

## ON THE QUEST FOR EPISTEMIC JUSTICE IN AFRICA: UNPACKING THE METHODIC CRISIS

<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ajct.v4i1.3>

**Submission: March 13, 2024**      **Accepted: July 20, 2024**

Akinpelu OYEKUNLE

Department of Philosophy and Systematic Theology

University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Email: [Foyekuaa@unisa.ac.za](mailto:Foyekuaa@unisa.ac.za)

ORCID No: 0000-0002-1697-7233

### Abstract<sup>1</sup>

The paper interrogates the methodical attempts in the quest for epistemic justice/re-centring in the Global South, focusing on Africa. The paper notes some of the intellectual dilemmas or methodic crises that African scholars encounter in their quest for epistemic justice. With the conversational method, the paper interrogates the methodic crises in the quest for epistemic justice and engages with the power dynamic of the epistemological silencing of African knowledge forms. The paper argues that the power dynamics of epistemological silencing created a system of epistemic annihilation of the colonised people. It further contends that epistemological silencing enhances the dearth and death of significant development of African indigenous knowledge forms. Consequently, epistemic annihilation necessitates the quest for epistemic freedom. The paper concludes that an epistemic re-centring process that is void of the methodic crisis is imperative for the liberation, growth, emancipation, and development of African Societies.

**Keywords:** Africa, Epistemic Justice, Epistemological Silencing, Knowledge Forms, Methodic Crisis

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is taken from my PhD thesis, “An Exploration of an Indigenous African Epistemic Order: In Search of a Contemporary African Environmental Philosophy,” [Department of Philosophy, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa], January 2021, Unpublished. However, I have revised it to suit the present paper.

## Introduction

One of the consequences of the hegemonic Eurocentric epistemic process<sup>2</sup> is making the need for African epistemic justice or epistemic re-centring a necessity. The demand for epistemic justice in Africa arises from the presence of an undesirable condition of epistemic denial, which is marked by the restriction, dominance, or suppression of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) (see MIGNOLO and WALSH 2018; MITOVA 2020; 2022; NDLOVU-GATSHENI 2018; 2021; POSHOLI 2020; RAMOSE 2020). Thus, in the bid to combat epistemic injustice against AIKS, African scholars are challenged by the lack of independent construction of indigenous knowledge forms due to epistemic alienation. Thus, in their pursuit of epistemic justice, Africans face a conundrum regarding preserving their indigenous epistemological frameworks.

To interrogate these conceptual challenges identified as “methodic crises”, the paper is mapped into four sections. In the first section, I problematise the experience of epistemic injustices with regard to African knowledge forms. Indeed, espousing the instances of the silencing or destruction of AIKS or Indigenous Knowledge Forms (IKF) is pivotal to the discussion in the paper. This is because the reality of epistemic injustices makes the quest for epistemic justice or epistemic re-centring a necessity. The next section answers the question of why there is a need for epistemic justice. The subsequent section identifies and engages with two of the methodic crises associated with the quest for re-centring epistemic justice and emancipation in Africa. These methodic crises are, first, the verification and/or affirmation of indigenous knowledge via the lens of a Western paradigm of knowledge and, second, the deification of indigenous ideas as sacrosanct. While the former is the uncritical employment of Western epistemic categories within the indigenous thoughts, the latter is the tendency to condemn African IKS to the schemes of nativism and ethnocentric colouration. The paper argues

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<sup>2</sup> The Eurocentric epistemic process captures the Western-centric view that rationality is unique to the Western world. Non-Western conceptual frameworks, ontological realities, and humanities were seen as irrational, unsuitable, and non-existent. Several scholars have criticised the Eurocentric epistemic process for its inherent illogicality. Some of these scholars include Toyin Falola (2002), Mogobe Ramose (2002a,b), Doyo Guyo (2011), Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007, 2014), Gloria Emeagwali (2014), Kole A. Jimoh (2018), Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, 2021), and Akinpelu A. Oyekunle (2021).

that these two methodic crises are inimical to the success of conceptualising any African epistemic activity.

In the fourth section, the paper envisions an appropriate attempt in the quest for epistemic justice. Here, it is argued that the quest for an epistemic re-centring should be fashioned out of an African epistemic consideration that would not only deconstruct Eurocentric epistemological ideology but would also not be grounded on African ethnocentric hegemony. The paper concludes that the growth and development of any society is dependent on an epistemological process devoid of methodic crises. This is because such an epistemic process can propel society beyond the pursuit of self-actualisation, ethnocentrism, cultural idiosyncrasies, materialism, and the over-exploitation of human and natural resources.

