colonialism Explained

Colonialism is both a practice and a worldview. As a practice, it involves the domination of a society by settlers from a different society. As a worldview, colonialism is a truly global geographical, economic, and cultural doctrine rooted in the worldwide expansion of the West, even though it is not exclusive to a European/Western phenomenon. It is also known as European capitalism, which survived well after most colonial empires collapsed. Thus, colonialism has been described as the principle of imperial state craft and effective strategy of capitalist expansion that involved sustained appropriation of the resources of other societies, regions, of the world for the benefit of the colonizing society, backed by an elaborate ideological justificatory apparatus. (Borocz and Sarkar 1)

As a worldview, colonialism is a global geopolitical, economic, and cultural doctrine that involves the superimposition of the rule of an alien social order on another. As such, violence inheres in all its aspects. Colonialism can be seen further as a compound effect of three interconnected fields of domination, which are political-economic, social-institutional, and representational-symbolic systems. In this respect, colonialism involves the destruction of the social, legal, political, agrarian, proto-industrial, and other technological structures of the colonized society. It is very unlikely that the reason and motive behind colonialism was altruistic considerations. But as far as it is known, colonialism has political and ideological aspects. The political aspect has to do with the spreading of empires and state glory, while the ideological aspect has to do with capitalism and the expansion of economic frontiers. The striking contemporary poverty of some of the erstwhile colonial societies can be linked to the political and economic processes of colonial value transfer and devastation as upheld throughout the centuries of colonial rule. Colonialism also produced social forms in the colonies that were distinct from those in place in Europe, even though in both contexts, the drawing force was the rise and expansion of capitalism.

Understanding Decolonization

Frantz Fanon (28), among other thinkers, has insisted that decolonization entails the creation of “new men,” where the ‘thing’ which has been colonized becomes man during the

same process of decolonization. Decolonization has been described as the process that colonized countries pass through when they become politically independent from their former colonizers. However, decolonization is not merely a matter of political independence but also involves the dissolution of the colonial inherited structures of government and other institutions and how a former colonized country is economically organized. Furthermore, decolonization involves a conscious change or restructuring of how former colonial subjects were made to think and act due to colonialism or colonial education. In order to overcome the legacy of colonialism, it is also necessary to decolonize the mind of the formerly colonized (Oelofsen 130).

Hence, decolonization concerns the dissolution of inherited colonial structures, as seen in the political and social institutions of formerly colonized countries, and the restructuring of the minds of the formerly colonized people, who were made to think that they were inferior and an extension of the colonial personality. The colonialists ruled their hosts using the structures of colonies and protectorates. A colony is a region or government unit created by another country and generally ruled by another country. Decolonization, then, will mean the emergence of new nation-states or the process that will lead to the independence of former colonies. Decolonization can be pushed by the colonizing country (disentanglement) or achieved through the struggle for freedom of the colonies. Either way, it speaks of independence for the colonized as well as the sense of right action by the colonizing or imperial power.

Moreover, decolonization has two stages: political decolonization and ideological decolonization. Political decolonization occurred during the independence of formerly colonized countries. Political decolonization has four broad types: change of imperial masters, formal empire replaced by informal empire or neo-colonialism, self-government for white settlers, and formal end to empire followed by independent rule. Ideological decolonization has to do with the conscious dissolution of the inherited colonial structures and the change or restructuring of the mind of the formerly colonized, which was affected by colonial education. The two stages of decolonization are interwoven as both are related, and neither can stand on its own without the other. Political decolonization has not ended, as colonial masters interfere significantly in the political affairs of their former colonies. It is the task of African philosophy to ensure that ideological decolonization is successful in Africa. This will likewise bring about real political independence to the formerly colonized countries of Africa. Decolonization is a process whose endpoint is the freedom of the colonized.

All the undercurrent that led to the decolonization process can be attributed to the fact that humans cannot come to terms with what is unjust and unfair. Decolonization becomes a protest philosophy, implicitly or explicitly, and one that cannot be ignored in the whole gamut of the unfair treatment that European imperialists meted on the colonized.

For the purpose of this paper, the *locus* is to understand the concept of decolonization and its intricacies as it concerns the cultural and political life of the people of Africa and its interconnectedness with African philosophy. It is crucial also to scrutinize how far Africa has been able to make the most of this decolonization window in regaining her lost identity and place in the scheme of things.

