Reconstructing the Social Sciences and Humanities: Advancing the African Renaissance

by

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Abstract

The thrust of this article speaks to the fateful colonial encounter between Africa and Europe and the resultant underdevelopment of the former. Hence, despite decolonisation having taken effect, with various internal and external attempts being made to reverse Africa's underdevelopment, the continent is still in crisis mode. However, the African renaissance continues as a newer attempt at addressing the state of affairs characterised by poverty, instability, dictatorship and growing social inequality on the continent since the beginning of the 20th century. Considering the above situation, this work asserts that the social sciences and humanities have been found wanting with regard to contributing to the process of reviving and regenerating Africa because such disciplines remain steeped in their Eurocentric origins. Therefore, to be relevant to the African renaissance, there is need to reconstruct such disciplines.

Keywords: African renaissance; colonial penetration; social sciences

A Fateful Colonial Encounter

That colonisation resulted in African underdevelopment (Rodney, 1973) and the destruction of Black civilisation (Wiiliams, 1992) is no longer in dispute except in caricature and essentially racist narratives. Precisely because of the long-standing implications of colonial penetration into Africa, some scholars argue that the African post-colonial condition can be described as a 'crisis' or even as the 'world's tragedy' (Oke, 2006; Oguejiofor, 2001; Mbaku & Saxena, 2004). For some the continent is the most humiliated and dehumanised in the world and its past is "a tale of dispossession and impoverishment (Osundare, 1998) that remains at a crossroads (Gumede, 2014), facing stalled development (Leonard & Straus, 2003) with many of its parts in turmoil (Ntuli, 1999) and plagued with various levels of corruption, mortality, disease, poverty, low literacy and political deficits (Abegunrin, 2009; Hyden, 2006; Taylor & Williams, 2004).

Hence, the debate about Africa's stalled development or lack thereof continues unabated in terms of national (internal) and international (external) causes, impact and alternative cures. Historically, the colonial penetration of Africa which swept large swathes of the continent fundamentally truncated, retarded and distorted the trajectory of development in indigenous and later contemporary African societies. This process of penetration succeeded because it imposed incongruous ideas and institutions that confused identities of African people and instituted an arbitrary redefinition of allegiances throughout the continent (Araoye, 2016). Moreover, colonialism subverted traditional structures, institutions and values, making them subservient to the economic and political needs of colonial powers (Baah, 2003). In order to guarantee total erasure, African public spaces were flooded with Westernisms, including Western symbols, names, aesthetical preferences and academic though; the price for African people being epistemicide.

A nuanced understanding also implicates a European renaissance as this process was not simply the freedom of spirit and body for Europeans, but more critically a new freedom to destroy freedom for the rest of humanity. The European renaissance enlightened Europe but darkened the rest of the world. It was the freedom for the mercantilist bourgeoisie to loot, plunder and steal from the rest of the world (Magubane, 1999). The scramble for Africa at the infamous Berlin Conference and the subsequent creation of many small states in Africa was based on pure imperialist greed and insatiable quest for wealth (Baah, 2003). But imperial expansion was also profoundly conditioned by ethnocentrism (Mazrui, 1984) and the espousal of the ideology of White supremacy.

As the situation is, the struggle against residual colonialism is far from over and the state of coloniality characterises the African continent. This reality points to the irony that the colonial dictates still have pre-eminence in the continent economically, culturally, aesthetically and epistemologically. In this regard, also not in dispute is that the subsequent varied solutions to Africa's problems have failed to address the developmental challenges faced by the continent. All forms of modernisation attempts have left Africa poorer and still teeming with multitudes of challenges. At the core of modernisation was the assertion that for Africa to develop the continent had to rid itself of nationalist characteristics and adopt Western features and approaches. Of particular interest has been the impact of structural adjustment programmes.

The structural adjustment programmes merely subjected the continent to the strictures of multilateral agendas, notably the imposition of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund prescriptions in the form of structural adjustment and stabilisation programmes left the continent in stagflation. In the case of Africa, the World Bank simply called for drastic cuts in expenditure on social services and university education, especially for subjects that make up much of what is known as the social sciences and humanities (Mkandawire, 1994) as these were not responding to the job market and the changing nature of the global economy (Chachage, 2001).