### **Epistemic Injustice on African Knowledge Forms**

Emboldened by the idea of European superiority is the epistemic project of universalising Western viewpoints as the standard by which other cultural worldviews are judged to be viable, genuine, or legitimate. In this light, the Eurocentric epistemic process can be seen as the epistemic method that promotes Western epistemological systems as essential and a model for non-European epistemologies. In other words, the Eurocentric epistemic process forcefully pushes Western thought as ‘the given’ epistemic heritage with which to validate all other cultures.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos described the illogicality of this line of reasoning that supports the Eurocentric epistemic process as “Western-centric abyssal thinking” (SANTOS 2007, 45). Elsewhere, he shows that the Western-centric epistemic position results in the epistemicide of indigenous knowledge—the eradication or systemic erasure of a people’s knowledge forms (see SANTOS 2014). Similarly, Isaac Ehaleoye Ukpokolo (2018, 3) has shown that Western-centric epistemic process leads to the “fracturing [of] African indigenous knowledge system[s]”. This means that the superimposition and suppression of African epistemology is a “long-term consequence of modernity, enslavement and colonialism, [which has made] African people [to] have been reproduced as [instruments<sup>3</sup>] in a Eurocentric

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<sup>3</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) here employs the term ‘agents’ in denoting Africans. However, it should be noted that, the treatment of Africans through slavery and

history” (NDLOVU-GATSHENI 2018, 1). It is largely to fit African conceptual schemes and intellectual engagements into the hegemonic and supposedly unitary episteme of the Western thought system. Such biased epistemic reasoning describes the distortion of the African epistemic process, resulting in the fragmentation and deterioration of IKS via deliberate degradation and suppression of knowledge (2018, 10).

On the whole, a knowledge-generating process that is centred on Eurocentric perspectives and experiences is often accompanied by the repression of IKS, resulting in a deliberate exclusion of non-Western epistemologies. This is because the operation of such an epistemic process rests on the denial of the rationality of Africans. The depiction of Africa as a continent of persons without rational abilities for engaging with their existential realities, is a “denial of humanity [that] automatically disqualified [Africa] from epistemic virtue” (NDLOVU-GATSHENI 2018, 3). To show the Western prejudicial thought that Africans are incapable of epistemic productions – an idea that translates to a direct denial of the Africans’ humanity – Mogobe Ramose argues:

Asking whether African Philosophy is possible or exists... pertains more to the capability of the African to philosophise. In other words, it is doubtful that Africans can philosophise. If Africans were exposed to philosophy, they could not cope with its requirements. This is because, by their nature, it is impossible for Africans to do philosophy. In this way, the question assumes an ontological character: it calls into question the humanity of the Africans. The question is thus another way of saying that it is doubtful if Africans are wholly and truly human beings. (RAMOSE 2002a, 4)

The systematic othering of non-Western epistemologies, structured on the indefensible bias that European existence is the true human existence, became the legitimate right for the global conquest and colonisation of non-European indigenous cultures, including African cultures (RAMOSE 2002a, 1–3; SEREQUEBERHAN 2002, 64–67).

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colonialism is such that Africans were not regarded as agents of any history including their own.

As such, Africans were subjugated and degraded to a sub-human group that lacks epistemic capability and, thus, requires Western tutelage to function intellectually. Santos clearly captured this when he noted that “it is during the heydays of colonialism that Africa was re-invented as a site of darkness bereft of any knowledge beyond superstitions” (SANTOS 2014, 19). Furthermore, the Eurocentric epistemic process also ensued as a systemic othering of IKS because – as an ideological system – it aims to distort IKS via acts of colonial genocides, the appropriation of historical narratives and the deliberate erasure of knowledge: “epistemicide” (SANTOS 2014, 238). In addition, the Eurocentric epistemic process goal is, among other things, the eradication of the language of indigenous people. Hence, the organised annihilation of IKS and, by extension, AIKS. The annihilation of AIKS could be seen in the lack of significant development in African indigenous knowledge on the continent.