African Philosophy

African philosophy as a discipline was non-existent before the 1920s as a corpus of courses taught in the university. The teaching of African philosophy in universities began in the 1970s. This was because of the colonial antics that tended to undermine and discredit everything associated with Africa. However, as Uduigwomen (3) avers:

The debate or controversy on whether or not there is an African philosophy is dead and buried. At best, it is a matter of mere historical interest...The subject 'African Philosophy' is presently being taught either as a self-subsisting course or as part of comparative philosophy in many African

universities. A number of theses have been written on it by both undergraduate and postgraduate students. In addition, a good number of journal articles and textbooks have been or are being published on it.

African philosophy has gone beyond the question of its existence and nature into actual theorizing. The pioneering and enduring efforts of such African scholars as Bodunrin, Sodipo, Alexis Kagame, Wiredu, Orika, Hountondji, Okere, Omoregbe, Nkrumah, and so on cannot be ignored even though the focus of African philosophy has moved from mere apologetics to actual philosophizing on thematic issues that have universal relevance and applicability. This keeps African philosophy's mill constantly grinding with new and fresh perspectives springing up. So, Momoh (viii) is concerned about African philosophy as he maintains that the "...present state is such that the discipline suffers from about four ailments: stagnation, isolation, imitation and deception."

African philosophy can be described as a body of work systematically written by Africans or non-Africans alike on existential and ontological issues from the lived experience and cultural worldview of Africans, alongside the attendant logic of such engagement. A good example of African philosophizing can be captured thus: "[M]y system, appropriately dubbed *Consolation Philosophy*, is not an existentialist system *per se*, in spite of the solid reference to concrete human conditions... It should rather be seen as a work of African rationalism... I do not desire a system that turns out to be a mere logic-chopping exercise" (Agada xix).

African philosophy can be said to be in the same genre as Western philosophy, Eastern philosophy, and American philosophy. However, it must be noted that no philosophizing is done outside of a cultural context. It can also be argued that no philosophizing is presuppositionless. This is why Ijiomah (v) asserts that "...every part of philosophy is coloured by the root-paradigms of the culture in which the philosophy is domiciled...every explanation has a logical base." So, for Africans to be denied rationality by Western instruments of colonialism is a grave error and evil done to the African psyche, which demands some form of reparation and restitution.

The Corollary between Decolonization and African Philosophy

The paper's primary aim concerns how decolonization has the same *fait accompli* as African philosophy. It is essential, therefore, to note that the economic growth of any people after gaining independence from the colonialists depends more on how the people organize themselves and make the most from what the society indigenously provides. This is where decolonization becomes meaningful and positively impactful only to the degree to which the decolonized know what to do with their new found freedom, something that African philosophy readily provides. African philosophy is more than just a genre of philosophy; it is a decolonization tool or instrument that can assist in the desired development of Africa. This is so because this field of scholarship interrogates a wide array of subjects that are imperative to the development of Africa and its people.

African philosophy is focused on addressing the core needs of the African people from the point of view of research and scholarship. The primary focus of African philosophy is not being an apologetics but being able to reflect on the lived existential reality themes that will help Africa to become a great continent. Sensing that African philosophy as it is does not reflect this true calling, Wiredu (21) asserts that:

It is probably clear without further argument that the exorcising of the colonial mentality in African philosophy is going to involve conceptually critical studies of African traditional philosophies. I might mention that African philosophy consists of both a traditional and a modern component. It would have been unnecessary to make a point that, in the abstract sounds so trite, were it not for the fact that some people seem to equate African philosophy with traditional African philosophy.

It is, in any case, perhaps not so trite to insist that the imperative of decolonization applies to both phases of African Philosophy.

African philosophy covers every aspect of the African experience. It is a corpus geared towards the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of Africans, on abstract and physical issues, however complex. This kind of activity involves a lot of pure thinking devoid of external influences, which decolonization also pursues. This is why African philosophy must be understood as:

Not so much an area or topic within Philosophy as it is a set of culturally original questions about the full range of philosophical issues. It deals with metaphysics, epistemology, axiology and methodology, as well as with the problems and opportunities of Intercultural philosophizing and does so in ways that cover the gamut of the analytic/continental divide in Western Philosophy (Janz 690).

