

TOWARDS SALVAGING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES THROUGH INDIGENISATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

This essay advances the thesis that given the history and role of the social sciences and humanities in the colonisation of Africa in general and South Africa as a specific case, the only way in which such disciplines can be salvaged from their crises so that they can thrive and add value is through their indigenisation. Following the independence of many African countries not much changed in the orientation of the academy in Africa as a result the social sciences and humanities still suffer from the coloniality of knowledge. In this respect, there is a need to recognise the historical, institutional and normative baggage of the disciplines so as to explore their appropriation, localisation and grounding in an emancipatory and transformative agenda. The West has made the particular the universal and that is the intellectual project which African intellectuals have been deconstructing.

The social sciences and the colonial encounter

That colonialism marked a turning point in the social, cultural, economic, and political fortunes of Africa (Magubane, 1986) is no longer in dispute given the mounting evidence to that effect. In this regard, the impact of colonialism on Africa has been critically dissected, interrogated and unpacked by a range of thinkers and theorists. Among these could be included Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon, 1970) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1968); Memmi (1963) in his *Coloniser and Colonised* and Rodney (1972) in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Other scholars such as Ngugi (1986) focused specifically on the problems of colonisation of the African minds, while others such as Ake (1982) revealed how social science itself constituted a form of imperialism and Mafeje (1976) looked at how the disciplines entrenched capitalist modes. Read together, these writings poignantly point to what Williams describes as the destruction of Black civilisation (Williams, 1971) in light of the comparison of the political and social systems of Europe and Africa from antiquity to the formation of modern states (Diop, 1988). Their combined deconstruction of colonialism has settled the colonial legacy as negative and destructive to Africa.

What can be distilled from these illustrative materials and historical accounts is that the social sciences and humanities were deeply implicated in the colonisation of Africa and the Africans. Moreover, these accounts unpack the reality that the colonial encounter, penetration and rule relied not only on the military and economic power of conquering nations, but also on domination over forms of cultural representation and misrepresentation. The Europeans embarked upon what Frantz Fanon (1968) called 'the enterprise of deculturation'. They condemned Africa to insuperable and incorrigible backwardness by proclaiming that the West was the best and Africa and the rest were the worst. They fostered a brainwashed acceptance of the role of Africans as inferior and sub-humans with their reference point as the West being the primary centre or mover of history and theory. Western historiography was fundamentally tendentious precisely to justify the dehumanisation of Africans. Thus colonisation broadly was a form of dehumanisation (Cesaire, 2000) and its logic was the systematic negation of the humanity of Africans.

Pursuant to the colonial project, the altruistically coined 'civilising mission' was used as an effective but unethical and perverted narrative for indoctrination. After all, colonisers did all evil in the name of chosen people. According to Mudimbe, missionaries were, through all the 'new worlds' part of the political process of creating and extending the putative right of European sovereignty over 'newly discovered' lands (Mudimbe, 1988). However, this was accomplished by completely uncivilised methods (Fanon, 1968; Rodney, 1972). This was unmistakable in the attitude of the early missionaries towards indigenous institutions and indigenous knowledge systems.

The contemptuous ethnocentrism and racism displayed by Christian missionaries had as the main objective supplanting African peoples' sensibilities. As such, education did not organically connect Africans with their environment or advance their mastery of the ecosystem for sustainable livelihood and self-knowledge. On the contrary, it alienated them from their environment broadly speaking. Learning was not understood as a process of harnessing the inner potential, whose imperative is to equip the recipients with an awareness of their identity and environment (Lebakeng, 2004). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire suggests that allowing students or individuals to have ownership of their knowledge is equivalent to respecting their culture, traditions and identity (Freire, 1996).

Missionaries perceived deculturation of Africans as a divine assignment and were ready to risk death for it. Groves (1969: 488) provides a characterisation of the role of missionaries and an insight into their inspiration thus:

The early missionaries came as censors of the Africans and in preaching their ideals the emissaries of the gospel were usually fortified by the unquestioning belief not only in their righteousness but also in the depravity of indigenous African institutions.

They were pulled by the lure of civilising the 'savage mind.' Projecting the African savage mind meant that Africans were expunged from history, philosophy and literature hence the deliberate silence on their historical contributions to world civilisation. That was part of negating and denying the humanity of Africans as they were supposed not to have expressed any thought or made any intellectual and

philosophical pronouncements. As such, nothing from Africans was worth noting, knowing and celebrating as Africans were considered affective rather than effective, passionate and lacking in basic rationality (Ramose, 1999).