Unsurprisingly, one of the consequences of the imposition of structural adjustment policies has been the displacement of the agency of African leadership, as well as the reactive nature of African economists and policy makers and mounting criticism about the inadequacies of such policies. By the 1980s all economic and social indicators showed that Africa had been left behind. Despite the continent being the largest in geographic and demographic size and well-endowed with resources, one area that has generated a pervasive Afro-pessimism has been the performance of almost all economies of Africa (Cliffe, 2002).

African Leaders in Realizing the African Renaissance

Although African leaders claimed the exclusive right as liberators and insisted on determining the future of African people, there has been generally little input at the leadership level towards Africa's future development trajectory (Karyzzi-Mugerwa, 2001). Some became authoritarian, some dictators, some presidents for life, and others naively believed that they would rule until "Jesus" came back on earth. Even more disconcerting is that such leaders carried forward the sinister activities of the imperial powers through neo-imperial designs. This was a calculated move to ensure that they maintained their power and influence in their respective countries. In fact, the continent sank further into economic dysfunction and continued to experience military coups, political instability and various social ills and violence. Consequently, civil strife has characterised African countries for too long and this is detrimental to any form of development initiative (Asante, 1987). Clearly Africa cannot experience development when her very human capital is slaughtered by the military and many Africans, especially the youth take perilous journeys to Europe as refugees or to eke out better living conditions.

African leaders must take the bulk of the blame for implementing the disastrous prescriptions of the West with its high capacity to cause havoc and pose an African existential threat. For one, the externally imposed prescriptions were obviously highly suspect and the results have been irreparably disastrous to Africa and African people.

As the continent operated on a crisis mode such leaders were reluctant to upset the IMF and WB apple cart and by the 1990s we saw the triumphalism of global imperial designs on one hand and the spread of Afro-scepticism and continued violation of African people on the other hand. Ihonvbere has roundly blamed African founding fathers, for numerous betrayals of the national project(s). He blamed them for failure to restructure the state; to empower Africans; to challenge foreign domination and exploitation of African people; and to challenge the cultural bastardization in the continent (Ihonvbere, 1994).

As African governments lost significant degree of autonomy and initiative, they began to pursue objectives imposed by external financial institutions (Mkandawire, 1994), the task of removing Africa from abject poverty was effectively assumed by donors and multilateral agencies.

Thus, there is general agreement that these Western-driven and Western-inspired efforts have borne very little fruit precisely because they were merely palliative rather than addressing the root causes. Part of this is because the development strategies adopted since independence did not depart from the colonial ones and essentially it was 'business as usual'. There was no attempt to transform the African economy, African state and African society (Zack-Williams, 2002).

With the devastation wrought by neo-liberal policies and many African leaders having lost political legitimacy and the charm and attraction of their liberation dividend having ran out, some African leaders in the persons of former presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and current president Abdul-Aziz Bouteflika of Algeria revived the pan-African agenda at the beginning of 2000s in the form of the 'African renaissance.' At the core of the African renaissance was the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which essentially developed out of a merger of the Millennium African Recovery Programme (MAP) and the Omega Plan, and was intended to provide a framework and programme of action for the African renaissance. In this regard, it was a modernisation and reconstruction programme aimed at stimulating Africa's development after years of colonialism, bad governance, unsound economic policies and destructive conflicts as well as the Cold War (Bekoe & Landsberg, 2002).

Although the concept of African renaissance was first used by Diop, it was popularised by former South African President Thabo Mbeki during his term. In April 1997, President Mbeki articulated the elements that comprise the African renaissance as (1) social cohesion, (2) democracy, (3) economic rebuilding and growth, and (4) the establishment of Africa as a significant player in geo-political affairs (Maloka, 2000). But this articulation lacked an African cultural underpinning as it amounted to socio-economistic reawakening, revival or regeneration.

Thus, despite such lofty objectives, these very leaders were pursuing neo-liberal agendas in their own countries and their domestic policies are illustrative of this assertion. Rather than self-reliance on vast resources of Africa, NEPAD was a pro-growth plan aimed at soliciting Western investment, aid, market access and assistance for Africa's development. In exchange African people were to hold themselves accountable politically and economically (Bekoe & Landsberg, 2002).