Contemporary African philosophy has moved on from analyzing traditional issues to systemic logic building so that all seven or more trends of African philosophy, which include Ethno-Philosophy, Philosophic Sagacity, Nationalistic-Ideological Philosophy, Professional Philosophy, Hermeneutical Philosophy, Historical Philosophy, and Literary or Artistic Philosophy, are present in the perimeter of African philosophy which, today, has assumed the role of decolonizing and deconstructing issues with the prospect of advancing knowledge that will be beneficial to Africans. This is why this paper argues that decolonization has the same aim as African philosophy, namely the emancipation and freedom of Africa.

Moreover, contemporary African philosophy focuses on developing indigenous African logic, which aids in understanding African peoples and their worldviews. For Instance, Anthony Kanu and Jonathan Chimakonam have theories called *Igwebuike* and *Ezumezu*, respectively. Both authors strive to tell the story of an authentic African way of thinking and how this can aid the process of independent thinking of Africans as well as their survival.

Furthermore, challenges to African philosophy still abound, and Martin Asiegbu (1) iterates that they are “of two major kinds: one is deconstructive and the other reconstructive.” After a century of Western discourse about Africans, it is the task of the deconstructive challenge to explore and expose the limiting ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies of such an existing negative discourse that burdens the African psyche. Mainly repressive and subjugating of Africans, such ideas equally subserve the postcolonial, socioeconomic, political, and cultural institutions in African society. Consequently, decolonization and African philosophy cannot be discussed in isolation, especially as they both have the primary task of ensuring the liberation and emancipation of Africa from colonial vestiges.

Important Areas in Need of Decolonization in Contemporary Africa

African Philosophy of History

African philosophy of history is one of the foremost areas that need urgent decolonization. It has been argued that:

What is intended and expected is how to remove the imprint of colonial history and interpretation of history and effect a replacement of what African Philosophy of history would be. This replacement has to absorb the unfolding events and their corresponding feats prior to colonialism, the dogged exercises to overthrow colonialism and how such continued doggedness portends a better history and historicism for Africa (Isife 52).

The African past and present are as real to Africans as reality can be. Thus, the past provides the opportunity to unearth the African way of life in all facets so that one can make good use of it in the present to make plans or progress for the future. Africans must not always use Western categories to make sense of their situations. Africa has unique problems that may differ from the West's. This is why Africa needs to decolonize her own way of telling her story because

history is primarily concerned with telling a story. Hence, there must be a conscious attempt to bracket the history of Africa to properly delineate the African philosophy of history without Western influence.

African Political Philosophy

Although democracy is being embraced and accepted worldwide as the ideal form of government, Africa should look at its own uniqueness or its own peculiar challenges so as to either modify democracy if possible or jettison it for its own traditional system in order to address the many political problems confronting the continent. This is not to say that African traditional political systems were perfect before the West came to disrupt them with their system of governance. In fact, if one probes deeper, one will realize that there are many imbalances and flaws in it. Still, the point is that, just as with everything else in life, problems or challenges will always arise, which, of course, is not a setback but an opportunity for innovation and re-modification.

African political philosophy must reflect and capture the African experience, times, and culture. In fact, African political discourses should be texts and talks about African political ideas, contexts, and situations on how to govern African political societies, with these discourses bothering on development, identity, unity, liberation, democracy, nation-building, and sovereignty.

African Philosophy of Science and Technology

It is a fact that pre-colonial Africa had knowledge of the workings and the laws of nature as well as proficiency in the art and science of fabrication of technological gadgets. So, to talk about decolonizing African philosophy of science and technology is, in a sense, trying to set the record straight that science and technology as is known today is not exclusively Western even though the West has done a lot more in this area with breakthroughs in different areas covering the air, land, and sea.

Traditional African metaphysics was the basis upon which traditional Africans confronted and made sense of the world. Divine forces reveal knowledge of medicine for specific ailments through dreams and visions, as well as how to control and predict the forces of nature. If these were not pragmatic, living in the traditional African time would have been challenging without modern vaccines or medicines. One may query that belief in the non-physical or non-material entities has no place in science. But many aspects of modern science also deal with non-physical issues, such as strings theory, black holes, quantum entanglement, etc. Western science has an aspect of rationalism where the internal logic of a system is known differently from the derivable laws of nature captured under the scientific method. Taiwo Afisi (59) has argued that the method of African science can be seen as a distinct method “that can be termed scientific.... there exist varieties of inquiry beyond what has been developed in the West, which can still be justifiably termed scientific. The social character of science, which makes it a part of social and cultural traditions, qualifiedly justifies ‘African science’ as a true science.” The body of knowledge in this field is vast and can be studied even in conventional universities, as it is done in South Africa, where witchcraft is studied as a bachelor’s degree program.

