Epistemic Freedom in Africa

Deprovincialization and Decolonization

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Chapter 1

Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

Seek ye epistemic freedom first

Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization is a study of the politics of knowledge in general and specifically of African struggles for epistemic freedom. As a result of the long-term consequences of modernity, enslavement and colonialism, African people have been reproduced as agents in a Eurocentric history. What exist today as conventional 'philosophy of history' and academic discourse of history produced within modern universities is still normatively Eurocentric, neo-Enlightenment, neo-Hegelian, neo-Marxist, neo-modernist and Habermasian. In this context thought about historical change is still hostage to resilient linear social-evolutionary notions of 'transitional' shifts (Bhambra 2007: 24).

A major consequence of this Eurocentric thinking is that what is today known as 'African history' has been 'subsumed to the ideological parameters and periodization of the general framework, be it colonial, nationalist, or Marxist' (Bhambra 2007: 25). This point was delivered more emphatically by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2007: 27) when he argued: ' "Europe" remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call "Indian," "Chinese," "Kenyan," and so on.' It was perhaps this reality that provoked the African historian E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo (2002: 14) to pose the question: 'Can African historians recapture this historical space and reintroduce an African philosophy of history that emphasizes African autonomy?' Atieno-Odhiambo (2002) pushed for a paradigm shift 'from African historiographies to an African philosophy of history'. In an earlier publication, Atieno-Odhiambo (1996: 31) eloquently expressed the epistemic quandary haunting the so-called 'African history':

> Has the time come to question the unitary acceptance of the hegemonic episteme which posits that the discipline of history uniquely belongs to Western civilization? Alternatively, can Africans articulate an African gnosis

> that stands independently of these western traditions in our study of African history? Need African epistemes be intelligible to the West? Need the study and practice of history be tied to the guild of historical study at the universities? Is there still the lingering possibility than any one of us working within the western mode can have the arterial bypass surgery that may still be the viaduct upstream to the African reservoir of history?

At another level, Amy Allen (2016: 44) correctly critiqued Eurocentric notions of 'macrohistory' in these revealing words: 'If global unity and capacity to make history are themselves historical developments that have emerged relatively recently, then they cannot be made the premises of an understanding of history as *a whole*.' Hence the urgent need for epistemic freedom, which restores to African people a central position within human history as independent actors. This epistemological concern is fundamentally decolonial. As a people, Africans were always there in human history. They were never creatures of 'discovery'. Africans were always present ('presence Africaine'). Africans were never absent. Africa was never a *tabula rasa* (Dark Continent). Africans always had their own valid, legitimate and useful knowledge systems and education systems. This is the decolonial tale at the centre of this book. The foundation of this decolonial tale is well articulated by the Wole Soyinka who had this to say about Africa:

> The African continent appears to possess one distinction that is largely unremarked. Unlike the Americas or Australasia, for instance, no one actually claims to have 'discovered' Africa. Neither the continent as an entity nor indeed any of her later offspring – the modern states – celebrates the equivalent of America's Columbus Day. This gives it a self-constitutive identity, an unstated autochthony that is denied other continents and subcontinents. [. . .] Africa appears to have been 'known about', speculated over, explored both in actuality and fantasy, even mapped – Greeks, Jews, Arabs, Phoenicians, etc., took their turns – but no narrative has come down to us that actually lays personal claim to the discovery of the continent. Ancient ruins, the source of a river, mountain peaks, exotic kingdoms, and sunken pyramids, yes, but not the continent itself – as in the case of the Americas. Hundreds have ventured into, explored, and extensively theorized over the continent, but no one has actually claimed to have discovered her.
> (Soyinka 2012: 27)

Soyinka challenged the colonial paradigm of 'discovery' and highlighted Africa's primordial existence. This means that Africa has a long history that pre-dated its encounter with Europe. It also means that such a primordial entity had and has its own rich knowledge that kept it alive. What is explored in this book is not only how Africa in particular and the rest of the Global South in general became victims of genocides, epistemicides, linguicide and cultural imperialism, but also the trajectories of struggles for epistemic freedom that were provoked and ensued.

Thus, conceptually speaking, the book delves deeper into such concepts as 'the epistemic line' as the problem of the twenty-first century; the perennial problem of 'silences' of African voices and problematic African archives enabled by the 'Europeanization' of the world on the one hand and the subalternization of Africa on the other hand; and the imperative of 'rethinking thinking' during the current age of epistemic and systemic crisis.

The epistemic line

If the 'colour line' was indeed the major problem of the twentieth century as articulated by William E. B. Du Bois (1903), then that of the twenty-first century is the 'epistemic line'. The 'epistemic line' cascades from the 'colour line' because denial of humanity automatically disqualified one from epistemic virtue. The epistemic line is sustained by what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) termed 'abyssal thinking' – an imperial reason that reduced some human beings to a sub-human category with no knowledge. This means that the epistemic line is simultaneously the ontological line.

Thus the triple processes of provincializing Europe, deprovincializing Africa and epistemological decolonization which frame this book constitute a drive for a restorative epistemic agenda and process that simultaneously addresses ontological and epistemological issues haunting Africa. The definitive entry of descendants of the enslaved, displaced, colonized and racialized peoples into the existing academies across the world, proclaiming loudly that they are human beings, their lives matter, and that they were born into valid and legitimate knowledge systems, enabled the resurgence of long-standing struggles for epistemic freedom. Thus epistemic freedom speaks to cognitive justice. Epistemic freedom is fundamentally about the right to think, theorize, interpret the world, develop own methodologies and write from where one is located and unencumbered by Eurocentrism. Samir Amin (2009) depicted Eurocentrism as one of the great ideological deformation of our time. Epistemic justice is about liberation of reason itself from coloniality.

Africa is one of those epistemic sites that experienced not only colonial genocides but also 'theft of history' (see Goody 2006), epistemicides (killing of indigenous people's knowledges) and linguicides (killing of indigenous people's languages) (see Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2009a; Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2009b). Therefore, African people's epistemic struggles are both old and new. They are old in the sense that they emerged at the very time of colonial encounters. They are new in the sense that they are re-emerging within a context of a deep present global systemic and epistemic crisis. What is projected here is epistemological decolonization as a double task of 'provincializing Europe' and 'deprovincializing Africa'. The processes of 'provincializing' and 'deprovincializing' are inextricably linked as they speak to how what appears on a global scale as European thought could be claimed as human heritage rather than a thought from one geographical centre. 'Provincializing' is a process of 'moving the centre' to borrow a concept from Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993). 'Moving the centre' is understood in a double-sense:

> I am concerned with moving the centre in two senses at least. One is the need to move the centre from its assumed location in the West to a multiplicity of spheres in all the cultures of the world. The assumed location of the centre of the universe in the West is what goes by the term Eurocentrism [. . .] The second sense is even more important [. . .]. Within nearly all nations today the centre is located in the dominant social stratum, a male bourgeois minority. [. . .] Moving the centre in the two senses – between nations and within nations – will contribute to the freeing of the world of cultures from the restrictive walls of nationalism, class, race and gender.
>
> (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1993: xvi–xvii).

In this sense, 'provincializing Europe' is meant to confront the problem of overrepresentation of European thought in knowledge, social theory and education, which resulted in what the European historian John M. Headly (2008) celebrated as 'the Europeanization of the World'. To 'provincialize Europe' is fundamentally to 'de-Europeanize' the world. De-Europeanization of the world entails what Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010) depicted as 'deimperialization'. Chen (2010: vii) defined deimperialization as movement that demanded (ex)-imperial powers to genuinely reflect on 'their imperial histories and the harmful impacts those have had on the world'. This is a fundamental decolonial demand of which political decolonization of the twentieth century failed to deliver. The process of 'de-Europeanizing' is here rendered as 'deprovincializing Africa' – an intellectual and academic process of centring of Africa as a legitimate historical unit of analysis and epistemic site from which to interpret the world while at the same time globalizing knowledge from Africa. Such a move constitutes epistemic freedom as that essential pre-requisite for political, cultural, economic and other freedoms.

Epistemic freedom is different from academic freedom. Academic freedom speaks to institutional autonomy of universities and rights to express diverse ideas including those critical of authorities and political leaders. Epistemic freedom is much broader and deeper. It speaks to cognitive justice; it draws our attention to the content of what it is that we are free to express and on whose terms. Cognitive justice as defined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) is premised on recognition of diverse ways of knowing by which human beings across the globe make sense of their existence. Epistemic freedom is about democratizing 'knowledge' from its current rendition in the singular into its plural known as 'knowledges'. It is also ranged against overrepresentation of Eurocentric thought in knowledge, social theory and education. Epistemic freedom is foundational in the broader decolonization struggle because it enables the emergence of the necessary critical decolonial consciousness.

In Africa, decolonization has generally been understood to have begun with 'political decolonization' predicated on seeking the 'political kingdom first'. However, the current struggles for epistemic freedom have provoked a need for rethinking of the decolonial trajectories. While it is true that political, economic,

cultural and epistemological aspects of decolonization were and are always inextricably intertwined, we have to be cognisant of the fact that the 'sequencing' arose from a practical strategic logic of struggles against colonialism, which privileged attainment of political sovereignty first. In the co-constitution of political, economic, cultural and epistemological decolonization, epistemic freedom should form the base because it deals with the fundamental issues of critical consciousness building, which are essential pre-requisites for both political and economic freedom. This point was highlighted by E. Mveng (1983: 141): 'if political sovereignty is necessary, the scientific sovereignty is perhaps more important in present-day Africa'. Mveng (1983: 141) elaborated that 'The West agrees with us today that the way to Truth passes by numerous paths, other than Aristolean Thomistic logic or Hegelian dialectics. But social and human sciences themselves must be decolonized'. Paulin J. Hountondji (1996: 107) also emphasized the need for epistemic freedom when he argued that:

> We must be ambitious for Africa and for ourselves; we must be careful not to nip in the bud the unparalleled promise of our history or to prune it prematurely. We must on the contrary open it up, liberate it [. . .]. Beyond all facile solutions, beyond all myths, we must have courage to make a fresh start.

Hountondji (2002: 103) went on to articulate some of the key aspect of the African struggles for epistemic freedom:

> The struggle against intellectual extraversion presupposes the creation, in Africa, of an autonomous space for reflection and theoretical discussion that is indissolubly philosophical and scientific. Only such a space can enhance an effective participation of African peoples – and not just some individuals of African origin – in the debates about them. That will be the condition for intellectual freedom.