As a note of caution, we need to be humble enough not to edit out of history many of the African leaders who previously spoke exactly to the need for the reawakening of Africa. Rather we should learn from them. A cursory look at the works of, among others, Kwame Nkrumah, Azikiwe Mnandi, Gilbert Coka, Pixley ka Isaka Seme and Mangaliso Sobukwe will be instructive. These leaders wanted to see the challenges confronting the African continent being overcome and the continent achieving cultural, political, scientific, economic, literary and historical renewal. In this sense, they saw African sensibilities as having the potential to revitalise the power to dream, imagine, initiate and create solutions for Africa and by African people.

Thus, what the recent African renaissance coalition did was to provide an impetus, urgency and a descriptor but as a process the seeds were planted and germinated with the decolonisation of the continent. Point taken that since then so much collapsed. However, for posterity the new advocates of the African renaissance should acknowledge past attempts and pronouncements so as not to reinvent the will.

Within the context of a deep crisis in which the whole of Africa finds itself, calls for an African renaissance is a response to reverse such a situation (Vilakazi, 1999). In this regard, the African renaissance 'is a unique opportunity for African people to define themselves and their agenda according to their own realities and taking into account the realities of the world. It is about Africans being agents of their own history and masters of their own destiny (Makgoba, Shope & Mazwai, 1999). The resultant failure of the imposition and subsequent dominance of foreign thoughts and practice in the conceptualisation and implementation of development and other policies necessitates new, appropriate and relevant approaches. Africa can no longer rely on imported economic development models to attain her developmental goals. The point of departure is that prior to colonialism and imperialism, African people had their own economic systems which worked well for them but were not given the chance to grow organically and mature (Rodney, 1973).

The Significant Role of Social Sciences and the Humanities

Although the concept of African renaissance has been widely taken up and used by policy makers and scholars, it clearly has different meanings and resonance for different users (Cliffe, 2002), and more critically for some, is an historical concept signifying a specific period in the history of Europe (Ramose, 2002a).

As such, the very descriptor of African renaissance is considered an inappropriate term because it is obviously christened in the image of the European renaissance and subjugates Africa to the north-bound gaze resulting in the denial of Africa choosing its own experiences, identity and interpreting its own history and politics. This further perpetuates the notion that Africa will always be defined and described by others, in other words, it creates a Eurocentric view of Africa and is a received prescription from a different context from that which gave rise to the present challenges in Africa Africa (Ramose 2002a).

It is clear that Ramose's stringent critique fails to symbolically project a liberated sense of self on the part of African people. After all, action of naming something makes it present, and adheres to a traditional process of seeking representation of its essence (Derrida 1995) and a word's value is determined by people who participate in operationalising it (Asante, 2009). For Africans, their renaissance will have an opposite impact on other parts of the world. This impact will be positive and humanising rather than bestow the other parts with a dark side as was the case with the European renaissance which was profoundly rapacious.

Notwithstanding the scepticism and reservation about the appropriateness of the concept, it is clear that there is a need for a renewal, regeneration and revitalisation of Africa. Therefore, the African renaissance should be used as an occasion for beginning the journey of African economic, epistemological, psychological, social, cultural as well as political liberation.

As Koma & Malose points out, the African renaissance basically implies the renewal and rebirth of the African continent taking into account the political, economic, social, technological and more importantly educational dimensions of that process (Koma & Malose, 2002). We assert that the need for African renaissance should be used as a mobilisation statement and the basis for articulating an African agenda. However, as an ideal towards which African people should strive, this imposes a number of challenges with serious implications given that modern western civilisation, as opposed to indigenous western civilisation, is the first civilisation in history to try and homogenise culture (Mafeje, 1988).

Among these challenges could be mentioned the need to reclaim indigenous knowledge systems and cultures of Africa to inform, underpin and undergird the reawakening of continent endogenously. One major advantage and opportunity is the fact that such indigenous knowledge systems are now acknowledged and recognised as key to sustainable socio-economic development (Lebakeng, 2010). There is even a growing number of Western scholars in ethno-mathematics, ethno-botany and ethno-chemistry who see not only culture but science and mathematics as a human enterprise in which various communities of the world have participated. There appears to be a growing awareness all over the world that, after years of Western science hegemony and persistent "underdevelopment" of the African continent, the reality is that indigenous knowledge is, indeed, the "missing link" in sustainable socio-economic development (Mafeje, 1988; Odora-Hoppers, 2002, 2005; Ntuli, 1999; Lebakeng, 2010). Such reorientation is in stark contrast to the traditional views that saw such knowledge as a major obstacle to development. Contrary to colonial and neo-colonial representations, rather than an unnecessary distraction and 'feel good' exercise, indigenous knowledge is now broadly viewed as seeking to broaden and enrich the understanding of the human experience.