The precarious state of Africa, under the continuous suppression of its knowledge forms, which culminated in her colonisation and subjected her to power and knowledge control, eventually placed the West at an advantage. Since within the modern world’s political cum economic governance, political and epistemic domination are inseparable. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) further notes that the emergence of modernity in Euro-North cum American-centric systems engenders the maintenance of unequal global power dynamics. Such abysmal power control is significantly influenced and maintained by the control over the domains of knowledge production, cultivation, and dissemination.

Modernity, the prevailing paradigmatic framework for social and political ideas and social engagements, carries two essential notions: “rupture and difference” (BHAMBRA 2007, 1). Modernity encapsulates a chronological split, delineating clear distinctions between a conventional, rural past and the contemporary, industrial present, and a fundamental distinction that separates Europe from the *other parts* of the world. Eurocentric epistemic processes can thus be seen to take root in the attempt to globalise Eurocentric modernity by differentiating it from the rest and through the rupturing of IKS.

The assumption of difference and rupture creates a stance for the imperial reasoning of the West, wherein Europe is empowered with epistemic capabilities and is, thus, justified to rupture the ‘other’ so-called sub-human category cultures of the world that are assumed

to lack conceptual epistemic schemes. Thus, even in the so-called post-colonial era, a series of attempts are being made to brand the indigenous cultures of Africa as uncivilised, irrational, undemocratic, illogical and erroneous (BIAKOLO 2002, 10–18). While it could be said of the African colonised population that their AIKS – which existed before the advent of colonialism – was forcefully suppressed by the colonial masters imposing their way of life over the locals, the same cannot be completely said of contemporary post-colonial African societies. This is because the forceful distortion has been replaced by subtle and psychological processes that almost unnoticeably erode indigenous knowledge systems.

Jimoh, making a historical assertion, notes that, “the people [contemporary African society] were socialised into believing that their indigenous practices and ways of doing things were wrong” (2018, 16). The gradual process of distortion, suppression, and breaking of AIKS started seamlessly with a series of veiled methods that undervalue Africa’s cultural heritages. As the Western method of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ becomes perpetuated as the ideal on a worldwide scale, it contributes to the devaluation of African cultural and intellectual heritages. Edward Shizha (2013) notes that technological advancements in communication, shifts in economic and political influence, and the establishment of Western knowledge, skills, and cultural values – as the idyllic – are the tools of globalisation. These tools engender a covert diminishing of African indigenous heritages and the unavoidable consequence of making Africans find little value in their IKS. The quest for epistemic justice becomes essential in light of the epistemic injustice explored above and the illogicality that attends the Eurocentric epistemic process.

### **Why Epistemic Justice or Re-centring?**

The quest for African epistemic freedom is made necessary by the existential realities of the hegemonic Eurocentric epistemic process. Thus, the bid to combat the Eurocentric epistemic process led to the struggle against the gradual and continual suppression of African knowledge systems. In other words, the demand for epistemic freedom in Africa arises as a response to an unfavourable state of epistemic suppression, marked by the repression, dominance, or clampdown on AIKS. This situation was captured by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, 4) as the politics of knowledge in the world that is

marked with “continuous gauging, and limiting the growth of knowledge in Africa through research management to which Africa is struggling for epistemic expression, liberty self-determination and independence”. The quest for epistemic justice entails a state of struggle against the gradual and continual suppression of African knowledge systems. To quote Santos (2014, 238) again, the “Western-centric abyssal thinking” due to the hegemonic Eurocentric epistemic process makes the African struggle for epistemic freedom imperative. This struggle is aimed at combating the distortion of IKS at the hands of the Eurocentric epistemic process.

Africans have challenges due to Eurocentrism and the lingering effects of colonialism in the current era of globalisation, hindering their ability to engage freely in intellectual pursuits and establish their epistemic methodology. The pursuit of epistemic justice is deeply rooted in the ongoing confinement of knowledge creation in Africa under Euro-North American colonial power structures (NDLOVU-GATSHENI 2018, 8). Therefore, epistemic freedom is considered an epistemological necessity for Africans and does not necessitate any special arguments. Thus, in justifying the African struggle for epistemic freedom, Ndlovu-Gatsheni is of the view that:

Epistemic freedom is about democratising ‘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 decolonisation struggle because it enables the emergence of the necessary critical decolonial consciousness... In the constitution of political, economic, cultural and epistemological decolonisation, epistemic freedom should form the base because it deals with the fundamental issues of critical consciousness building, which are essential pre-requisite for both political and economic freedom. (NDLOVU-GATSHENI 2018, 4-5)

In light of the need to counteract ideological distortions brought about by the structural and epistemological impact of colonialism, the quest for epistemic freedom becomes apparent. This quest that entails

repositioning Africa as an autonomous and rational participant in the world's intellectual framework requires addressing epistemological concerns. Indeed, in order to fight against what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, 3) calls the "coloniality of knowledge" or "the invasion of the mental universe of the colonised world", the repositioning exercise is necessary.