Until Africans, especially the thinking population, begin to see the need to develop traditional African science in a manner whereby it can begin to solve the problems of humanity, Africans would only be deceiving themselves that they are free from colonialism and its effect when they are not.

African Philosophy of Healthcare

The decolonization of African philosophy of healthcare can be achieved by institutionalizing traditional medicine in parallel with orthodox or Western medicine within the healthcare scheme. This is because Western medicine is costly and sometimes very difficult to access for

everyone. Healthcare is one of the fundamental needs of human beings for quality living and longevity. African ancestors knew the application of plant, animal, or mineral materials found in the hierarchy of forces, sometimes with incantations for healing purposes, which can be rationalized, explained, and investigated scientifically. It has to be noted that the use of *Salix alba*, the willow plant containing the salicylates for fever and pains, which led to the discovery of aspirin, is a form of traditional medicine.

This also shows that African ancestors were experimental in their search, which led to the discovery of the potency of these plants not in the very sense of Western experimentation but from the revelation of divine forces or through observation and experimentation, as the case may be. So, some scholars have described the traditional medical practitioner or traditional healer as a “person who is recognized by the community in which he lives as competent to provide health care by using vegetables, animals and mineral substances and other methods: serving as the nurse, pharmacist, physician, dentist, midwife, dispenser, etc.” (Elujoba et al. 48). The specialists include herbalists, bone setters, traditional psychiatrists, herb sellers, general practitioners, and so on. It is not a case of competition with Western medicine but a subtle quest to develop Africa’s indigenous episteme in the area of restoring health to Africans. Since this cannot be done without the knowledge of the workings of traditional Africa, there must be ways of developing, preserving, and teaching traditional African culture in healthcare as a curriculum for schools and a health policy for governmental implementation.

African Philosophy of Economic Development

In decolonizing African economic development, there is an imperative to revisit Africa’s distant past to strengthen the African spirit of communalism, as well as family-hood that regulates interpersonal relationships amongst Africans. Hence, whatever is done with regard to African economic emancipation without considering this vital aspect of African context and culture is incomplete. The economic dimension of traditional Africa holds a lot of promise that can be incorporated into the economic experience of contemporary Africa. For example, one fundamental question that can be asked with regard to policy formulation is what is in traditional African thinking that can be added to the economic analysis or projections for Africa’s emancipation. This question should always be asked because there are old ways of solving new problems. In traditional Africa, public utilities, such as roads, markets, halls, and squares, were built through community efforts in which every group member contributed their own quota for the collective good of all. This idea of African rulers coming into power and amassing public wealth is un-African. It is a Western residue of exploitation that is foreign to the traditional African system of economics. Wealth or economic prosperity in traditional Africa has a different connotation. It is not for the suppression of the people but for the service of other members of society. The principle of life forces also operates here with the understanding that every life force adds up to the collective force. What affects one affects the other, and the poverty of one is the poverty of the other. This ontological cum epistemological dimension of traditional African economic principles ought to be known by all and to be preserved or maintained.

African Philosophy of Infrastructural Development

In the same vein, Africa’s need for urgent infrastructural development demands decolonization from the West with regard to sourcing cheap local construction materials that can help save the continent’s wealth and avoid capital flight. This is because “Africa constitutes a substantial percentage of the growing urbanization without commensurate infrastructural development facilities to take care of the increasing population” (Msinjili et al. 48). The present economic downturn of many African countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, has caused the cost of building/construction materials to explode, making it difficult to actualize the expectations of

infrastructural provision. It can be understood if some of the materials for critical infrastructural development are imported to complement those that can be locally sourced, granted that the world is now globalized and Africa needs to sell its raw materials so she can get enough funds to invest in infrastructure.

Africa's economic growth and development are intrinsically linked to her infrastructural development, but it is the push-pull relationship with commodities that has become the driving force for infrastructural development in the African space. The benefits of sourcing local materials for Africa's infrastructural development and using local expertise are enormous. Africa's infrastructural development will also thrive if the concept of community and duty is imbibed as it is known in traditional Africa.