But in the search for epistemic freedom, knowledge cannot be reduced to 'philosophical' and 'scientific' forms only. Recognition of various forms of knowledge and knowing is called for in decolonization. Hountondji (2002: 104) elaborated that the task of epistemic freedom is 'that of organizing in Africa an autonomous debate that will no longer be a far-flung appendix to European debates, but which will directly pit African philosophers against one another'. To Hountondji (2002: 139), the base for sustainable epistemic freedom lies in formulation of 'original set of questions' and he elaborated on this point this way:

> The creation of an autonomous body of thought had to begin with the effort to formulate original set of questions, not out of a search for novelty for its own sake, but out of a concern for authenticity, of a desire to be oneself by freely asking questions that one spontaneously asks oneself and by

> trying to raise them to a higher level of formulation, rather than by passively accepting the questions that others ask themselves or ask us from their own preoccupations.

What is also necessary for the success of epistemic freedom according to Hountondji (2002: 139) is the 'change of audience' by African researchers 'to consider his or her African public as his or her prime target'. All these moves speak to the necessary processes of deprovincializing Africa and 'provincializing Europe'. Suffice to say deprovincializing Africa addresses marginality and peripherality of Africa in the knowledge and education domain through recentring it. Chakrabarty, who introduced and popularized the concept of 'provincializing Europe', seemed to be concerned about how the 'Restern world' could claim what has been known as European ideas and thought. This is indeed another important way of subverting and confronting the problem of Eurocentrism as an enabler of Western epistemic hegemony. Chakrabarty (2000: xiv) highlighted how 'universalistic thought was always and already modified by particular histories'.

While this is indeed a valid intervention, there is still the need to stretch the concept of 'provincializing Europe' into a decolonial perspective where it has to directly address the problem of 'coloniality of knowledge' which took the form of 'invasion of the mental universe' of the colonized world (see Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986; Quijano 2007). This analysis takes us to the concept of epistemological decolonization, which is meant to deal with problems and consequences of the 'metaphysical empire' such epistemicides, linguicides, cultural imperialism and alienation. At the centre of epistemic freedom is demythologizing of both the idea of Europe as a teacher of the world and the idea of Africa as a pupil (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986). With specific reference to demythologizing Africa, Hountondji posited that:

> The search for intellectual freedom presupposes a 'demythologizing' of the idea of Africa. The 'dominant, mythological conception of Africanness' had to be demolished, and re-established the simple, obvious truth that Africa is above all a continent, and the concept of Africa an empirical and geographical concept and not a metaphysical one'.
>
> (Hountondji 2002: 126)

Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (2012: 1) also highlighted a decolonial epistemological move of decentring the Global North as the centre of knowledge and recentring the Global South. This is how they pondered on this deprovincializing strategy:

> But what if, and here is the idea in interrogative form, we invert that order of things? What if we subvert the epistemic scaffolding on which it is erected? What if we posit that, in the present moment, it is the global south that affords privileged insight into the workings of the world at large?

The Comaroffs posited these key epistemological questions as part of pushing for deprovincializing the 'Global South' within a historical and epistemic context in which 'Western enlightenment thought has [. . .] posited itself as the wellspring of universal learning, of Science and Philosophy [. . .], it has regarded the non-West – variously known as the ancient, the orient, the primitive world, the third world, the underdeveloped world, the developing world, and now the global south – primarily as a place of parochial wisdom, of antiquarian traditions, of exotic ways and means' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012: 1). It is within this terrain that the current assertions of epistemic freedom emerged but they became accentuated in the twenty-first century because the 'Global North' 'after five centuries of "teaching" the world, it lost the capacity to learn from the experience of the world' (Santos 2014: 19). This inability of the 'Global North' to learn from the rest of the world emerged from invented white supremacy that underpinned colonialism and imperialism (Santos 2014: 19). It has delivered a double crisis – systemic and epistemic.

It was during the heydays of colonialism that Africa was reinvented as a site of 'darkness' bereft of any knowledge beyond superstitions. But the reality of today is that what has existed as 'Western, Eurocentric critical tradition' is exhibiting clear signs of exhaustion (Santos 2014: 19). The exhaustion manifests itself in various forms that Santos (2014: 19) summarized as: 'irrelevance, inadequacy, impotence, stagnation, paralysis'. The epistemic crisis is also expressing itself in terms of what Santos (2014: 33) depicted as 'loss of critical nouns'. He elaborated that:

> There was a time when Eurocentric critical theory 'owned' a vast set of nouns that marked its difference from conventional or bourgeois theories. These nouns included socialism, communism, revolution, class struggle, dependency, alienation, fetishism of commodities, and so on. In the past thirty years the Eurocentric critical tradition seems to have lost 'its' nouns and now distinguishes itself from conventional or bourgeois theories by the adjectives it uses to subvert the meaning of the proper nouns it borrows from such theories. Thus, for instance, if conventional theory speaks of development, critical theory refers to alternative, integral, inclusionary, democratic, or sustainable development; if conventional theory speaks of democracy, critical theory proposes radical, participatory, or deliberative democracy.
>
> (Santos 2014: 33)

At another level, such African leading philosophers as Hountondji (1997) have noted that, even though today, mainly because of globalization, there is increasing talk of a global economy of knowledge, such globalized knowledge still has an identifiable centre from which it cascades and circulates. That centre is Europe and North America. A long-standing asymmetrical division of intellectual labour sustains epistemic hegemony. In this context African scholars have largely

functioned as 'hunter-gatherers' of raw data as well as 'native informants'. Europe and North America have remained sites of processing of raw data into concepts and theories. These concepts and theories are then consumed in Africa. Africa remains a large laboratory for testing of concepts and theories.

This explains why many African students continue to make great treks to Europe and North America for education, even though the dream of 'one country one university' has long been realized by Africa. African scholars continue to seek affirmation and validation of their knowledge in Europe and North America. This affirmation and validation take the form of publication in the so-called international, high-impact and peer-reviewed journals. Europe and North America constitute the 'international' and the rest of the world is 'local'. Consequently, international, high-impact and peer-reviewed journals, and internationally respected publishing houses and presses are those located in Europe and North America. Highly ranked universities are located in Europe and North America. Taken together, these realities confirm the existence of epistemic hegemony. The signature of epistemic hegemony is the idea of 'knowledge' rather than 'knowledges'.

Contextualizing African struggles for epistemic freedom

Resurgent struggles for epistemic freedom are provoked by the reality of continued entrapment of knowledge production in Africa within Euro-North American colonial matrices of power. Since power and knowledge are inextricably intertwined, control of the domain of knowledge generation and knowledge cultivation remain very important for the maintenance of asymmetrical global power structures in place since the dawn of Euro-North American-centric modernity. This is why Walter D. Mignolo (2007: 463) articulated epistemic decolonization as an expansive movement targeting the 'geo-political location of theology, secular philosophy and scientific reason and simultaneously affirming the modes and principles of knowledge that have been denied by the rhetoric of Christianisation, civilisation, progress, development, market democracy'.

The broader discursive context of epistemic struggles is what became known as 'modernity'. Gurminder K. Bhambra (2007: 1) correctly noted that 'Modernity is the dominant frame for social and political thought, not just in the West, but across the world'. She went further to explain two key assumptions that underpinned modernity '*rupture* and *difference* – a temporal rupture that distinguishes a traditional, agrarian past from the modern, industrial present; and a fundamental difference that distinguishes Europe from the rest of the world' (Bhambra 2007: 1). Bhambra's intellectual intervention is very important because it challenges 'the continued privileging of the West as the "maker" of universal history and seek to develop alternatives from which to begin to deal with the questions that arise once we reject this categorization' (Bhambra 2007: 2).

If anything called 'universal history' exists in the first place, it can only do so as a sum total of diverse human histories. Seeking to move beyond the trap of what Immanuel Wallerstein (1997) termed 'anti-Eurocentric-Eurocentrism',

Bhambra contested the very idea of Europe, particularly the 'facts' of 'specialness of Europe' in human history (Bhambra 2007: 2–3). She defined Eurocentrism (that leitmotif of modernity) as nothing other than 'the belief, implicit or otherwise, in the world historical significance of events believed to have developed endogenously within the cultural-geographical sphere of Europe' (Bhambra 2007: 5). The second important intervention of Bhambra is:

> The ideas of difference and rapture that form debates about modernity should be regarded as 'interpretative categories', whereby the 'unity' and 'integrity' of specific experiences are created by abstraction from wider interconnection.
>
> (Bhambra 2007: 7)

Bhambra (2007: 10) proceeded to pose an important epistemological argument: 'The historicity of the human condition, whereby we are born into pre-existing conversations regarding our pasts and our presents, necessarily shapes the positions from where we think and argue.' To Bhambra, the colonial encounter, which was far from being 'an encounter and more a conquest, domination, and enslavement of peoples and forms of life [. . .] is constitutive of the very disciplines that express or seek to understand modernity' (Bhambra 2007: 16). She proposed: 'What is required is a more thoroughgoing analysis of the underlying assumptions upon which discourses and practices come to be premised' (Bhambra 2007: 21).

Building on the work of Sanjay Subrahmanyam (1997, 2005), Bhambra concluded that the escape route from the trap of a Euromodernity is to project 'connected histories' as a departure point because such an approach 'allows the deconstruction of dominant narratives at the same time as they are open to different perspectives and seek to reconcile them systematically both in terms of reconstruction of theoretical categories and in the incorporation of new data and evidence' (Bhambra 2007: 33). Cascading from this analysis, one key aspect of decolonial epistemic struggles of the twenty-first century is to correct the distorted human relationships that emerged from the social classification of human species and their racial hierarchization. This 'reinvention' of the human by other humans has had long-term implications for knowledge, education and social theory.

Also, what emerged clearly from this engagement with the ubiquitous modernity is that to gain a deeper understanding of the essence of the struggles for epistemic freedom, it is important to appreciate the entanglement of knowledge in imperial/colonial economy and politics. A clear understanding of entwinement of knowledge in both economic and epistemic extraversion is very important. The work of Samir Amin (1968) introduced the concept of 'extraversion' from a political economy perspective. Extraversion is to turn a previously functioning, stable and alive economy upside down so as to lose its self-sustaining stamina through destabilization of its internal coherence (Amin 1974). It goes further to entail subordinating such an economy to the whims and needs of global capital and minority bourgeois ruling classes (Amin 1973). The result is what became

known as 'underdevelopment', which arose during the forcible integration of African subsistence economies into the global capitalist market through such devices as enslavement and colonization (Amin 1990). Hountondji (1996) extended the concept of economic extraversion and applied it to the domain of knowledge and coined 'intellectual extraversion'. He explained that:

> I found an approach that situated the production of knowledge in the general context of production *tout court* and that examined North/South relations in the field of science and technology on this basis illuminating and heuristically fruitful.
>
> (Hountondji 2002: 255)

Just as economic extraversion resulted in economic dependence, intellectual extraversion resulted in scientific dependence. Both situations provoked struggles for 'delinking'. Just as economic dependence produced a situation of 'growth without development', scientific dependence produced knowledge without invention. Intellectual extraversion is indeed an 'analysis of the scientific and technological relations of production on an international scale; and a critique of the actual functioning of research in the periphery as it relates to the world of knowledge controlled and managed by the rich countries of the North' (Hountondji 2002: 161). Hountondji went on to explain the process of epistemic freedom in these useful words:

> To learn anew to be free intellectually and politically, *that* to me was the current requirement. This liberty presupposes the reassessment of the status that had been worked out, the paradigms that had been established, and the canons of thought that had been developed for us. Shutting ourselves up in our cultural past – a purely apologetic relation to our heritage – would respond exactly to what is expected of us. In this regard, nothing will be more Euro-centred than a febrile nationalism that would be content to hold up the treasures of African culture to the face of the world by congealing them, mummifying them, freezing them in their muggy eternity.
>
> (Hountondji 2002: 190)

Here, Hountondji is offering both pathways to be pursued in search of epistemic freedom and is also warning us about the dangers of degenerating into nativism in our struggles for epistemic freedom.