Several works have been put forth that propose epistemic freedom for Africa as a solution to the problem of knowledge coloniality. These include "Conceptual Decolonisation" by Kwasi Wiredu (1995; 2004); "Decolonisation of the Mind" and "Globelectics" by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993; 2007; 2012); "Grammaticality of Language" by Adeshina Afolayan (2006); "Conversational Philosophy" by Jonathan O. Chimakonam (2015; 2017a); "Epistemological Decolonisation" by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018); "Struggle for Reason in Africa" and "Ubuntu" by Ramose (2002a; 2002b; 2009; 2020); and "Indigenous African Epistemic Order" and "Conversational Decoloniality" by Akinpelu A. Oyekunle (2021) and (2022) to mention but a few. These scholars are on the frontline, battling the politics of epistemology by attempting to deal with the challenges and effects of the destruction of knowledge, languages, cultural dominance, oppression and isolation of AIKS.

It is important to recognise the significant burden involved in challenging colonial knowledge systems and amplifying Africa's epistemic perspective in global intellectual discourse. Scholars frequently become combative and polemic when addressing epistemic injustice related to the fragmentation and repression of IKS due to the alienation resulting from the colonial experience<sup>4</sup>. Regarding the process of alienation, wa Thiong'o (2012) maintained that it is a constant procedure of estrangement from one's foundational self and a continuous process of evaluating oneself through external

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<sup>4</sup> Here, the ideological essentialism that is implicit in the rejectionist perspective that Ngugi Wa Thiong'o takes is a well-known example that comes to mind when discussing the Language Question in African literature and philosophy. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in his book "Decolonisation of the Mind," expressed the idea that for decolonisation to have any significance, it is necessary for Africans to reject the use of European languages in their cognitive processes. For more information, please refer to the books "Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms" (Thiong'o 1993) and "Decolonisation of the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature" (Thiong'o 1986).



perspectives or the lenses of an outsider. The hallmark of this kind of estrangement is a disconnection from one's own identity, both intellectually and socially, and a coercive confinement to the fictitious reality of a "given" self.

Also, this estrangement is made more worrisome for African scholars in their intellectual striving for epistemic autonomy/re-centring due to the ensuing intellectual tension that is associated with it. This tension is founded in the politics of knowledge ushered in by the abysmal power control of Eurocentrism. Consequently, Western knowledge, values, epistemologies, and worldviews, which are frequently imparted as universal values and scientific truths, infiltrated the African academy. Thus, in the bid to combat epistemic injustice against AIKS, African scholars, because of epistemic alienation, are challenged by the lack of independent construction of indigenous knowledge forms. The preservation of epistemic forms that are indigenous to the people even in the strive for epistemic re-centring presents a dilemma. The next section explores the methodic crisis that this dilemma creates for AIKS. It is essential to make this exploration because doing so justifies the consideration of the African knowledge process that is free of methodic crisis.

### **Methodic Crisis in the quest for Epistemic Justice**

In this section, I shall expound upon a few of the subsequent obstacles encountered by African scholars in their pursuit of epistemic justice or re-centring. The assemblage of these obstacles shall be called the "methodic crisis." Two methodic crises are addressed here: (1) the assimilation of Western epistemological paradigms into the validation of indigenous experience. (2) The deification of indigenous ideas as sacred. It will be demonstrated that the success of conceptualising any African epistemic endeavour is impeded by these two methodological fallacies. The African people, with fragmented epistemic heritages, utilise the pursuit of epistemic justice as a means to achieve intellectual liberation and emancipation. Therefore, it is essential to intellectually refocus African epistemic forms to avoid the repercussions of the methodic crisis.