In his edited seminal volume *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (1973), Talal Asad argues that anthropology was deeply embedded in the colonial system. However, it is noteworthy that despite the naming, blaming and shaming of anthropology such strictures levelled against the discipline do not exonerate other social sciences and humanities as they are also implicated in the colonial project (Mafeje, 1976). In fact, many examples of how the social sciences and humanities from history, literature, education, social work, religious studies, psychology, sociology to political sciences, assisted in the colonial penetration of Africa and subsequent consolidation straddles such disciplines (see Mafeje, 1976; Rex, 1981; Ake, 1982). In South Africa education perpetuated and reinforced patterns of socio-economic and ethno-cultural differences and falsified history (Hoerner, 1977; Corvenin, 1980).

The social sciences and humanities, as constituted are, to a large extent, products of the European Enlightenment. These disciplines were brought to Africa through the encounter with the West and since then Africans have internalised many of the European theories and paradigms in their work (Sall, 2013). Although they trace their roots from the engagement with issues around Western Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution and modernity, they were imposed as part of the colonial project to facilitate the conquest of Africa. They were embedded in rationalism – which presupposes that the basic laws of history can be known with certainty and that this knowledge can help bring about freedom and justice anywhere in the world.

Therein lies the teleological and almost unilineal conceptions of world and human development. This core tenet of the disciplines informed their approach to Africa as a continent that needed to follow the route taken by the West. As such, these disciplines carry a great deal of epistemological, theoretical, methodological, cognitive and historical baggage based on their origins and the key concerns and intellectual project of their founders. Precisely because they paraded structural-functionalism and behaviouralism as universal theories, they lacked symbols for deciphering local history as seen in the indices they employed in studying colonial Africa (Magubane, 1971).

Following the independence of many African countries not much changed in the orientation of the academy in Africa. Academic mimetism of Eurocentrism, which translates into the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems and valorisation of Western knowledge and epistemologies remains commonplace. This is a function of the failure to cut the intellectual umbilical cord from the western epistemological paradigm. As such, the disciplines are still condemned to paradigmatic dependency and African students continue to suffer cognitive injustice. As I pointed out previously, their core postulates, key concepts, basic methodologies, undergirding theories and competing models are still drawn from and essentially represent extrapolates of discrete European and American socio-historical experiences and cultural specificity (Lebakeng, 2000).

According to Nabudere, epistemologically Western intellectual traditions are insensitive to different epistemological foundations within which methodologies, theories, paradigms, methods and techniques are framed for the creation of knowledge in particular epistemes (Nabudere, 2002). Precisely owing to this, the stark reality is that despite achievement of political independence, Africa continues to suffer from coloniality of knowledge, and universities in Africa remain philosophically wedded to the conventional historiography and epistemology that denigrated the continent. In modern times, this is attributable to the impact of globalisation on knowledge production and indigenous culture.

In the last twenty years, globalisation increasingly became the defining characteristic of contemporary nations as it articulated the dominant features of modern existence. So overwhelming was globalisation and globalism that they spawned a litany of terms bearing the adjective 'global'. These include 'global system of governance', 'global society', 'global civil society', 'global culture', 'global discourse', 'global social agenda', 'global knowledge', 'global resistance', 'global citizens', and 'global consciousness' (Lebakeng, 2001; Lebakeng & Mokobane, 2002). As an umbrella term for a complex series of economic, social, technological, cultural and political changes seen in the form of increasing interdependence and integration between nations, the impact of globalisation has been a rapid cultural westernisation. In other words, the trend towards globalisation and a 'global culture' was threatening to worsen the situation of

the status of indigenous knowledge (Mazzocchi, 2006).

The confluence of factors such as colonisation, modernity and globalisation have meant that the orientation, philosophy, methodologies and subject matter of the social sciences and humanities continue to overlook fundamentals about the nature of knowledge and knowledge rationality. The nature of knowledge is such that all knowledge is first of all local knowledge (Okere, Njoku & Devisch, 2005) and different knowledge traditions are best understood by examining their context (Agrawal, 1995). Therefore, all knowledge systems can be regarded as localised, situated ways of making coherent systems of meaning from an array of heterogeneous, disconnected and fragmented elements (Turnbull, 2000).

More importantly, knowledge-building, even in the West is by no means a homogenous or monolithic univocal enterprise. For instance, hermeneutics, itself a Western intellectual product, asserts that any form of knowledge makes sense only within its own socio-cultural context. What is certain is that historically the multiple Western epistemological traditions have been encoded into different discourses in different languages. It is just that those that did not explicitly support the colonial and imperial project were marginalised. Therefore, it is an oxymoron to represent western ideas as universal since their cultural, theoretical, intellectual and philosophical presuppositions are profoundly European in the ethnocentric sense.