Having framed the context of the struggles for epistemic freedom, it is important to understand the trajectories of this struggle since it has a long history. The history of knowledge generation and knowledge cultivation in Africa began with what Falola termed the 'traditional intellectuals/traditional elites' that comprised priests, kings, chiefs, magicians, praise poets and merchants of the pre-colonial era (Falola 2001: 56). These people produced mainly oral knowledge that drove pre-colonial African societies. The advent of colonialism became very brutal to these African

knowers. Kings were attacked, defeated, captured and decapitated. The decapitated heads of African kings were taken and transported overseas to decorate European museums. Some were buried with their head-up-side-down as a symbolic act of signifying the death of the African world. Yet others were exiled to very cold islands as part of dismembering them from their societies.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009a) argued convincingly that 'dismemberment' was part of colonial technology of planting European memory. He gave the example of Waiyaki wa Hinga who actively led his Gikuyu people against British colonialism. He was eventually captured and removed from the centre of his people only to be 'buried alive' at 'Kibwezi, head facing the bowels of the earth – in opposition to the Gikuyu burial rites' requirements that the body face Mount Kenya, the dwelling place of the Supreme Deity' (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2009a: 3). Informed by Cartesian philosophy, European colonialists targeted heads of African kings because to them the heads carried knowledge and memory. They had to be cut from the bodies as part of the broader process of dismemberment. The knowledgeable African women were simply discredited as witches. Remember that in Indo-Europe itself knowledgeable women had been burned alive accused of being witches during a period that Ramon Grosfoguel has correctly termed 'the four genocides/epistemicides of the long 16th century' (see Grosfoguel 2013: 73–90).

Those who survived death together with magicians were discredited as demon possessed and subjected to forcible and violent conversion to Christianity. Conversion was itself a form of epistemicide. Achille Mbembe (2015: 213–214) distilled five features Christianity as a monotheistic system with God as its apex symbolizing 'fantasm of the One'. The first feature is *primacy* (god who signified only himself and is the genesis). The second is *totalization* (condensation of sovereignty that is against plurality of gods). The third is *monopoly* (suppression of other forms of worship/incompatibility with worship of other gods). The fourth is *omnipotence* (divinity and its supreme essentiality). The fifth is the *ultimate* (alpha and omega) (see Mbembe 2015: 214–215). Mbembe defined the epistemic implications of 'conversion' in these informative words:

> [T]he act of conversion is also involved in the destruction of worlds. To convert the other is to incite him or her to give up what she or he believed. Theoretically, the passage from one belief system to another ought to entail the submission of the convert to the institution and authority in charge of proclaiming the new belief. In actuality, every conversion has always been, if only covertly, an operation of selection has always required, on the part of the convert, an exercise of judgement. Further, it is also assumed that the person who is converted agrees to accept, in everyday life, the practical consequences of this submission and of this transfer of allegiance. [. . .] By divesting himself or herself of previous beliefs, the neophyte is supposed to have shifted his or her centre of gravity. A test or ordeal of defamiliarization and disorientation, conversion distances the convert from family, relatives,

> language, customs, even from geographical environment and social contacts – that is, from various forms of inscription in a genealogy and an imaginary.
> (Mbembe 2015: 228–229)

Mbembe elaborated on the essence and meaning of 'conversion' that:

> Therefore, from a theological point of view, conversion is supposed to move from death to life – or, in any event, to the promise of life. This tend to suggest that conversion always involves an act of destruction and violence against an earlier state of affairs, an accustomed state for which one seeks to substitute something different. This act of violence and destruction is always carried out in the name of a specific materiality, one that claims to oppose a system of truth to an order of error and falsehood.
> (Mbembe 2015: 229–230)

Fundamentally, according to Mbembe (2015: 231), 'conversion always presupposes an entry into the time of the other'. Conversion is a mechanism of epistemicide. On the graveyard of African indigenous knowledges, colonialism planted European memory. The church and the school played a major role in the planting of European memory including imposition of colonial languages. What is often ignored in the analysis of the impact of missionary education on Africa is that by the time the colonialists were conquering and colonizing Africa in the nineteenth century, already Europe, where they came from, was distancing itself from theological thought. It has been undergoing intensive secularization since the dawn of Enlightenment. For them to then come to Africa and introduce 'education for salvation' was part of the broader colonial process of desocializing African people out of their cultural and historical context into zombies of colonialism.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986: 16) emphasized that 'the most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonized, the control through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world'. The missionary church and the colonial school were meant to establish effective mental control. Ali A. Mazrui (1978) documented how the establishment of mission boarding schools was meant to separate African children from the influence of their parents and the home environment and how this process eventually influenced a new class formation in Africa. The French colonizers became famous for their 'cultural arrogance' whereas the British became well known for their 'racial arrogance' and all these 'arrogances' combined to degrade the very humanity and cultures of Africa (Mazrui 1978: 11).

Christianization constituted a form of education and an epistemicide simultaneously. It is not surprising that the earliest group of educated Africans consisted of Christianized ex-slaves. At the time of abolition of slavery some of these educated Christianized ex-slaves were shipped back to Africa and they founded Sierra Leone and Liberia as independent republics within a colonized continent. These early Africans had imbibed Western thought and experienced

Western lifestyles from the traumatic experiences of bondage, colonial schools, mission schools and churches (July 1968). Their activism and struggles were limited to what Mazrui (1978: 12) termed 'rebellious emulation'. They had not yet developed decolonial or anti-colonial consciousness necessary for tearing away from colonialism and Christian missionary thought. Mazrui (1978: 16) correctly noted that the influence of Western education became that of 'psychological deruralization' to the extent that the educated African 'became in a fundamental sense a misfit in his own village'. Dramatizing the negative influence of colonial education on Africans, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986: 9) argued that:

> Berlin conference of 1884 was effected through the sword and the bullet. But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom.

It is not surprising that the early African educated elite, which comprised of evangelists, bishops, reverends, nurses and teachers, were deeply seduced by the salvationist and civilizationist promises of colonial education and that being fluent in colonial languages such as French and English was part of acquisition of knowledge itself. Mazrui (1978) provided a catalogue of the benefits of gaining colonial education within a fast-changing colonial environment where anything African had to die unless it was of benefit to the project of colonialism. The most poignant change and benefit took place at the centre of new class formation. This is how Mazrui (1987: xiii) put it:

> The colonial impact transformed the natural basis of stratification in Africa. Instead of status based on, say age, there emerged status based on literacy. Instead of classes emerging from the question 'who owns what?', class formation now responded to the question 'who knows what?'

The seeds of scientific and intellectual dependency are rooted in the seductive nature of colonial education as well as the epistemicides, linguicides and alienations it committed. As correctly stated by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986: 11): 'The language of my education was no longer the language of my culture.' The long-term consequence of colonial education has been the distortion of African consciousness as colonial education was deliberately meant to 'obscure reality and force a certain perception of reality' consonant with the colonial project (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2012: 30). Frantz Fanon captured the epistemicidal nature of colonialism very well when he wrote:

> Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverse logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it.
>
> (Fanon 1968: 210)

The key consequence of this process is alienation. Ngugi wa Thiong'o captured the essence of alienation in these revealing words:

> The colonial process dislocates the traveller's mind from the place he or she already knows to a foreign land. It is a process of continuous alienation from the base, a continuous process of looking at oneself from the outside of self or with the lenses of a stranger. One may end up identifying with the foreign base as the starting point, from self to other selves. [. . .] This colonization of the cognitive process was the everyday experience in a colonial classroom anywhere.
>
> (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2012: 39)

Emerging from this alienating terrain, modern African intellectualism has never been a simple one of enjoyment and a mere professional vocation. The activist aspect is embedded through and through. It has taken the formats of empiricism, ideological interventions and activism simultaneously. What is disturbing, though, is that despite the fact that African intellectuals have produced numerous books and journal articles speaking directly on pertinent issues of epistemic freedom and development, these works have not succeeded in replacing those of Western theorists such as Michael Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, Max Weber and Karl Marx, even within African academies. African intellectual productions have not yet assumed dominance in the field of global knowledge in the way that Marx, Derrida and Foucault are doing currently. The African academy has remained a site of inculcation of Western knowledge, values, ways of knowing and worldviews that are often taught as universal values and scientific knowledge. The African continent is still stuck with the problem of 'the place that Western thought occupies in non-Western discursive formations' (Diawara 1990: 56).

Thandika Mkandawire (1995: 2) sought to understand and explain the ideological orientation of African intellectuals and logic behind their emphasis on different issues affecting Africa and he developed the notion of 'three generations' of African intellectuals. The first generation of African intellectuals were the first to occupy academic positions in the universities at the time of attainment of political independence. Many of them became ardent supporters of African nationalism and uncritical celebrators of political independence. The second generation of African intellectuals comprised African scholars that were produced during the hey-day of the Marxist and neo-Marxist schools of thought, and some of them were products of African universities themselves.

What was distinctive about this group was their faithful adherence to Marxist and political economy thought. They supported African nationalism and were anti-imperialist. They were at the same time critical of the neo-colonial direction that the postcolonial state was taking. The third generation of scholars became the current young academics, most of whom were produced by African universities as well as non-African institutions and have imbibed neoliberal, postcolonial and postmodernist thought. Most of them became critical of African nationalism,

particularly its antipathy towards democracy and its disdain for human rights. But the categorization of African intellectuals into three generations is not cast in stone, as ideological persuasions and intellectual traditions 'criss-crossed' the generations easily and tendentiously.