Herein lies the relevance of the social sciences and humanities to advance the African renaissance. The disciplines must give an African content and flavour to the renaissance through vibrant artistic and cultural renewal and social and humanistic practices. As Sall points out, "the role of the social sciences is precisely to decipher, read, name, map and make sense of local, regional and global social processes and transformations" (Sall, 2003). The more radical strand of the social sciences and humanities are known for inspiring ideas of social movements and transformations. The key question is whether such disciplines are in a position to do so by adding value to the African renaissance? The stark reality is that such disciplines face many distinct contemporary challenges in their quest to articulate or make sense of social processes and present possibilities.

The Missing Sciences in the Quest for the African Renaissance

For various reasons, some not necessarily in concert, it is rather fashionable to acknowledge that there is a crisis in the social sciences today and proclaim that our understanding of the disciplines is due for transformation or a new way forward (Latour, 2005).

In order to appreciate the nature of the crisis faced by African social scientists and to explore new vistas in African scholarship, it is essential always to bear in mind the historical context within which the disciplines developed on the continent (Mkandawire, 1994). In the West social sciences and humanities were midwifed as a project for the Enlightenment, industrialisation and colonisation (Mafeje, 1976; Ake, 1979) and the genealogy of their curriculum became inevitably and irreversibly white and Western. In turn, the social sciences and humanities played a critical role in the process of Western rebirth. With scientific invention and discoveries, the disciplines, which were inextricably linked to the circumstances in which they emerged, were developed and called upon to diagnose and, if possible, to treat the problems of society arising out of the attempts to adjust to tectonic changes, and to take advantage of the impact of advancing technology. It can be strongly argued that it was the depth of endogeneity that gave the canonical Western works their vibrancy and not contrived and received discourses deriving from different contexts. This ensured the moral and intellectual authority of their pronouncements.

Noteworthy is that although nomothetic, the disciplines jealously emulated the Newtonian Cartesian model of science to gain accreditation as scientific disciplines. Science, as understood, engaged in the pursuit of universal laws, which would hold true irrespective of context, time and space. Pursuant to this scientific status, the social sciences and humanities were to be underpinned by universalistic social, political, economic and historical laws. These claimed universalistic laws were essentially European experiences and, as such, by insisting on them being universal actually ensured that Eurocentrism was anti-universalistic. Eurocentrism did not seek general laws but sought to impose particularistic ones. This is clear from an appreciation of the characteristics of positivism which includes denial of intuition, prior reasoning, theological and meta-physical knowledge. Precisely because of such self-identification and self-definition, positivism also seeks to distance the disciplines from their ideographic nature. It is because of such positivism that Mafeje locates the problem of the social sciences in historical perspective (Mafeje, 1976).

During the colonial-imperial inroads to Africa, the social sciences and humanities were not spared as they were implicated in the process of penetration of the continent and continued as part of the imperial domination (Mafeje, 1976; Ake, 1979). Both studies are primarily concerned with scientific knowledge as pernicious forms of imperialism as the disciplines were used to foist capitalist values and capitalist development on the Africa. The disciplines were crucial for the colonial project. In fact, the African university became the clearest manifestation of cultural and intellectual domination as it relied on cultural exports from Europe and America (Mazrui, 1984).

There is a broad consensus that Europe and North America largely defined the orientations that govern the social sciences vocation and the modes of engagement in the various fields of the social sciences. After all, Eurocentrism was anti-universal and highly ethnocentric (Amin, 1988). Thus, the disciplines deriving from such ontological reality are inconsequential without adding any value to the African condition in general and expectedly have not even contributed to the African renaissance project.

This is mainly because they are premised on received discourses derived from different, specifically European contexts and have thus led to the production of alienating rather than empowering knowledge for African people.

In this sense, what were areas of scholarly inquiry responding to specifically Western problems and concerns overtime laid claim to universality and were uncritically accepted and taken for granted as being so. Because of this erroneous understanding, the social sciences and humanities in Africa pay loyalty to Western intellectual and philosophical traditions. They borrow conceptual equipment to convey ideas grounded in understanding their own universe and this has more often led to distortions of the fundamental canons of their understanding of the African universe. True to their common origin, they have inherited customs, traditions and standards and adhered to European models.