#### *1. Methodic Crisis One: Validating AIKS with Western Paradigm*

The African scholar is faced with the challenge of adopting the Western paradigm to assess the logic and legitimacy of African

knowledge systems. In order to fight the intellectual denigration of African indigenous knowledge systems from the Eurocentric epistemic perspective, Western paradigms are often used as a benchmark for such activities. One of the causes for this methodological problem is the mistaken belief that the African epistemic process can only be validated and seen as relevant if it is presented as approximations to Western categories and thinking (JIMOH 2018, 6). The position underlying this technique is based on the premise that, in order to establish the presence of reason and the potential of a functioning knowledge system in Africa, conceptual categorisations should be displayed in Western schemes. Ramose notes the apparent injustice that this type of methodic crisis promotes when he argues that:

[T]here is no moral basis nor pedagogical justification for the Western epistemological paradigm to retain primacy and dominance in decolonised Africa. The independent review and construction of knowledge in the light of the unfolding African experience is not only a vital goal—it is also an act of liberation. (RAMOSE 2002, 4)

This methodic crisis poses the challenge of writing or speaking from a defensive stance to African scholars. This is because of the necessity to address intellectual tension and epistemic alienation that characterise the fight for epistemic freedom.

In other words, arising from the struggle is the defensiveness, dissipation of bitterness or aggression in the responses and ideas put forward to combat epistemic injustice. One may wonder about the reason for such an emotional outpouring in African-oriented research. The answer is that academic research in Africa has been shaped by an outsider-created reality and epistemology imposed on the continent, as well as by conflicts with imperialism, capitalism's power, and knowledge generated for Africa by others. The African intelligentsia, in their attempts to penetrate into the contemporary world, according to Falola (2001), are confined to writing from a perpetually 'given' and fragmented modernity. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) highlights that defensive avenues in African philosophical thought have significance. These paths serve to contextualise Africa's pursuit of epistemic freedom within the framework of struggle, a struggle that seeks to

break and put an end to the model of the world that the coloniser creates, as well as the ensuing epistemology from such models.

Unfortunately for African scholars, the coloniser's epistemic model has become such a 'given' that not employing it renders his or her works lacking in substance. Thus, African scholars are ironically burdened by the methodological crisis of the employment of Western analytical categories in the epistemic decolonisation process. Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997, x) places this crisis in a clearer perspective by noting that "Western conceptual schemes have become so widespread that almost all scholarship, even by Africans, utilises them unquestioningly." The dominant Western experience has been turned into an intellectual paradigm with a necessarily functional foundation that must be a basis for all meaningful research. To this end, Oyewumi (1997, 87) further argued that "historically and currently, the creation, constitution and production of knowledge have remained the privilege of the West." According to her observation, this is the case even in African studies. On this ground, Ramose calls for a radical overhaul of the whole epistemological paradigm underlying the current educational system in Africa.

For several reasons, the method of validating African worldviews through or with the Western paradigm is erroneous. Firstly, it strengthens the concept of reason being disavowed in Africa. If African rationality is judged based on Western perceptions and concepts, then it implies that the capacity to generate original ideas rooted in the native conceptual framework is severely deficient. Secondly, rationality is one of the essential features or expressions of humanity – regardless of race, colour, or geography. Thus, to make the viability and authenticity of African epistemology dependent on its proximity to Western epistemic processes is not only to deny rationality to Africans but also to take away their humanity.

Thirdly, validating AIKS by its measurement to the Western paradigm is a product of an unequal comparison between Western and African epistemic processes, which amounts to a distortion of AIKS. One of the characteristics of such distortions is the denial of indigenously African logical reasoning.

The fourth point is that there are uniquely African ways of inquiry into African epistemic processes, and attempting to force the Western paradigm on the indigenous knowledge system of Africa in any way is a denial of that fact. The Western paradigm's use of

distinctive African conceptual schemes as a measure of logical validity is further emphasised by the fact that, as shown in the texts discussed above, there may be inquiry techniques that use them to validate indigenous epistemic claims.

Lastly, a Western-justified epistemic method for an African thought process is an attempt to unquestionably reinforce Eurocentric efforts at universalising Western thought processes. This researcher will thus opine that an unquestioned employment of foreign i.e. Western, Asian etc, analytical categories or methods in the presentation of African conceptual schemes may be intellectually counterproductive. As such, uncritical employment would inhibit the production of genuine ideas that are rooted in African intellectual heritage.