There are also common experiences that characterized African intellectual interventions across the three generations. For instance, Peter N. Thuynsma explained why issues such as socialism and development have pre-occupied the African mind and African struggles for freedom. He stated:

> Africanists have never been able to afford scholarship for its luxury. In whatever field, we have worked with an unwritten command *to tell our people about our people*. We have had to work our way out from under a number of historical boulders rolled over us by foreign interests (emphasis in the original source).
>
> (Thuynsma 1998: 45)

No wonder that African intellectual interventions have often sounded deeply polemical, if not aggressive. Falola explained why:

> Reading the works of Africans or listening to their lectures, you may form an impression that they are polemical or defensive, bitter or apologetic. Yes, you are right! However, you need to know the reason for this. 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. The African intelligentsia 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 2001: 17)

Even though African people have continued to be major consumers of ideas generated in the West and tested on the African soil and on African minds, some African scholars began to engage and critique Western epistemology from an Afrocentric perspective. For instance, Archie Mafeje had this to say:

> Afrocentrism is nothing more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of an alienated intellectual discourse [. . .] [W]hen Africans speak for themselves and about themselves, the world will hear the authentic voice, and will be forced to come to terms with it in the long-run [. . .] If we are adequately Afrocentric the international implications will not be lost on others.
>
> (Mafeje 2000: 66)

Claude Ake added his voice to the debate on the decolonization knowledge when he argued:

> Every prognostication indicates that Western social science continues to play a major role in keeping us subordinate and underdeveloped; it continues to inhibit our understanding of the problems of our world, to feed us noxious values and false hopes, to make us pursue policies which undermine our competitive strength and guarantee our permanent underdevelopment and dependence. It is becoming increasingly clear that we cannot overcome our underdevelopment and dependence unless we try to understand the imperialist character of Western social science and to exorcise the attitudes of mind which it inculcates.
>
> (Ake 1979: 12)

At the centre of the African search for self-knowing are six core concerns and demands: complete African self-rule, self-regeneration, self-understanding, self-definition, self-knowing and self-articulation of African issues after centuries of domination and silencing. While Achille Mbembe (2002) tried to caricature these legitimate African concerns as nativism and Afro-radicalism, these aspirations form a core part of the quest for freedom, development and identity in a world still dominated by Western particularistic world views that have been universalized and globalized.

Black scholars from the Diaspora like Molefi Asante (1988) have questioned and critiqued Eurocentrism even more consistently than those African intellectuals based on the continent. Asante is well known for his consistent and systematic push for 'Afrocentricity' not only as a direct challenge to Eurocentricity but as another epistemology that takes Africa as it departure point. Afrocentricity is 'the belief in the centrality of Africans in post-modern history' and a 'critical perspective placing African ideals at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture or behaviour' (Asante 1987).

Within the continent such scholars as Dani W. Nabudere have also been very vocal on issues of epistemological decolonization. Nabudere's *Afrikology, Philosophy and Wholeness: An Epistemology* (2011) boldly and directly confronted the limits of Eurocentrism and traced the historiography of African epistemology from the 'Cradle of Humanity', which is Africa. Nabudere emphasized that all sources of knowledge were valid within their historical, cultural and social contexts. He used the term 'Afrikology' to refer to an Africa-focused epistemology that fully took into account African history, culture and context. Nabudere argued:

> The construction of the science of Afrikology therefore directly flows from the need for Africans to redefine their world, which can enable them to advance their self-understanding and the world around them based on their cosmologies. [. . .]. Afrikology must proceed from the proposition that [it] is a true philosophy of knowledge and wisdom based on African cosmologies because it is *Afri-* in that it is inspired by ideas originally produced from the

> Cradle of Humankind located in Africa. *It is not Afrikology because it is African* but it is *Afri-* because it emanates from the source of the Universal system of knowledge in Africa.
>
> (Nabudere 2011: 17–18)

But why is it difficult to break from the colonizer's model of the world and the epistemology it produced? Ashis Nandy's book *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (1983) provided part of the answer. His concept of an 'intimate enemy' speaks to colonialism as that enemy that invades and resides in one's heart, mind and body. Intimate enemies consistently survive through processes of naturalizing and routinizing themselves as part of camouflaging so as to claim non-existence. Nandy vividly described how colonialism existed and operated as an 'intimate enemy' that worked on the psychology of both colonized and colonizing societies. The concept of 'intimate enemy' captured accurately the reality of colonialism's 'colonization of the minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within the colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once for all' resulting in internalization of Eurocentrism ('The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and minds') (Nandy 1983: xi). For Nandy:

> [T]he drive over men is not merely a by-product of a faulty political economy but also of a world view which believes in the absolute superiority of the human over the nonhuman and the subhuman, the masculine over the feminine, the adult over the child, the historical over the ahistorical, and the modern or progressive over the traditional or the savage. It has become more and more apparent that genocides, ecodisasters and ethnocides are but the underside of corrupt sciences and psychopathic technologies wedded to new secular hierarchies, which have reduced major civilizations to the status of a set of empty rituals. The ancient forces of human greed and violence, one recognises, have merely found a new legitimacy in anthropocentric doctrines of secular salvation, in the ideologies of progress, normality and hyper-masculinity, and in theories of cumulative growth of science and technology.
>
> (Nandy 1983: x)

Nandy also highlighted how deceitful colonialism is as an 'intimate enemy'. It presents itself as bringing about civilization, progress and development as it subverts and destroys the order it found. Thus the colonialism that is invoked in Nandy's (1983: xi) work is one 'which survives the demise of empires'. As a strategy of defeating colonialism, Nandy (1983: 3) posits: 'Perhaps that which begins in the minds of men must also end in the minds of men'. This is because 'colonialism is first of all a matter of consciousness and needs to be defeated ultimately in the minds of men' (Nandy 1983: 63). This is why this book is focused on epistemic freedom that speaks directly to both technologies of dismemberment and the struggles for what Nandy (1983) termed 'recovery of self under colonialism'. Nandy's analysis resonates with that of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, which emphasizes the

process of decolonization of the mind as the first article of freedom and documents various African and Africa Diasporic initiatives aimed at 'recovery of self under colonialism' in order to 're-member' Africa after centuries of 'dismemberment' (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2009a, 2009b).

Silences as epistemicides

A struggle for epistemic freedom is ranged against silences as an imperial/colonial technology of dismemberment. The first silence cascaded from the very Eurocentric idea of history and the philosophy of history. The epistemic problem that emerged out of this development was termed 'historicism' by Chakrabarty (2007). The problem of 'historicism' defied even Marxist critique of bourgeois society and capital, and was in fact reproduced by Marx through his stagist conceptions of human history. The problem of historicism is fundamentally that of Cartesian and Enlightenment reason as they spoke to what is knowledge and transcendence over the so-called irrationalities and superstitions. Here was born the Eurocentric idea of history 'as the rational-secular discipline' (Chakrabarty 2007: 237). At the centre of this idea of history was the 'spirit of science', 'rational outlook', 'free enquiry' and faith in 'progress' (Chakrabarty 2007: 237).

From the ideas of 'rapture' and 'difference' as constitutive technologies of colonization of time emerged the problematic paradigm of difference as well as the monolingual language of social science that obliterated the realities of plural ways of being human and knowing. At the centre of 'historicism' is the story of Europe as a 'macrohistory' of the human. Furthermore, this was the basis for 'irrational' rationality within history as a knowledge system. This 'irrationality' manifested itself through overrepresentation of Europe if not outright dominance in historical knowledge. The long-standing consequence of historicism was to subordinate and subsume all human histories within the Western episteme and to reduce all diverse histories into mere episodes within an assumed 'universal transcendental history with a capital 'H'. This is why Allen (2016: 25), building on the work of Latin American decolonial theorists, called 'for the specific project of rethinking the relationship between history and normativity that is necessary if critical theory is to be decolonized'. She concluded:

> [C]ritical theory stands in need of decolonization insofar as its strategy for grounding normativity relies on the notion of historical progress; thus, if critical theory is to be decolonized, it will have to find another strategy for grounding normativity and another way of thinking about progress.
>
> (Allen 2016: 36)

Historicism as an epistemicide affected the rest of the colonized part of the world. The Caribbean scholar Edouard Glissant has systematically critiqued the Eurocentric idea of history and philosophy of history from the vantage point of the Caribbean black societies:

> History is a highly functional fantasy of the West, originating at precisely the time when it alone 'made' the history of the world. If Hegel relegated African people to the ahistorical, Amerindians peoples to the prehistorical, in order to reserve History for European peoples exclusively, it appears that it is not because these African or American peoples 'have entered History' that we can conclude today that such a hierarchical conception of the 'march of history' is no longer relevant.
>
> (Glissant 1999: 61)

Because of the impact of the slave trade and the experience of the 'middle passage', the Caribbean terribly suffers from what Glissant (1999: 63) has termed 'nonhistory'. Like all other victims of the epistemicide known as 'historicism', Glissant (1999) consistently worked to undermine and unmask the notion of a coherent, progressive and linear history ('from the shame of Fallenness to the glory of cosmic Perfection') (see Introduction by Dash 1999: xxviii). The Caribbean just like Africa fell on the margins of such a conception of history. To Glissant the totalizing imperative of 'a transcendental History (with a capital H)' resulted in the reproduction of a Hegelian 'division of History into ahistory, prehistory and History' (see Introduction by Dash 1999: xxix). This Eurocentric rendition of history into a singular 'macrohistory' had had a deadly effect on Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia.

With specific reference to Africa, it was actually Terence Osborne Ranger, the British liberal Africanist historian, who posed the question of how 'African' is 'African history' as he reflected on methodology and methods as well as thematic concerns cascading from Western historiography and their sufficiency as tools for researching and narrating African history' (see Ranger 1968, Atieno-Odhiambo 2002). He posited that there was need

> to examine whether African history was sufficiently Africa; whether it had developed the methods and models appropriate to its needs or had depended upon making use of methods and models developed elsewhere; whether its main themes of discourse had arisen out of the dynamics of African development or had been imposed because of their over-riding significance in the historiography of other continents.
>
> (Ranger 1968: x)

The debate was picked up by the Kenyan historian Bethwell Allan Ogot in the 1970s and he called for a development of 'philosophy of history of Africa' (Ogot 1978: 33). He elaborated:

> We have struggled hard to reject a conceptual framework which is Western both in its origins as well as its orientations. But we have not yet succeeded in evolving an autonomous body of theoretical thinking. Herein lies the root of our cultural dependence.
>
> (Ogot 1978: 33)

The challenge of silences in African history in particular and African Studies in general has also been at the centre of the work of the Congolese historian Jacques Depelchin in recent years. In his book entitled *Silences in African History: Between the Syndromes of Discovery and Abolition* (2005: xi), Depelchin highlighted what he described as 'the Herculean task of producing historical knowledges for a group of people who were seen by the hegemonic other as lacking history/sense of history'. Understood from the perspective of silences, the epistemic struggle is a direct confrontation with the Columbian-Hegelian-Conradian-Hugh Trevor Ropian imperial/colonial discourse, not of simple silencing but exclusion.