African Philosophy of Foreign Affairs

Finally, foreign policy in the contemporary world has taken a completely new shape. It has been stated that "the compulsory enrolment of all nation-states in the web of international relations gives rise to the imperative for them to formulate and implement policies which will maximize their interest within the fiercely competitive global system (Jibrin xxviii). Hence, African philosophy of foreign affairs must be carved out of the knowledge garnered over the years, especially from the long road to colonial freedom and independence. It must be such that it should benefit the continent and her people without equivocation. It should not be construed without a definite goal in mind, a case of just following the bandwagon. As the contemporary world holds various opportunities for the continent, Africa must be circumspective and intentional in her foreign policies and affairs. So, she should relate with other nations in the world without leaving out the ingredients of the African culture or identity, which, of course, must inform the background or foundation of any such relations.

Evaluation

The reality of neo-colonialism has put African countries in a situation where they are constantly at the receiving end of the always advancing, innovating production of (especially automotive, electronics and knowledge transfer) commodities exported from developed countries. The benefit that the globalizing economic neo-colonizers of today would derive from such socio-cultural petrification on the part of the neo-colonized is the assurance that, while the latter are committed to various outdated beliefs in an immobilized cultural tradition, the neo-colonizer would retain economic (and political) power over them (Olivier 5). It is easy to dwell on past cultural utopias, whether of imagined cultural purity, preceding imperialists' colonization, or successful resistance to colonial authorities, and deflects one's attention away from present neo-colonization, where one has to take root to overcome it.

Frantz Fanon took a full swipe at colonialism and its debilitating effect on the colonizers when he articulated his vision poignantly in relation to decolonization by stating that "it sets out to change the order of the world and is obviously a program of complete disorder"(27). Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it fundamentally influences individuals and modifies them. It transforms spectators crushed with the inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. Fanon thus insists that decolonization brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new individuals, and with it, a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is then the veritable creation of new human beings. But this creation "owes nothing of its legitimacy to say supernatural power; the 'thing' which has been colonized becomes [human] during the same process by which it frees itself" (28).

Everything that will not be for the good of the African people or add value to them must be refused or rejected as a sign of enlightenment occasioned by an African philosophy or way of thinking. The present decade is governed by a society of contempt, where the power of money

triumphs and is erected as a true ideology inducing fear of the other, regardless of what form it takes. This ideology can be characterized by financial capital, corruption, the subjection of the impoverished, and a culture of fearing the other which leads to exclusion. This is why Fanon warned against “postcolonial nationalism,” where the newly empowered political elite duplicate the same structures of domination and confiscation of wealth. It is unfortunate that many African leaders fall into such traps.

During the struggles for liberation, the African leader (of whatever genre) awakened the people and promised them a forward, heroic, and unmitigated march. Such a leader, as illustrated by Fanon, uses every means to put them to sleep. The leader, because they refuse to break up the national bourgeoisie, asks the people to fall back into the past and become drunk on remembering the epoch that led up to independence. The leader, seen objectively, brings the people to a halt and persists in either expelling them from history or preventing them from taking root in it. Thus, to a larger extent, visionary leaders in a political setting can foster a decolonization process that benefits the people. But whether there are such visionary leaders in the African political and economic milieu is subject to debate owing to Africa’s slow developmental pace.

One would wonder if Africa has actually fared any better economically after gaining independence from the colonialists. Kevin Sylwester examines the growth rate of real GDP per capita with regard to decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa. Countries becoming independent grew slower than did countries not simultaneously undergoing this type of political change. However, there is no strong evidence of a cost to decolonization relative to remaining a colony. He concludes that “decolonizing countries are not found to grow slower than ones that remained colonies during the same period” (Sylwester 100). Decolonization thus appears as a positive phenomenon with varied advantages for several reasons, from freedom to political and economic development. Like African philosophy, decolonization provides new insights on how to view the world differently from seeing it from a particular external prism. Thus, to think in a decolonizing way is revolutionary with attendant benefits for a people or continent. Decolonization, therefore, is a catalyst or recipe for development if adequately understood and harnessed from the point of view of African Philosophy. It is on the strength of this that Fanon holds that decolonization entails the creation of “new people” that necessitates the turn towards the future instead of reclining to the past. Decolonization sums up as “the creation of a new human being, impervious to the hierarchization of humanity into a racial or cultural centre, and a number of subaltern rules and cultures of the colonized” (Olivier 3).