Flowing from this unfortunate situation, it is incumbent upon African scholars to ensure that the quest for an African renaissance gives birth to authentic African social science and lead to the establishment of an African social science community. This will position African social scientists and artists should play a major role in shaping passions, ideologies and social visions towards an African renaissance. Obviously, this raises the question of the potential liberatory impact and role of such disciplines in helping in the realisation of the African renaissance and repositioning the continent in world affairs. In fact, I have previously asserted that the university in Africa is facing an array of crises because of the ontological decoloniality of Africa and by extension of the decoloniality of the African university (Lebakeng, 1997) and this is reflected in, among other areas, the intellectual and philosophical traditions in academia. Specifically, whose knowledge matters in the university in the post-colonial university in Africa? And what is the state of the art in the social sciences and humanities disciplines as taught in Africa? That such questions are still legitimate demonstrate a major dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in knowledge production and dissemination in universities in Africa.

Falola contends that scholarship in Africa has been conditioned to respond to a reality and epistemology created for it by outsiders, a confrontation with imperialism, the power of capitalism, and the knowledge that others have constructed for Africa. Moreover, the African intellectual does not write in a vacuum, but in a world saturated with others' statements, usually negative about its members and their continent.

Even when this intelligentsia seeks the means to intrude itself into the modern world, modernity has been defined for it and presented to it in a fragmented manner (Falola, 2004). It is precisely because of this obtaining state of the art in the social sciences and humanities that the disciplines are not able to contribute to the African renaissance. In fact, time and again African policy makers, especially African leaders who tend to be instrumentalist in relation to the disciplines, have been accusing African social scientists of being aloof or academic in the pejorative sense. Such African leaders, who are policy makers have not made bedfellows with African researchers (Ndiaye, 2009).

Such accusations are not entirely far-fetched given that, by and large, the university in Africa continues to be purveyor of Eurocentric concepts, solutions and methodologies. But an overview of the main intellectual themes debated by African scholars in the social sciences and humanities reveal that a concern with key developments in various countries. These debates over the years included the nature of the Africa state, class struggles, nation building, under-development and development paths, peace and conflicts, elections, the state of democracy, the state of the universities and other issues relevant to the continent. However, African policy makers have themselves contributed in displacing African social scientists by their over-reliance of foreign expertise.

Given that the core of the logic of social sciences and humanities are diametrically opposed to the creation of a reawakening in Africa, we cannot justify retaining them without reversing epistemicide and valuecide. The urgent need to re-imagine the social sciences and humanities is informed by the fact that as an academic project in Africa the disciplines have failed as they remain warped in their Western origins epistemologically, methodologically and theoretically. Their contrived and tendentious nature ensued scholarship that excludes indigenous African discourse and indigenous knowledge systems from policy formulation in the social, cultural, economic, judicial, constitutional and educational areas (Ramose, 2002b; Lebakeng, 2010). Inscribing indigenous knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems in the African academy should be non-negotiable and must be a badge of intellectual status and pride rather than shame and ridicule.

The current struggles for decolonisation and Africanisation are forms of resistance to the hegemony of Western scholarship in the African academia and the inability of such scholarship to contribute positively to addressing the challenges faced by the continent. Transforming and decolonising universities, through rejecting the universality of Western knowledge and appreciating that it is anchored in Western canons, will enable the disciplines to take greater part in solving African problems and addressing African challenges in a fundamental way. Thus dethroning colonial historiography and placing African people centre stage in the history of the continent should be our urgent task in the construction of an intellectual arsenal for the liberation of the continent (Mkandawire, 2005).

In our deconstruction of Western science, it is important to locate the crisis of the social sciences and humanities in their scientism. In other words, the social sciences and humanities which originated and received their inspiration in the West, and are essentially indigenous to it given their provisional horizons, cannot be universal to the rest, including Africa. Many African scholars have articulated a visceral critique of African scholarship as characterised by mimetism of the worst kind (Hountondji, 1992; Prah, 1989) especially mimetic philopraxis (Ramose, 1999).

They contend that the social sciences and humanities in particular cannot continue to be irrelevant, insensitive and inattentive, if not antithetical to the African condition by continuing to propagate and promote Eurocentric ideological prejudice and unleashing cognitive injustice in the investigation and proposal of solutions to African problems, African predicaments and African challenges.