To deeply appreciate the importance of the struggle for epistemic freedom, it is important to understand the discursive terrain of politics of knowledge, particularly such key elements as 'subject-positions, institutional practices, systems of exclusion, epistemes, and so forth' (Allen 2016: 213). Political decolonization of the twentieth century did not delve deeper into the complexities of the knowledge terrain, hence it failed to deliver epistemological decolonization (Depelchin 2005: xii). For those people who endured enslavement, colonialism, capitalist exploitation, cultural imperialism, forced religious conversion, gender and race discrimination as well as political domination and repression, silences constitute facts of their lives (Depelchin 2005). Depelchin's analysis confronted epistemic violence in its various guises and manifestations including those embedded in research techniques and methodologies as well as in 'syndromes of discovery and abolition'. Depelchin had this to say:

> The syndrome of abolition can be clearly seen in the words and actions of the 'abolitionists' who fought to end slavery, crediting themselves as the ones to realise its inhumanity; as if those oppressed by slavery had not already been aware of this.
>
> (Depelchin 2005: 6)

Broadly speaking, according to Depelchin (2005: 12), African history has undergone two forms of silencing: 'denial' of existence right up to the 1960s and 'recognition' since then. Depelchin posited:

> In reality, however, it was the former which continued to dominate, but under a different form. The apparent paradigmatic shift – from denial to recognition – can be revealed as false by showing that the affirmation was paralleled by a systematic silencing of questions, themes and/or conceptualizations. So, in reality, what took place was a redefinition or reformulation of denial.
>
> (Depelchin 2005: 12)

Depelchin also confronted the dominant narrative of 'discovery' that dominated in the story of the unfolding of modernity, imperialism and colonialism. He argued that 'Nothing is "discovered" until such "discovery" can become part of

the arsenal of the reproduction of the superiority of the discoverers' (Depelchin 2005: 13).

The theme of silencing of the past is also the subject of the Michael-Rolph Trouillot's classic book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995) in which he distilled and delineated four major moments of silencing of history in general:

> Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance).
>
> (Trouillot 1995: 26)

Trouillot underscored these four moments of silencing the past as he grappled with the silenced significance of Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804 that is always overshadowed by the histories of French and American Revolutions. The importance of the Haitian Revolution for Africa in particular and humanity in general is that it confronted racism, slavery and colonialism very early in the annals of modern global history. Fundamentally, the Haitian Revolution was a heroic struggle organized and prosecuted by black people whose humanity was denied and who were reduced to commodities and enslaved, and inferiorized as slaves. To Trouillot (1995: 82) the Haitian Revolution was subjected to a major silence known as the 'unthinkable' ('that for which one has no adequate instruments to conceptualize'). He elaborated on this point this way:

> The Haitian Revolution did challenge the ontological and political assumptions of the most radical writers of the Enlightenment. The events that shook up Saint Dominique from 1791to 1804 constituted a sequence for which not even the extreme political left in France or in England had a conceptual frame of reference. They were 'unthinkable' facts in the framework of western thought. [. . .] The unthinkable is that which one cannot conceive within the range of possible alternatives, that which perverts all answers because it defies the terms under which the questions were phrased. In that sense, the Haitian Revolution was unthinkable in its time: it challenged the very framework within which proponents and opponents had examined race, colonialism, and slavery in the Americas.
>
> (Trouillot 1995: 82–83)

The Haitian Revolution signified a radical paradigmatic shift in the very conceptions of the human and in other ways. It directly challenged the colonial discourse of doubting the humanity of those people they reduced to slaves that made slave-owners to propagate a false view of obedient 'Negros' who do not think and for whom revolt was impossible. The reality of the Haitian Revolution

spearheaded by the enslaved did not coincide with deeply held Eurocentric colonial and racist discourses of an enslaved people who could not imagine freedom. The Haitian Revolution broke the philosophical, epistemological and ontological Western ethno-beliefs.

Trouillot (1995: 88) correctly designated the Haitian Revolution as that moment, which is located 'at the limits of the thinkable'. Not only the slave-owners but even the philosophers of Europe could not think of black enslaved people organizing themselves and establishing solidarity that was capable of producing a coordinated and successful revolution. Hence, attempts were made to blame outsiders/non-existent agitators as the brains behind the revolution. Even the victory of the black slave is trivialized through emphasis on how the diseases not the actions of the black enslaved people made the revolution successful ('The Haitian Revolution appears obliquely as part of medical history') (Trouillot 1995: 99). Black racial pride and black agency was unthinkable.

The Haitian Revolution is relevant for any history of black people not only because it led to the collapse of a system of slave trade but because it produced the first independent black-ruled republic of Haiti. It challenged most of what Europeans had told themselves and believed in. Trouillot (1995: 107) concluded: 'The silencing of the Haitian Revolution is only a chapter within a narrative of global domination.' The major lesson is that the silencing of the Haitian Revolution was reproduced on a world scale and it was sustained by genocides, epistemicides, linguicides as well as outright 'theft of history' to use Jack Goody's (2006) terminology.

Silences also arise from what Amy Allen (2016) has termed the 'normative foundation of critical theory'. Focused on how the Frankfurt School, which despite its claims to be critical, was silent on racism, slavery, imperialism and colonialism, Allen set out to explain the sources of this 'quietude'. In fact, Allen is building on the work of Edward E. Said who 1993 criticized the Frankfurt School in these piercing words:

> Frankfurt School critical theory, despite its seminal insights into the relationships between domination, modern society, and the opportunities for redemption through art as critique, is stunningly silent on racist theory, anti-imperialist resistance, and oppositional practice in the empire.
>
> (Said 1993: 278)

Said posited that the 'silence' was never an oversight but 'a motivated silence' (Allen 2016: 1). It was a silence that emerged from ideas of 'blithe universalism', which had normalized notions of racial inferiority of other people and routinized subordination of other cultures to those of Europe. Allen (2016: 2) has noticed that despite Said's critique of 1993, the Frankfurt School 'remains all too silent on the problem of imperialism'. In search of explanation for this silence, Allen (2016) ventured into the 'normative foundations of critical theory' as practiced by the members of the Frankfurt School. Her discovery has been that there are core Eurocentric normative beliefs on social evolution, historical progress, development

and emancipation, which form the base of critical theory (Allen 2016: 3). This is how she explained it:

> Thus, they [members of Frankfurt School] are [. . .] deeply wedded to the idea that European, Enlightenment modernity – or at least certain aspects or features thereof, which remain to be spelled out – represent a developmental advance over premodern, nonmodern, or traditional forms of life, and, crucially, this idea plays an important role in grounding the normativity of critical theory for each thinker. In other words, both Habermas and Honneth are committed to the thought that critical theory needs to defend some idea of historical progress in order to ground its distinctive approach to normativity and, thus, in order to be truly critical. *But it is precisely this commitment that proves to be the biggest obstacle to the project of decolonizing their approaches to critical theory.*
>
> (Allen 2016: 3, my emphasis)

The epistemic limits of the Frankfurt School and the blindness of its critical theory to those key concerns affecting the 'non-Western' world, haunts the entire Western thought and make the theorists fail to hear and comprehend the core aspects of struggles for epistemic freedom cascading from the Global South.

Rethinking thinking

The epistemic and systemic crisis that is haunting the world today, calls for rethinking thinking itself. Catherine Odora Hoppers and Howard Richards in their *Rethinking Thinking: Modernity's 'Other' and the Transformation of the University* (2012: 8) articulated the essence of 'rethinking thinking' this way:

> The casting of light at last onto subjugated peoples, knowledges, histories and ways of living unsettles the toxic pond and transforms passive analysis into a generative force that valorises and recreates life for those previously museumised. [. . .] it is a process of engaging with colonialism in a manner that produces a program for its dislocation. This dislocation is made possible not only by permitting subalterns direct space for engaging with structures and manifestations of colonialism, but also by inserting into discourse arena totally different meanings and registers from other traditions. [. . .] The task for rethinking thinking is therefore precisely this: to recognize the cultural asphyxiation of those numerous 'others' that has been the norm, and work to bring other categories of self definition, of dreaming, of acting, of loving, of living into the commons as matter of universal concern.

Hoppers and Richards (2012) delved deeper into the constitutive make-up of such disciplines as law, economics, education, and natural science in their endeavour to rethink them. They posited:

> Law, like economics, science and education, is a box. These boxes constitute four pillars of modernity. Law protects the propertied; science valorises a mechanistic worldview over holistic cosmologies; economics upholds a metaphysics that justifies survival of the fittest over the metaphysics of sharing that governs a large majority of livelihoods in the world; education refuses to recognize and build on the knowledge that the children from non-western systems of thought have. Among the four boxes, circuits of fragmentation and dehumanization are masked and rationalized.
>
> (Hopper and Richards 2012: 45)

Building on this argument, Hoppers and Richards (2012: 50) emphasized the need to change the rules that constitute the disciplines of law, education, science and economics as part of setting afoot a new thinking in the knowledge domain. Rethinking thinking, in their analysis, entailed rectification of the problem of 'epistemological disenfranchisement' (Hoppers and Richards 2012: 84). This is necessary because knowledge constitutes the 'software' of coloniality.

Rethinking thinking is fundamentally a decolonial move that requires the cultivation of a decolonial attitude in knowledge production. It is informed by a strong conviction that all human beings are not only born into a knowledge system but are legitimate knowers and producers of legitimate knowledge. Rethinking thinking is also a painstaking decolonial process of 'learning to un-learn inorder to re-learn' as well as an opening to other knowledges and thinkers beyond those from Europe and North America that have dominated the academy in the last 500 years (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012). This 'learning to unlearn' entails the painstaking and difficult process of 'forgetting what we have been taught, to break free from the thinking programs imposed on us by education, culture, and social environment, always marked by the Western imperial reason' (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012: 7).

Rethinking thinking also calls for what Lewis R. Gordon (2006) has rendered as 'shifting the geography of reason'. It is not only relevant for the Caribbean world where the Caribbean Philosophical Association (CPA) has adopted it as a motto. The imperative to shift the geography of reason arises from the reality of dismemberment of black people from the human family, which raises the fundamental problematic of 'what it means to be human after the restrictions placed on such a concept by modern conquest and colonization' (Gordon 2006: 12). Shifting the geography of reason means a number of decolonial moves. In the first place, it challenges the imperial/colonial historiographical tendency of making European and North American historical experience the template of measuring other historical experiences and that Europe and North America are the only repositories of rational thinking. In the second place, it challenges the Hegelian idea of an Africa that existed outside the geographical reach of reason. In the third place, shifting the geography of reason challenges the old Cartesian view of knowledge as an individual possession and restores the situatedness of knowledge

in communities and civilizations (intersubjective character of knowledge) (Nisbett 2003: Banchetti-Robino and Headley 2006).