## *2. Methodic Crisis Two: Deification of Indigenous knowledge forms (IKF) as Sacrosanct*

The second methodic crisis is equally worrisome. This crisis is problematic because it is committed in a desperate attempt to evade the implementation of Western conceptual frameworks in categorising IKS. In other words, attempting to avoid using Western categories or conceptual schemes in the portrayal of African epistemic processes often leads to an inadvertent overprotection of the indigenous knowledge system against critical questions. The dilemma associated with this method is in its subtle nature of ensnaring credulous or unsuspecting theorists into its trap. This trap is the tendency to treat indigenous ideas and theories as adequate in logic, inevitably true and flawless. As a result, IKSs are typically seen as arcane, obscure, and impervious to evaluation (OLUWOLE 2015, 45–47).

The second methodical issue is more difficult because African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) or indigenous knowledge forms (IKF) when unquestionably accepted as absolute truths, may become a breeding ground for nativism and uncritical ethnocentrism. Thus, making futile attempts to decolonise epistemology. Furthermore, this approach may hinder AIKS/IKF from engaging in self-critical review, development, and sustainability. Moreover, it has the potential to make AIKS unappealing to those on the outside and make it impossible for inside stakeholders to understand it as a

planned and suitable epistemic procedure for addressing modern challenges.

Obtainable from the idea of IKF is that for its uniqueness and the fact that individuals are accustomed to seeing them as products of their culture, there is a danger that a state of undue attachment often takes place. With such a state of attachment to cultural realities, IKF may be taken or seen as sacrosanct. Such an attachment is the reinvention of a hegemonic thought that is structured on the imaginary and weak scaffoldings of ethnocentric assumptions. Paulin J. Hountondji (2002) cautioned against this attachment when he argued that intellectual and political freedom for Africa requires the re-evaluation of the previously worked-out status quo, the previously established paradigms, and the previously created canons of thinking.

Exceptionally noted here is the caution to be able 'to learn anew'. That is, one ought to learn to be critical of known indigenous facts to relearn new ideas about the culture for contemporaneous intellectual engagement and sustainable development. Implicit herein is the warning not to get carried away with the frenzies of showcasing the epistemic worth of the Indigenous African knowledge forms, thus becoming uncritical and irrationally accommodating of all native thoughts as sacred and inviolable. Taking indigenous thought as untouchable would thus be a prelude to an ethnocentric orientation.

What is instructive from the consideration of ethnocentrism in the postulations or presentations of AIKS is the idea of intellectual caution. It must be noted that what Oyewumi (1997) queries were the 'unquestioned' use of Western analytical categories. Additionally, on the call for caution against the uncritical assimilation of Western categories into Indigenous Knowledge Forms, Ndlovu-Gatsheni asserts that:

What is needed is to take the struggle for decolonisation 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. (NDLOVU-GATSHENI 2018, 26)

It is clear here that while it is required to be critical of indigenous ideas to divest them of undue deification and ethnocentric tendencies, the same must be done for Western epistemic forms.

### **Conversational Decoloniality as a Tool for Epistemic Justice/re-centring**

The decolonial perspective, known as “conversational decoloniality” (CD) (OYEKUNLE, 2022) is founded upon the “conversational method of philosophy” developed by Chimakonam (2015, 2017a, 2017b, & 2018). From the perspective of conversational decoloniality, an intellectual contribution directed at refocusing attention on Africa’s epistemic crises is not only achieved, but such output has the potential to be deemed devoid of the methodic crises. CD reiterates the 3R-UC themes of conversational thinking for an African, decolonial or epistemic re-centring attempts without falling into the traps of the methodic crisis. The combined themes of 3Rs – Re-tractment, Re-engagement and Re-leasement coupled with the UC – Unfoldment and Coverance – were adopted as frameworks for guidelines for a decolonial agenda termed conversational decoloniality (OYEKUNLE 2022). In this paper, the highlighted CD guideline becomes a veritable tool in re-centring African epistemic forms.