Kwasi Wiredu sees decolonization as divesting African philosophical thinking of all undue influences from her colonial past. The crucial word in his formulation is “undue,” as he agrees that rejecting everything of colonial ancestry would not be rational. To Wiredu, “that would be a madness having neither rhyme nor reason” (Wiredu 21). Yet, he admonished that one should be careful in adopting the theories of Western philosophy, particularly towards the categories of thought embedded therein because of historical colonial reasons, as it was not only a political imposition but also a cultural one. Wiredu suggests that African philosophers have to be doubly critical and use comparative models where necessary to project African thought clearly despite having been decolonized.

This being the case, decolonization does not enjoin anything like parochialism. Decolonization, then, has nothing to do with the attitude that implies that Africans should steer clear of those philosophical disciplines that have, at this particular point in human history, received their most remarkable development in the West. Suppose Africans do not enter these areas of philosophy and make their presence felt in them. In that case, they will perpetually remain outsiders to the project of understanding and clarifying modes of thought that have played a considerable part in the making of the modern world.

The vital task is to extract the benefits of decolonization and African philosophy as a recipe revolving around the conversation that promotes the African good. This is why there is a need for “Southern theory and a dramatic decolonization of the curriculum because the scholarship of teaching and learning in the South is a key site where contested postcolonial histories, geographies and epistemologies play out” (Manathunga 104). It has also been noted that Southern theories allow for critical thinking about the sense of multiple and contested histories, especially of colonialism, that are brought into supervision. In the case of supervision, there is a multi-layered operation of history present, which includes our own personal intellectual histories, the cultural histories of the many different cultural groups and sub-groups to which supervisors and students each belong, and the histories of the country in which the fieldwork or data and the supervision takes place.

Conclusion

Indeed, just anything can be decolonized if we understand the importance of conviviality and the principle of justice and harmony. African philosophy has continued to struggle to decolonize by seizing back the creative initiative of history through a real control of all the means of communal self-definition in time and space. Concerning the production of knowledge of Africa and its representation, the incompleteness of the decolonization struggle is evident in the fact that Africa today remains widely associated with chaos, illness, disorder, and a range of colonial stereotypes.

Decolonizing the African social and political institutions is the dual task of first placing African discourse at the center of the scholarship on Africa and, second, dislocating African humanity from the human-inhuman binary. The binary opposition of a primitive or traditional Africa to a modern or enlightened West continues to dominate academic discourses, contemporary journalistic accounts of Africa and its people, and the perspectives of international development and aid organizations. Hence, both African and non-African scholars have it as a challenge to establish the substantial and valid fact of African humanity, in all its diversity and form, and to enable the representation of Africa beyond its historical role as the foil to Western humanity (Mudimbe).

African voices have a right to be heard within intellectual discourses and a responsibility to represent themselves within the same discourses. Consequently, scholars must develop distinctively and explicitly African categories of intellectual inquiry. African scholars and scholars of Africa need to take advantage of academic and intellectual spaces opened by postmodern, post-colonial, and cultural studies theorists to rationalize African intellectual developments as explicit African reflections upon the specific experience of African historical agents.

Notes

- ¹ Ubuntu is a Nguni Bantu term that means humanity. It is best translated as “I am because you are. And because you are, I am.” It is a belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all of humanity. *Igwebuike* is a universal philosophy described in Igbo language by Igbo traditional philosophers. The philosophy means number is strength, number is power, or strength is unity. When human beings come together in solidarity, they achieve much more. The concept of *Ibuanyidanda* draws its inspiration from the teachings of traditional Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought. Hence, Innocent Asouzu (108) explains that: “One of the most common metaphors or imageries that the traditional Igbo uses to express the idea of complementarity is that of the collective effort needed by ants (*danda*) to lift heavy crumbs or loads (*ibu*) that would otherwise remain an insurmountable task.” For the Igbo philosophers of Nigerian extraction, the idea of complementarity is inferred from observing a species of ants called *danda*. These ants have the capacity to carry loads that appear bigger and heavier than them. What this implies is that they can surmount very difficult tasks where they are mutually dependent on each other in the complementation of their efforts.
- ² Philosophy in place is an intercultural way of thinking that is unique to a people and often capturing their lived experiences as they reflect upon the moral, aesthetic, and fundamental landscape of their environment.
- ³ Apart from being a geographical space, Africa is understood as a place replete with myths, legends, folklores, folktales, etc., that builds on the core beliefs of the people on matters of morality, knowledge, and the world.

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