Rethinking thinking speaks to unthinking some of the presumptions of knowledge that has been polluted by Eurocentrism so as to escape from what Paulin Hountondji (1990) termed 'scientific dependence' and Syed Hussein Alatas (1969; 1974) described as 'the captive mind'. This rethinking thinking becomes urgent not only in the context of liberating the colonized from Eurocentricism and colonization of the minds but because of the exhaustion of what Immanuel Wallerstein (1999: 4) terms 'nineteenth century social science'. He elaborated:

> It is quite normal for scholars and scientists to rethink issues. When important new evidence undermines old theories and predictions do not hold, we are pressed to rethink our premises. In that sense, much of nineteenth-century social science, in the form of specific hypotheses, is constantly being rethought. But, in addition to rethinking, which is 'normal', I believe we need to 'unthink' nineteenth-century social science, because many of its presumptions – which, in my view, are misleading and constrictive – still have far too strong a hold on our mentalities. These presumptions, once considered liberating of the spirit, serve today as the central intellectual barrier to useful analysis of the social world.
>
> (Wallerstein 1999: 4)

The situation becomes worse when African scholars are dependent on an exhausted intellectual tradition and social science that is no longer useful in the analysis of the social world in general and African experience in particular. Hountondji (1990: 10) distilled 13 'indices of scientific dependence'. The first is dependence on technical apparatuses made in Europe and North America. The second is dependence on foreign libraries and documentation centres for up-to-date scientific information. The third is what he termed 'institutional nomadism, a restless going to and fro' European and North American universities. The fourth dependence manifests itself as 'brain drain'. The fifth is importation of theory from the North to enlighten the data gathered in the South. The sixth dependence is aversion to basic research and sticking to the colonial ideology of instrumentality of knowledge. The seventh problem is in choice of research topics that is determined by interests of the North where knowledge is validated (Hountondji 1990: 12).

The eighth dependence is confinement to territorial specializations in which African scholars are often reduced to native informants. The ninth form of dependence is that African scholars are engaged in scientific research that is of direct service to coloniality. The tenth issue relates to research into indigenous knowledge that eventually is disciplined to fit into the modes of Western science. The eleventh challenge is that of linguistic dependence on six European languages (English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese) in teaching and research. The twelfth index of scientific dependence is lack of communication

among African scholars as most prefer ‘a vertical exchange and dialogue with scientists from the North than horizontal exchange with fellow scholars from the South’ (Hountondji 1990: 13). The final index of dependence manifests itself through reproduction of mediocrity that makes it justifiable to look for competent scholars in the North (Hountondji 1990: 13).

This analysis takes us to the consideration of the deeper intellectual and epistemological crisis. Issa G. Shivji clearly defined the African intellectual/epistemological crisis as manifested by the fact that:

> The majority of African intellectuals have pretty well accommodated mainstream thought. This includes former militant nationalists and radical socialist intellectuals. The metamorphosis of the African intellectual from a revolutionary to an activist, from critical political economist to post-modernist, from a social analyst to a constitutionalist liberal, from anti-imperialist to a cultural atavist, from a radical economics professor to a neo-liberal World Bank spokesperson, from an intellectual to a consultant is blatant, unrepentant, and mercenary.
>
> (Shivji 2003: 19)

Mamdani (2011: 5) clearly identified the African intellectual challenge for the twenty-first century as that of questioning and unpacking the foundations of the prevailing Euro-American intellectual paradigms which have turned the dominant Western experience into a model under which research is conceived as nothing other than a demonstration that non-Western societies around the world either conform or deviate from that model. What is needed is to take the struggle for decolonization to a higher level, informed by a decolonial epistemology focused on unpacking the constitutive negative aspects of Western modernity as the broader terrain within which coloniality and Euro-American epistemologies were generated.

What is promising though in the domain of struggles for epistemic freedom is that younger African scholars have not given up the liberatory agenda of rethinking thinking and even unthinking some ideas introduced on Africa by colonialism and hegemonic Eurocentric thinking. For example, the Nigerian decolonial feminist sociologist Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997)’s work helps us to rethink thinking on gender and the ‘woman question’. She took African society and context seriously and eloquently demonstrated empirically and theoretically how Oyo history in West Africa underwent three process of ‘patriarchalization’ through masculinization of the *alaafin*, ‘feminization of certain positions, whereby the society-wide influence of females in power has been narrowed to an undefined interest, distinct from the rest of the community’, and ‘genderization’ through invention of an essentialized category of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ that did not exist prior to colonialism in the Oyo-Yoruba society of Nigeria. Oyewumi (1997)’s work is one of the best and convincing testaments of how the very process of ‘writing history’ of Africa has been informed by hegemonic Western thought and its analytical categories such

as 'biological determinism', centrality of 'bodies' as well as privileging of sense of sight (visual) over other sense to the extent of globalizing ideas of 'worldview' over 'world sense'.

Oyewumi (1997)'s work directly confronted the silencing impact of imposition of Western gender categories on Africa particularly the Yoruba of Nigeria. In African studies, there is a general concern with how history writing has tended to privilege 'his story' over and above 'her story' in capturing human experiences across space and time. Oyewumi (1997) complicated this rather simplistic approach of merely adding the experiences of women to a world of knowledge that wrongly assumed the universality 'gender' and 'woman' categories as trans-cultural and transhistorical. Oyewumi (1997: ix) posited 'The woman question is a Western-derived issue – a legacy of the age-old somatocentricity of Western thought. It is an imported problem, and it is not indigenous to the Yoruba'. In Oyewumi's work one finds a robust, meticulously research and convincingly argued and first-rate case of 'rethinking thinking' on gender in particular and African thought in general. For instance, Oyewumi boldly revealed:

> As the work and my thinking progressed, I came to realise that the fundamental category 'woman' – which is foundational in Western gender discourses – simply did not exist in Yorubaland prior to its sustained contact with the West. There was no such pre-existing group characterised by shared interests, desires, or social position. The cultural logic of Western social categories is based on an ideology of biological determinism: the conception that biology provides the rational for the organization of the social world. Thus this cultural logic is actually a 'bio-logic.' Such categories like 'woman' are based on body-type and are elaborated in relation to and in opposition to another category: man; the presence or absence of certain organs determines social position.
>
> (Oyewumi 1997: ix–x)

The significance of Oyewumi's work is that it intervened robustly on the sociology of knowledge in general in the process directly challenging the dominant Western thought while at many levels retrieving and anchoring African thought. In the first place, Oyewumi (1997) challenges the idea of 'gender' as the first article of faith in thinking about any society and its organization. She questioned the Western idea of the universal subordination of women and even rejected the universalization of the category 'woman' because in the Yoruba society 'there were no women – defined in strictly gendered terms – in that society' (Oyewumi 1997: xi–xiii).

According to Oyewumi (1997) there is urgent need for careful historical and sociological research on Africa that is not informed by existing analytical categories borrowed from Europe and America. She identified some of the key problems of history, theory and methodology that are themselves colonized. Oyewumi (1997: x–xi) identified the core components of Western thought as privileging not only

'body-based categories' but the sense of sight in its interpretation of human phenomena. She elaborated on this problem this way:

> In African studies, historically and currently, the creation, constitution, and production of knowledge have remained the privilege of the West. Therefore, body-reasoning and the bio-logic that derives from the biological determinism inherent in Western thought have been imposed on African societies. The presence of gender constructs cannot be separated from the ideology of biological determinism. Western conceptual schemes and theories have become so widespread that almost all scholarship, even by Africans, utilizes them unquestioningly.
>
> (Oyewumi 1997: x)

One of her points is that African scholars must be conscious of the fact that 'all concepts come with their own cultural and philosophical baggage, much of which becomes alien distortion when applied to cultures other than those from which they derive' (Oyewumi 1997: xi). Oyewumi (1997: xi) posed the fundamental question: 'What are the relationships between, on the one hand, bio-anatomical distinctions and gender differences as part of social reality and, on the other hand, gender constructs as something that the observer brings to a particular situation?' Her response based on her meticulous sociological research on the Yoruba society is:

> The Yoruba case provides one such different scenario; and more than that, it shows that the human body need not be constituted as gendered or be seen as evidence for social classification at all times. In precolonial Yoruba society, body-type was not the basis of social hierarchy: males and females were not ranked according to anatomic distinction. The social order required a different kind of map, not a gender map that assumed biology as the foundation for social ranking.
>
> (Oyewumi 1997: xii)

Oyewumi is not in any way creating the impression of a golden age of Yoruba society that was a domain of pristine village democracies cascading from absence of any form of hierarchization. She revealed:

> Yoruba society was hierarchically organized, from slaves to rulers. The ranking of individuals depended first and foremost on seniority, which was usually defined by relative age. Another fundamental difference between Yoruba and Western social categories involves the highly situational nature of Yoruba social identity. In Yoruba society before the sustained infusion of Western categories, social position of people shifted constantly in relation to those with whom they were interacting; consequently, social identity was relational and was not essentialized.
>
> (Oyewumi 1996: xiii)

Oyewumi launched a daring intellectual challenge to the existing feminist discourses even revealing a fundamental contradiction in their understanding of such concepts as gender (social construction) and sex (biological construction). The contradiction if not feminist paradox is here: in the very celebrated 'fundamental assumption of feminist theory is that women's subordination is universal' which universality of 'gender asymmetry suggests a biological basis rather than a cultural one, given that the human anatomy is universal whereas cultures speak in myriad voices' (Oyewumi 1997: 10). Oyewumi proceeded to unpack this paradox in this manner:

> That gender is socially constructed is said to mean that the criteria that make up male and female categories vary in different cultures. If this is so, then it challenges the notion that there is a biological imperative at work. From this standpoint, then, gender categories are mutable, and as such, gender then is denaturalized.
>
> (Oyewumi 1997: 10)

Oyewumi's point is very important for rethinking thinking on Africa because it revealed how:

> In fact, the categorization of women in feminist discourses as homogeneous, bio-anatomically determined group which always constituted as powerless and victimized does not reflect the fact that gender relations are social relations and, therefore, historically grounded and culturally bound. If gender is socially constructed, then gender cannot behave in the same manner across time and space. If gender is a social construction, then we must examine the various cultural/architectural sites where it was constructed, and we must acknowledge that variously located actors (aggregates, groups, interested parties) were part of construction. We must further acknowledge that if gender is a social construction, then there was a specific time (in different cultural/architectural sites) when it was 'constructed' and therefore a time before which it was not. Thus, gender, being a social construction, it is logical to assume that in some societies, gender construction need not have existed at all.
>
> (Oyewumi 1997: 10)