Important to note is that a body of academics is emerging that seeks a more situational engagement with the immediate African context. The curriculum is at the heart of this project as it clearly an area of intellectual dislocation. This is so because through curriculum the universities define themselves. The major challenge facing the establishment of an African community of social science and humanities with a scholarly tradition steeped in Africa is that the number of master's and doctoral enrolments remains relatively small, with declining trends in some countries on the African continent. There is generally an extremely low conversion from masters to doctoral enrolment and completion. These trends do not bode well for developing an adequate pool of high-quality future academics. The urgency of the need for initiatives to build the next generation of academics in African universities is made clear by the changes in the sociological and demographic makeup of the scholarly community in Africa. The fact that the current crop is ageing very fast and some iconic ones such as Archie Mafeje, Dani Nabudere and Ali Mazrui have already departed should raise alarm and add more impetus to the mentoring of a new generation of African scholars in the social sciences and humanities.

Towards Reconstructing Disciplinary Relevance

The central importance of the social sciences and humanities to Africa's renewal and development is unquestionable and compelling. Given the general state of crisis Africa is in, there is an inevitable need to return to fundamentals or basics. In this case the fundamentals relate to how as Africans we anchor our knowledge to our world of experience. Moving forward, the new and emerging African scholars in the social sciences and humanities should not only take pride in those who helped to navigate the complex turns of decolonisation and Africanisation in the academy. Rather the emerging generation should ensure that the disciplines are substantively decolonised and Africanised given that this remains a mammoth task. Precisely because context matters, re-defining the content of a new trajectory is key to ensuring relevance and appropriateness of the disciplines to the African renaissance.

With the rejection of Western penchant for intellectual mischief, what this implies is that African scholars should not, as they have not, be rejecting Western knowledge qua Western knowledge but its claim of universality and self-projection as a universal scientific epistemology.

The emerging African scholars in the social sciences and humanities should, of necessity, pursue knowledge production that can renovate African culture, defend the African people's dignity and civilisational achievements and contribute afresh to the African renaissance to push African humanity out of the crisis of modernity as promoted by the European enlightenment and post-coloniality. After all, the most stringent critique of modernity has been mounted with the objective of rethinking western rationality.

This context means the African university as an institution must be distinguishable by its impactful research agendas and focused fields of study that are directly informed by the desire to address African issues, problems, challenges. The international relevance of African universities is premised on such institutions being authentically African and not on their imitative tendencies to seek to be western in orientation. In this regard, dispensing with reliance on Eurocentrism implies adopting Afrocenrism as the methodological requirement for decolonising knowledge in Africa and acknowledging Africanity as a legitimate combative ontology (Mafeje, 2000), embracing Ubuntu as central philosophy (Ramose, 1999) and indigenous knowledge as appropriate and empowering epistemology (Lebakeng, 2010). Such a project entails putting Africa at the centre of knowledge production and, by extension, removing the continent from being peripheral. The implications are clearly that there will be dire need to draw from the perspectives of African immediate environment and be rooted in African history and traditions so as to enrich insights and inputs to guarantee international relevance.

African scholars need to, as a way of looking forward, look back to the works and thoughts of its own artists and philosophers to salvage foundational wisdoms. In order to re-establishment indigenous philosophical knowledge and as a basis for resisting past and further impositions, it is absolutely necessary to interrogate all forms of received knowledge. The social sciences and humanities should serve as the consciousness of society and as a reflection of its reality, no matter how ugly (Mafeje, 2001). The charge that such attempt lowers standards is only a ruse to ensure that Western science retains its hegemonic status. After all the concept of standards is entirely non-referential and therefore empty one, acquiring meaning only in relation to some further context and purpose (Readings, 1996). Western experience indicates that the strength of the social sciences and humanities is **in it**s rich, reflexive analysis of values and power, essential to the social and economic development of their societies. But this strength can only be harnessed if the disciplines are contextualised, that is, rooted in the immediacy of their conditions. This requires the appreciation that to be authentic knowledge is, first and foremost, local (Okere, 2005). This dispels crude colonial and positivist myths about the nature of knowledge and provides insight to the effect that any form of knowledge makes effective meaning on condition that it is located only with**in it**s own cultural context (Ndofirefi & Cross, 2014).