Looking through the themes of CD, it could be noted that CD reiterates the need for intellectual caution in the quest for epistemic justice. Such caution is required to avoid fixation on the precolonial originary. As the fixation on precolonial originary makes the struggle for epistemic freedom be smeared by self-destructive tendencies, Re-tracement, for instance, opens the vista of enquiry for a creative struggle in the quest for epistemic justice as it encourages a re-creation of indigenous knowledge forms with a critical lens. This is beneficial to the epistemic re-centring project, as it avoids the second methodic crisis. In contrast, the concept of Re-engagement points to a synergistic interaction between oneself and other participants within the realm of intellect. Thus, the re-engagement motif encompasses the expansion of current knowledge horizons and the critical reconstruction of pre-existing concepts. The re-engagement theme allows for the avoidance of both the first and second methodic crisis since the process of epistemic freedom is engaged and re-engaged in a manner that dispels intellectual anachronisms and destructive struggles (CHIMAKONAM 2015).

Meanwhile, the re-tracement and re-engagement themes advocate the critical reconstruction and opening up of new ideas, thus giving sound epistemic voices to the agency of African epistemic forms. The Re-leasement theme, on the other hand, envisions the contextualisation of reasoning in the African intellectual thought process. This not only gives an intellectual emancipatory voice to the epistemic agency of African knowledge forms. It also deconstructs the entrapments of the African epistemic process in the forms and categories of Western epistemic processes (OYEKUNLE 2022). Indeed, the re-leasement theme is necessarily apt for epistemic justice or freedom because it proffers a systematic and methodical approach to empowering the voiceless, identifying the invisible, and giving recognition to the unrecognised.

As an intellectual antidote to the two identified clogs in the wheel for epistemic emancipation, justice and re-centring of African indigenous knowledge forms, the UC themes become essentially imperative. The UC themes, Unfoldment and Coverance, both account for the continuous availability of new concepts, ideas and theories from the African space and place. The UC themes also encourage a reconstructive recovery of indigenous knowledge forms from Western-centric thought processes. Thus, the quest for epistemic freedom in Africa could be made free of validating or authenticating IKF with Western categories and paradigms. Indeed, the identified methodic crisis earlier engaged could be seen to dissipate by beaming the searchlight of the Conversational Decoloniality (CD) stance on it. Thus, the African epistemic agency could be expressed as void of the superimposition of alien categories and cultural anachronism or nativism. The CD becomes instructive here as it allows for the achievability of the dual stance of the decolonial agenda: deconstructivism and re-constructivism. The dual stance of decolonisation encapsulates the deconstruction of the hegemonic and abysmal powers superimposing themselves on the epistemic agencies of the 'others'; while engendering the reconstruction of indigenous ideas or worldviews in the quest for sustainable epistemic emancipation (THIONG'O 1986; WIREDU 1998; JAMES 2018; NDLOVU-GATSHENI 2020; KUMALO 2022; MITOVA 2022; WINKLER 2024). While it is not the focus of this paper here, I would want to note that the little presence of decolonial scholarship in the global south is largely due to the noncommittal of scholars to the dual

stance of the decolonial agenda. Unfortunately, many of the attempts at advancing decolonial scholarship often end in the deconstruction of Eurocentric epistemic processes or getting entangled in the web of the methodic crisis. Indeed, given the existing imbalance in the power dynamics governing the global economy and knowledge systems, the quest for epistemic justice or re-centring that is void of the methodic crises is imperative.

### **Conclusion**

Informed from the consideration of epistemic injustice, i.e., the superimposition of Eurocentric epistemology on AIKS, is the need for intellectual caution in the struggle for epistemic freedom. The cautionary note emphasises that endeavours to establish an African epistemic system that deconstructs Eurocentric ideology must not be founded on ethnocentric hegemony, which is a recurrent intellectual challenge in combating epistemic injustice against AIKS. This challenge is observable in the call for a critical consideration of indigenous epistemic worldviews as well as the cautious application of Western categories in describing the former. This call is, however, informed and made rational by the appealing view that every culture and segment of humanity is endowed with a knowledge system specific to the people and their cultural orientation. Thus, not only are we all born into a knowledge system, but every human is also capable of the process of creating, acquiring, and disseminating knowledge.

It is suggested in this article that an adequate search for epistemic fairness should not be burdened with the weight of native hegemony or ethnocentrism, as is the case with the Europeanisation of the epistemic thinking of other people. In addition, such acceptable epistemic procedures for creating knowledge would not be established and verified via the lens of other cultures since the pursuit of globalisation would not even be sufficient to make such validation appropriate. Therefore, to achieve epistemic freedom, justice, or re-centring in Africa, divorcing intellectual efforts at re-centring from the abovementioned methodic crisis is imperative.

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