At another level, this generalization about powerless, disadvantaged and victimized women across the world might be taken to be another form of silence in which the world of the Yoruba society is ignored. But Oyewumi is careful not to challenge one generalization while creating another based on one case study. She is very clear on this:

> Although it is clear that findings of this study are applicable to other African societies, I hesitate to apply them broadly, primarily because I do not want to fall into the common trap of erasing a multitude of African cultures by

> making facile generalizations, a process that results in unwarranted homogenization. The erasure of African cultures, a major defect of many studies on Africa, motivates my efforts not to make a simplistic general case about Africa from the Yoruba example.
>
> (Oyewumi 1997: xiv)

What is important about Oyewumi's work is that in her critique of Western-centric 'body-reasoning' approaches to society that carried gender differentiation as a major lens, she revealed how 'scholars create gender categories', how any simplistic and uncritical deployment of gender lens 'necessarily write gender into that society' under study and how 'In actuality, the process of making gender visible is also a process of creating gender' (Oyewumi 1997: xv). Thus she concluded her in these wise words:

> The present book has cleared the way for asking first-order, foundational questions about gender and difference in Yoruba society. It has shown that our interest in gender in Yorubaland cannot be divorced from the West's domination of both the constitution of the academy/scholarship and the socio-political and economic world spheres. Ultimately, this study raises the question of whether it is possible to have independent research questions and interests given the Western origins of most disciplines and continued Western dominance of the world, for now.
>
> (Oyewumi 1997: 179)

Rethinking thinking cannot be realized without decolonizing methodology and research. It is here that the impressive work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Bagele Chilisa (2012) become indispensable. Smith and Chilisa's work takes us into the depth of the 'sacred' field of research and methodology and they excavate the dirty colonial history embedded in the very activities of researching. While Smith brought the world of the indigenous people of New Zealand into the world of research, Chilisa brought the world of the indigenous people of Africa into the world of research. It was Smith (1999) who bold declared that 're-search' was the most 'dirtiest' word because it involved enquiring into the secrets and scared lives of those who were its objects.

Chilisa (2012: xv) departs from the questions of 'social justice' and 'human rights' arising from the very research process. The convergence of Smith and Chilisa's work is on the call for decolonizing research methodologies as a process towards achievement of epistemic freedom by those peoples such as women, minorities, indigenous people, and formerly colonized, whose knowledges remain marginalized. They both delved deeper into cultures, philosophies, histories and power dynamics embedded in research and methodology.

Chilisa's work highlighted how mainstream research conducted on those societies considered being 'non-Western' still ignored other ways of knowing and other knowledge systems. This means that the struggles of decolonizing and

indigenizing research methodologies form an important part of the broader struggles for epistemic freedom. Chilisa (2012: 3) argued:

> Social science research needs to involve spirituality in research, respecting communal forms of living that are non-Western and creating space for inquiries based on relational realities and forms of knowing that are predominant among non-Western Other/s still being colonized.

Chilisa formulated a useful definition of decolonization from the perspective of research:

> Decolonization is thus a process of conducting research in such a way that the worldviews of those who have suffered a long history of oppression and marginalization are given space to communicate from their frames of reference. It is a process that involves 'researching back' to question how the disciplines – psychology, education, history, anthropology, sociology, or science – through an ideology of Othering have described and theorized about the colonized Other, and refused to let the colonized Other name and know their frame of reference.
>
> (Chilisa 2012: 14)

Understood from a research and methodological perspective, decolonization entails 'deconstruction and reconstruction', that is, 'destroying what has wrongly been written – for instance, interrogating distortions of people's life experiences, negative labelling, deficit theorizing, genetically deficient or culturally deficient models that pathologizes the colonized Other – and retelling the stories of the past and envisioning the future' (see Smith 1999; Chilisa 2012: 17). At the centre of this process is 'recovery and discovery' (Chilisa 2012: 17).

Decolonization is also about attainment of 'self-determination and social justice', that is, seeking 'legitimacy for methodologies embedded in histories, experiences, ways of perceiving realities, and value systems' on the one hand and on the other, giving 'voice to the researched and moves from deficient-based orientation' to 'reinforcing practices that have sustained the lives of the researched' (Chilisa 2012: 17–18; see also Smith 1999). Chilisa's work articulated what she termed 'a postcolonial indigenous research paradigm' as 'a framework of belief systems that emanate from the lived experiences, values, and history of those belittled and marginalised by Euro-Western research paradigms' (Chilisa 2012: 19). To Chilisa (2012: 20): 'A postcolonial indigenous research is thus informed by relational ontologies, relational epistemologies, and relational axiology.'

Organization of the book

The core chapters of the book are constructed around major African intellectual and political thinkers. The emphasis is on how such intellectuals and political

thinkers advanced the struggles of epistemic freedom. Featured in this book are such African intellectuals and political thinkers as Cheikh Anta Diop, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Frantz Fanon, Dani W. Nabudere, Cathrine Odora Hoppers, Paulin J. Hountondji, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Bagele Chilisa, Jacques Depelchin, Mahmood Mamdani, Achille Mbembe, Samir Amin, Francis Nyamnjoh, Thandika Mkandawire, Issa Shivji, Peter Ekeh, Ali A. Mazrui, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Toyin Falola, Neville Alexander, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes, Amilcar Cabral, Kenneth Kaunda and Nelson Mandela among many others. Some are dealt with in the introductory chapter as they provide invaluable concepts usable in framing the debates on epistemic freedom and others are included in the core chapters of the book.

The choice of African thinkers was not random. It was determined by the relevance of their intellectual and political thought and interventions to the core themes of the book. The core themes of the book range from epistemic freedom, epistemological decolonization, decolonizing the university, Africanity, cognitive justice, national question, meaning of freedom, decolonial pedagogy to African futures. Therefore, such African thinkers as Edward Wilmot Blyden, who was among the first people to fight for 'an African university', could not be ignored in a book dealing with struggles for epistemic freedom. Mamdani's work which emphasized the historical legitimacy of Africa as a unit of analysis and revolted against writing African history by analogy is very important in understanding issues of epistemic freedom. Because epistemic and ontological questions are inextricably intertwined, the expansive archive of Ali A. Mazrui who persistently argued for the invention of open Africanity predicated on the 'triple heritage' and abolition of continental boundaries became very useful.

Who would ignore the useful work of Ngugi wa Thiong'o who has consistently written and fought for the decolonization of the African minds and Leopold Sedar Senghor who argued for a 'planetary negritude' as part of deprovincializing Africa? The global icon Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, who introduced a new politics founded on the 'will to live' rather that the 'will to power' as well as innovative conception of justice predicated on the survival of both perpetrators and victims, advanced our thinking on 'the political' in Africa. Oyeronke Oyewumi's decolonial feminist sociological work revolutionized our understanding of the problems of using Western thought in understanding African reality and demonstrated empirically and theoretically how the 'woman question' emerged as an imposition on such societies as the Yoruba of Nigeria. Bagele Chilisa's interventions in the 'sacred' field of methodology and research, boldly making a convincing case for use of indigenous research methodologies, cannot be ignored in any work concerned with epistemic freedom. Toyin Falola, that indefatigable African historian of our era who has researched, written and published in almost every aspect of African society and has directly contributed to the epistemic struggles of 'Africanizing knowledge', cannot fail to find a space in this book.

Because struggles for epistemic freedom are not confined to Africa, the insights of leading African scholars are opened up to dialogue with other thinkers mainly from the Global South and the African Diaspora such as Edward E. Said, William E. B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Molefi Asante, Lewis R. Gordon, Michael-Rolph Trouillot, Ashy Nandy, Paulo Freire, Julia Suárez-Krabbe, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Ramon Grosfoguel, Walter D. Mignolo, Anibal Quijano, Edouard Glissant, Enrique Dussel, Gurminder K. Bhambra, An Yuontae, Kuan-Hsing Chen and many others. The integration of this scholarly tradition is inevitable because the struggles for epistemic freedom are planetary and many African Diaspora intellectuals have contributed immensely to the advancement of black struggles for epistemic freedom. The work of such progressive Western scholars as Immanuel Wallerstein, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Amy Allen and others cannot be ignored in any book that deals with the question of epistemic freedom. This is because they continue the tradition of critique of Eurocentrism from inside Europe. But part of deprovincializing Africa entails avoiding pitfalls of epistemic xenophobia, nativism and ghettoization of knowledge that characterizes some of the previous studies that have sought to debunk the hegemony of Euromodernist epistemologies.

The book is organized into ten thematic chapters. This introductory chapter sets the decolonial tone for the book and opens the canvas on the meanings and debates on 'provincializing' and 'deprovincializing' as well as 'epistemic freedom' versus 'academic freedom'. Beyond the definitional scope, the chapter provides a detailed review of some of the key epistemic challenges facing Africa today. The chapter makes a case for the primacy of epistemic freedom within the trajectories of decolonization. Epistemic freedom is an essential pre-requisite for other freedoms (political, economic and cultural). While political, economic and epistemic decolonization were inextricably intertwined, the privileging of seeking the political kingdom that was emphasized in the decolonization of the twentieth century has proven to be problematic unless it is underpinned by strong epistemic freedom, which generates a necessary decolonial attitude and decolonial consciousness needed for sustenance of political and economic freedom.

The second chapter defines the key contours of the decolonization of twenty-first century (otherwise known as decoloniality), in the process introducing not only the key nomenclatures of decolonization but also fleshing out the idea of three empires (physical, commercial–military–non-territorial and metaphysical) that provoked three trajectories of decolonization (political, economic and epistemological). It proceeds to layout the three units of analysis (power, knowledge and being) that underpin and propel decoloniality. At the same time, the chapter brings into creative dialogue and complimentarity the decolonial ideas and concepts cascading from different epistemic sites such as Latin America, Caribbean, Asia, Africa and African Diaspora to enrich the epistemic struggles, which are taking a planetary course and scope. Thus, such concepts as subaltern, African existential philosophy, creolization, coloniality of being, coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge are brought into dialogue with African ones such as neo-colonialism,

dismemberment, re-membering, delinking, moving the centre, colonialism of special type, African personality, Negritude, Ethiopianism, Pan-Africanism and many others.