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Precisely because the older generation of African scholars in the social sciences and humanities insisted on the indigenisation of knowledge and its institutional foundations and cultural orientations were they able to demonstrate that Western epistemology is not the only valid system of rationalisation nor is it superior to all others.

These scholars would not have insisted on pronouncements of indigenous knowledge, Ubuntu, Africanity and Afrocentricity if not for Eurocentric negations of their ontological, epistemological and methodological status. We should redeem their legacy by inscribing their authentic representations into the African renaissance. For them different foundations exist for the construction of pyramids of knowledge with their own episteme (rules for determining truth and validation). According to Ramose, this disclaims the view that any pyramid of knowledge is by its very nature eminently superior to all the others (Ramose, 1998). For a viable African pyramid of knowledge, African people need an autonomous social science and humanities tradition which has been generated, nurtured and rooted in African conditions and by African scholars and whose relevance is to address African sensibilities as expressed in the quest for the African renaissance.

Conclusion

African people have to urgently address the visceral impacts of foreign, especially Euro-American political, social, aesthetical and economic influence and philosophical thought that has given rise to imposed incongruous ideas, concepts, orientations and approaches that hampers progress towards the realisation of the African renaissance. In the context of neo-colonial Africa this has led to lack of logical and organic conceptual link between African problems and challenges and the solutions advanced to address them. Hence, instead of radical social, economic, political, aesthetic, philosophical and epistemological transformations that speak to Africanity as concrete expression of African ontology, Africa has been pursuing neo-liberal orthodoxies that either tinker with the or exacerbate the problems. For instance, there is general concurrence among African intellectuals that the Lagos Plan of Action was probably the most radical plan ever produced in Africa by African people. However, the Lagos Plan of Action did not gain momentum because African leaders believed that the West and the institutions of global economic governance such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were benign partners in African development (Tandon, 2016).

More significantly, Africa is being forced to continue to produce, to its disadvantage, raw materials at a time when bio-technology is producing artificial substitutes for some of the raw products exported from the continent. It being blackmailed to liberalise its economy and policy at a time when the Western powers are consolidating their protective blocs, and to remove subsidies for their farmers at the very time that farmers in the European Union and in the United States are enjoying massive subsidies that make it impossible for African producers to compete in the European markets. As in the past, the Western world view or sociology of ideas is marginalising the African continent and facilitating the economic domination of the continent by Western multinational companies (Mlambo, 2016).

It is within this context that scholars such as Mlambo (2006) investigated the role that Western world views, informed largely, but not only, by knowledge derived from the various branches of social science disciplines, played in the history of the African continent and its people. Western science in general and social science in particular underpinned capitalism and imperialism that led to the domination of the African continent by the West. Instead of decolonisation Africa entered the period of neo-colonialism as the status quo remained but under a different and more sophisticated guise.   With neo-colonialism and the state of decoloniality, continent's marginalisation in the world continued in terms of economic development and Africa's capacity to participate fully in the global knowledge community. This domination and marginalisation continue to the present and have serious implications for the realisation of the African renaissance and affects the continent's inability to reverse underdevelopment. It is a truism that Western knowledge systems, ever since the dawn of the modern era, have not served Africa well and have led to the domination and marginalisation of the African continent.

In light of this, we argue that it is not just about the past that African people should concern themselves with. Rather, more importantly, it is about the present state of neo-colonialism and decoloniality that Africans should pose and address the practical and political imperatives for mental decolonization. Neo-colonialism is continuing to demolish the very edifice of Africanity by destroying and condemning African beliefs and the things that defined what it meant to be African. In terms of devastating impact one of the consequences of the de-recognition of the rationality of the African anthropon was precisely the upholding of the so-called right to conquest. By virtue of this questionable right the Western colonisers appropriated the sole, unilateral right to define and delimit the meaning of social experience, social knowledge and social truth for African people. Unfortunately, even the right to conceptualising and implementing solutions to Africa's problems have been usurped.

This has affected academia as in contemporary Africa one of the fundamental problems facing African scholarship is the dependency syndrome. Four decades back, Mazrui (1978) pointed to a bitter reality that institutions of higher learning in Africa were copycats whose primary function was to serve and promote Western values.

The thrust of Western education is to deny African people useful and relevant social knowledge about themselves and their world, and in turn, transmit a culture that was designed to nurture and consolidate dependency and generally undermine African people' capacity for creativity. Unfortunately, this is still the situation to this day despite many African intellectual icons having demonstrated the fallacy of the universalism of Western science.