The third chapter addresses triple issues of ontology, epistemology and pedagogy. Its tone is philosophical as it articulates three ontological-oriented understandings of the 'human' (re-humanizing, humaning and posthumanism) and their interconnections with epistemology. It proceeds to flesh-out a decolonial attitude as a necessity for epistemological decolonization. Six dimensions of epistemological decolonization (provincializing Europe while deprovincializing Africa; Africanizing knowledge; decolonial critique of existing knowledge; adding to the existing knowledge; ecologies of knowledges and the problematic nativist approach to knowledge) are distilled and explained. It proceeds to explain the necessity of decolonial pedagogy. This approach enables the chapter to delve deeper into challenges of decolonizing teaching and learning while laying-out a re-education/re-socialization programme predicated on decolonization of the very normative foundations of dominant critical theory so as to 'rethink thinking itself' and unleashing the painstaking process of 'learning to unlearn in order to relearn' as a key and necessary response to colonial desocialization and dehumanizing processes.

The fourth chapter is focused on the important theme of reconstitution of the political as a decolonial move. Can't we begin with a decolonial appreciation of how the Biblical shift from the 'old testament' to the 'new testament' with Jesus Christ of Nazareth leading the offensive against old Judaic/Abrahamic/Roman Christendom's inflexible laws and traditions as the key symbolic if not ecclesiastic representation of a reconstitution of a new order entails? Eurocentric hegemonic and imperial thought spoiled the very constitution of the political in a fundamental way. The process of spoliation of the very constitution of the political involved fetishism of power, which culminated in the lodging of the paradigms of difference and war as well as the will to power into the centre of the very idea of politics.

Chapter 4 highlights what can be gained through a decolonial reconstitution of the political. It launches reclamations of the intellectual and political thoughts of such leading African thinkers and freedom fighters as Patrice Lumumba, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Amilcar Cabral, Kenneth Kaunda and Nelson Mandela that are constitutive of the decolonial/anti-colonial archive. These leading African politicians-cum-intellectuals contributed to the transformation of the 'constitution of the political' from the 'will to power' and the paradigm of war *(homo polemos)* to the 'will to live'. Mandela in particular emerges as a philosopher of liberation, which is planetary in its reach as it turned-upside down such standing conception of politics as the 'will to power', and worship at the altar of war (paradigm of war).

Mandela's anti-apartheid politics inaugurated a decolonial shift from the Nuremberg template of transitional justice predicated on criminal prosecutions to new political justice which privileged political transformation of societies emerging from war. While Mandela's vision and ideas are today facing their most difficult testing times in South Africa, they continue to be positively embraced by many

as progressive and innovative. Chapter 4 posits that a combination of global imperial designs and white South Africans who were never prepared to share their colonial loot failed Mandela rather than Mandela failing to lead South Africa into a better future. What hit Mandela's conception of politics was its dependence on the goodness of human beings, including those who had been irreparably corrupted by colonialism and apartheid to the extent of falling from humanity itself.

The fifth chapter is specifically focused on the topical theme of invention and reinvention of Africa by Africans themselves as a key aspect of epistemic freedom and contribution to deprovincialization of Africa. It underscores the identity known as 'Africanity' as a trans-space, trans-time, trans-geographical and trans-cultural phenomenon. The discussion is centred on the expansive archive of Ali. A. Mazrui. Three key areas of intervention – the invention of Africa, contested meaning of Africanity, and the concomitant complex question of the African condition frame the chapter. As part of Mazrui's contribution towards deprovincializing Africa, he introduced the concepts of 'triple heritage' and the idea of the abolition of the Red Sea in his push for a new identity called 'Afrabia'. At the economic level, Mazrui advanced the idea of decolonizing modernity through five processes of: indigenization, domestication, diversification, horizontal interpenetration and vertical counter-penetration.

The sixth chapter is focused on the contributions of the Ugandan political scientist Mahmood Mamdani to the intellectual and academic tasks of rethinking Africa. Mamdani's intellectual and academic work set out to establish 'the historical legitimacy of Africa as a unit of analysis' and to transcend colonial historiographical practice of writing African history 'by analogy'. What is captured here are five contributions to rethinking thinking on Africa by Mamdani. The first is his decolonial approach to the study of Africa, which privileged internal historical dynamics. The second is his analysis of how colonial power worked and how it impinged on and shaped African resistance and generated postcolonial dilemmas. The third is his thesis on how colonial rule invented very problematic political identities which are today haunting contemporary Africa's nation-building and state-making processes. The fourth is his concept of 'actually existing civil society' that is opposed to the abstract/programmatic conceptions of civil society in Africa. The fifth is his rearticulation of transitional justice beyond the traditional post-1945 Nuremberg template. The significance of Mamdani's academic and intellectual interventions is that they speak directly and consistently to the long-standing question of locus of historicization and theorization of Africa so as to liberate of knowledge from the snares of extraversion and coloniality.

The seventh chapter focuses on understanding pre-colonial indigenous knowledge systems and the education systems they enabled. The case study of Ethiopian indigenous education and the Ethiopian indigenous education system is very important because Ethiopia is the only African country that managed to successfully repel and resist military colonial conquest and direct colonial administration. But at the same time Ethiopia provides an ironic if not tragic situation of a country that was never colonized but progressively colonized itself with foreign institutions

and ideas while dismissing its rich indigenous knowledge and even indigenous schools. The chapter continues to articulate the long-standing but unfinished struggles for an African university while at the same time making sense of the African decolonial efforts aimed at reconstitution of the university across time. A triple genealogy of the 'university in Africa' emerges: namely the pre-colonial African/Arab/Muslim intellectual tradition, the Western imperial/colonial modernity and the anti-colonial nationalist liberatory developmentalism predicated on the idea of one country one university emerges poignantly in this chapter. Conceptually, the chapter locates the struggles for an 'African university' within the broader context of African struggles for epistemic freedom, the search for modern African identity and autonomous African development. Its importance lies in careful historicization of the emergence and trajectories of higher education institutions in Africa. This task is necessary at a time of resurgent demands for decolonization of universities in the twenty-first century, proving beyond doubt the incompleteness of the African decolonial project.

The eighth chapter shifts the focus to the important case study of South Africa and is specifically concerned with the unresolved national question. The rich work of Neville Alexander and his wide-ranging ideas provided the stepping-stone and ideal entry point into the complexities of the national question in South Africa. What the chapter provides is a deep historicization of the national question, tracing it from its pre-colonial lineage that is often ignored and consistently highlighting the areas of divergence and conflict in the various imaginations of post-apartheid South Africa. It concludes with a reflection on idea of South Africa as a difficult liberal experiment in which the triple imperatives of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), decolonization and liberal constitutionalism are in deep tension.

South Africa is chosen as a case study because it is today one of the highly volatile sites of multiple struggles including that spearheaded by students which demands decolonization in a country which was said to have gained political independence in 1910. South Africa is located in a strategic region of Southern Africa and is one of those sites that were imagined on the image of Europe despite its location at the Southern-most tip of Africa. It is, therefore, important to understand the very idea of South Africa and why it has been consistently generating so many conflicts. The national question is framed by the broader intersecting context of modernity, colonialism, decolonization and postcolonialism. The national question is a perennial challenge in Africa in general and South Africa in particular. It haunted colonialism (as the native question), African nationalism and decolonization (as a racial and colonial question), and 'postcolonialism' (as nation-building and state-making). It has re-emerged today as constitutive element of epistemological decolonization.

The ninth chapter turns to the most recent struggles for decolonization of South African universities in particular. The chapter locates and theorizes the Rhodes Must Fall movements within a broader context of a broader epistemic and systemic crisis engulfing the modern world. Thus it provides details on the three

phases of African anti-colonial protests of 1950s and 1960s; the anti-austerity and limits of reform protests of 1980s and 1990s, and the current 'Africa Uprisings' as it opens the canvas for contextualizing specific South African context mediated by the 'paradigm of difference' and practices of 'impossibility of co-presence'. As the last outpost of the empire to shed off juridical colonialism known as apartheid, South Africa is indeed racing against time in its attempts to decolonize power, knowledge and being.

The university in South Africa became a key site of decolonial struggles in 2015. What began as Rhodes Must Fall targeting Cecil John Rhodes's statue at the University of Cape Town (UCT) quickly expanded into broader demands for cognitive justice, change of curriculum, decommissioning of offensive colonial/apartheid symbols, right to free, quality and relevant education, cultural freedom, and overall change of the very idea of the university from its Western pedigree ('university in Africa') to 'African university'. Even more importantly the demands of Rhodes Must Fall not only expanded to the centre of the empire (Britain) where the students at the premier Oxford University also protested against the presence of Rhodes's statue at Oriel College. When read together with such other movements as 'Why is My Curriculum White?' in the United Kingdom and 'Black Lives Matter' in the United States of America, Rhodes Must Fall became part of planetary struggles for epistemic freedom and life itself.

The tenth chapter pulls together the lines of arguments raised in this book and grapples with the difficult question of how can Africans create African futures within a modern world system structured by global coloniality as it concludes the book. What are restated are the interconnected and intertwined challenges of coloniality of power, knowledge and being as constitutive elements of global coloniality that makes it difficult for Africans to create their own futures. It highlights that an analysis of both the constitution and workings of modern global power is an important intellectual task because global coloniality has direct implications on African initiatives aimed at creating African futures. No African futures without epistemic freedom. Decolonization of the twenty-first century compared to that of the twentieth century has to gesture into the future that is predicated on '6-ds': deracialization, detribalization, depatriachization, decorporatization, deimperialization and democratization.

Conclusion

Indeed the whole world is experiencing the deep and catastrophic effects of double crisis. The crisis is both systemic and epistemic. The epistemic part has led to the reopening of the basic epistemological question and set in motion planetary epistemic struggles that are simultaneously unmasking what has been concealed by Eurocentric epistemology while searching for new knowledges capable of taking the world out of the epistemic crisis. The planetary nature of the epistemic and systemic crisis manifested itself recently in the form of what became known as the 'global financial crisis'. It took the world by surprise, including Europe and North

America who have paraded themselves as alert to anything that could potentially disturb the legacy of capitalist modernity. The crisis destabilised the epistemological confidence of the Euro-North American world. Modern institutions such as the banks, stock markets and the entire global financial system nearly lost credibility.

The current environmental/ecological crises rocking the modern world are another indicator of the epistemic crisis as well as the systemic crises that remind us of the catastrophic failures and vulnerabilities of the modern world system that has been caught off guard. What the world is facing is a broad 'civilizational crisis' which loudly proclaims that modernity has produced many modern problems for which it has no modern solutions. Consequently, it would be naïve for peoples of the Global South in general, and Africa in particular, to continue looking to Europe and North America for usable knowledge, relevant ideas, critical theories and solutions to modern problems. This is why this book calls for intensification of African struggles for epistemic freedom as a way of rehabilitating the entire world from the current systemic and epistemic crisis.

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