From the perspective of the sociology of indigenous knowledge, the assumptions which constructed Western thought and traditions are not universal but are derived from specific, historical and discreet Western experiences prescribed by specific historical levels of economic and industrial development. (Lebakeng, Phalane and Nase, 2006). Implicit in this observation is that, therefore, it behoves African scholars to urgently reconstruct the epistemological traditions and methodological approaches in the social sciences and humanities so as to enable African societies to fully understand the nature of their problems and provide appropriate solutions to them. To achieve this the disciplines must have a preoccupative autonomy and scholarship must not be derivative. This is not meant to deify the disciplines and attempt to use them instrumentally in a positivist sense. The dangers of positivism should not be lost to African people.

Africa needs an intellectual renaissance and this cannot be generated unless there is a fundamental reconstruction of the social sciences and humanities to combat the Euro-centric and potentially destructive reflexes that shape and define neo-colonial outlook to various spheres of life, including development on the continent. Dongala enjoins scholars working in the social sciences and humanities in Africa to offer new paradigms that will help Africa have an independent view of itself and which will help 'to clear our horizon which is blocked by all the incongruous rubbish inherited from colonization' (Dongala, n.d). For to him, without a conscious deconstruction of this institution's festering viruses, it is unlikely that Africa's cultural revival will come about. Wiredu also addresses this issue through his call for conceptual decolonisation, that is, avoidance or reversal through critical self-awareness of uncritical assimilation of those categories of thought embedded in the foreign language or philosophical traditions which have exercised considerable influence on African life and thought (Wiredu, 1995).

Precisely because the condition of the disciplines remains essentially Eurocentric since decolonisation, Africa needs value for money and that translates into reconstructed disciplines. This is important as it will address the issue of epistemological injustice and cognitive violence wrought on African students due to the mimetic and decontextualized nature of the disciplines.
One of the consequences of the de-recognition of the rationality of the indigenous African anthropon was precisely the upholding of the so-called right to conquest. By virtue of this questionable right the Western colonisers appropriated the sole, unilateral right to define and delimit the meaning of social experience, social knowledge and social truth for African people.

Only through the realisation of the African renaissance can African people destroy the myth that only one segment of humanity namely Euro-Americans have prior, superior and exclusive right to reason and civilisation and its concomitant view that because African people are not endowed in that area they live in a shithole.

With that understanding, it is important to inspire a new generation of African social scientists to see the potential of such disciplines. An approach in the social sciences and humanities which encompasses the philosophical, epistemological and methodological issues, all seen as part of the process of creating an African self-understanding that can place Africa in today's global world, and in which it is recognised as a full partner and forebear of much of the human heritage. Cultivating a generation of scholars steeped in African studies who can, in turn, construct a distinct voice and theoretical paradigms to address social transformations on the continent will ensure that the African renaissance is truly African. As Mafeje emphasises, social scientists in the Africa and the developing world broadly must abandon instrumentalism and positivist notions about development. Rather they should increase the level of social awareness and consciousness of the citizens of their societies (Mafeje, 2001). Africa needs to feel the influence in literature, philosophy, art, music, politics, science, religion, and other aspects of intellectual inquiry so as to create African identities that promote the idea of a cultural movement of African literary renaissance.

In light of the above, Africa needs a transformed generation of African scholars and researchers who can abandon the conceptual, epistemological, methodological and theoretical frameworks that emanates from Eurocentric disciplines and are ideologically and philosophically constructed to sub-humanise African people. Moreover, such generation should negotiate with past intellectual and visual heritage to provide spirituality and psychology to the African renaissance as anchored in Africanity as a combative ontology.

 Armed with the insight that 'all knowledge is local' and 'universal knowledge only exist in contradiction', such new generation of African scholars and researchers, which by necessity should be Afrophilic, can rest assure that 'if they are adequately Afrocentric, the international implications will not be lost to others' (Mafeje, 2000). They should take up intellectual arms against the prescriptions of academic orthodoxy and the laziness that often supports conventional wisdom, rooted as it is, in Eurocentric traditions. In the tradition of post-independent anti-colonial scholarship, they should continue to debunk Western epistemological paradigms which dehistoricises and decontextualizes African experiences because social sciences and humanities steeped in and inspired by the colonial experience are ill-equipped and ill-prepared to mid-wife the renaissance in Africa.

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