The South African experience with the disciplines

Although the social sciences and humanities played a critical role in colonisation, as academic subjects, the disciplines were introduced to the South African academy long after the colonial encounter and penetration. Nonetheless, since there was an organic connection between universities and their founding moments, this meant that higher education in South Africa was part and parcel of the civilising mission and its social research work was useable to the regime (see Rex, 1981). The racist regime used universities for the intellectual and ideological justification of racial practices (Behr, 1987; Lebakeng, 2004). The social sciences and humanities were called upon to play a critical role in buttressing, embedding and perpetuating colonial-apartheid. They underpinned the ideological presuppositions and perversions of the colonial enterprise and as such, were morally and intellectually implicated. In many histories of South

Africa, indigenous African people appeared as shadowy figures in the background of white historical experiences and history making (Maylam, 1986).

South African universities were attentive to the socio-political issues of the time and, as such, were not passive beneficiaries but active participants in ensuring the colonial-apartheid government injected capital in their programmes and funded them generously. For instance, sociology departments emerged as part of a social work programme and contained a strong policy orientation. The discipline focused on the limited concerns such as those of welfare agencies or those of a patron such as the government (Webster, 2004).

Such disciplines failed, to a larger extent, to bring their intellectual resources to bear on the oppression and exploitation of the majority. Lest one is accused of intellectual ignorance, it is important to point out that in the 1960s/1970s there was a noticeable trend towards Marxism and Leninism and scholars in the social sciences and humanities played a crucial role in the struggle against colonial-apartheid. Marxism and Leninism inspired and provided a combative discourse and did not adopt depoliticising strategies. However, no matter how important the social theory provided by Marxism and Leninism, these cannot be offered as epistemological alternatives since they had universal pretensions and shared as much baggage as those founded on European history at a particular time.

By various accounts, the disciplines are still not relevant even to the post-apartheid social conditions of a democratising South Africa. I have previously argued that the result of overlooking the historical perspective in the educational sphere has been the false and misleading but commonly held stratification of higher education, especially its university subset, as either merely black/disadvantaged or white/advantaged

(Lebakeng, 2003; 2004). Such descriptors emanated from an incorrect historical understanding regarding the development, nature and role of universities in colonial-apartheid South Africa.

This does not mean that some form of work has not been done to reverse the situation. We now understand better that the real problem of universities in South Africa has

been that of the right to be an African university (Lebakeng, 2004; 2003; Lebakeng, Phalane & Nase, 2006). This right was denied through a process of denying, degrading and marginalising indigenous African knowledge systems. In the post-apartheid era such process takes place through resistance to transform universities in the current dispensation and the fact that globalisation and its market extremism was at its peak (Chachage, 1999).

In this respect, the changes which have been made have not addressed the root causes of the problem. In many of the tertiary institutions the changes have involved merely transforming the racial composition of management, academics and students in the institutions and leaving intact the pedagogical traditions and epistemological cultures which had been in existence since the colonial-apartheid era. Students in South Africa are not exposed to social theories, specialised concepts, and research findings, as well as a range of tools related to investigation and analysis that can help them understand themselves, their families, their communities, and society as they strive to find meaning in the world around them. I therefore concur with the thrust of the thesis advanced by Alatas (1972; 1974) that the poor performance rate of black students is due to alienation and that black students are made to feel inferior through the Western epistemologies which dominate their pedagogies.

Rather than undermining their immediate experiences, values, beliefs systems and knowledge systems, students should be taught through a juxtaposition of their own perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs with those of others. This should be with the objective of developing an understanding and appreciation of the contexts through which their own and others' worldviews are formed. Through research, inquiry skills and critical thinking, the disciplines can play a key role in shaping students' views about life and learning. By developing an understanding of the contextualised nature of their ideas, values, and ways of life, students come to appreciate and honour, rather than fear, the diversity with which they are surrounded. The social sciences and humanities curriculum should provide varied opportunities for students to learn about ethical issues, explore ethical standards, and demonstrate ethical responsibility. Knowledge and understanding developed through the study of the disciplines should help inform discussion on critical social, cultural, economic, technological, environmental, and wellness issues, and can provide a strong foundation for vibrant,

healthy, and engaged citizenship.

The array of crises facing the social sciences and humanities are captured generally in the World Social Science Report 2010 and specifically in the two recent reports on the state of the social sciences and humanities in South Africa. The disciplines are not adding value in the post-apartheid era. There can be no doubt that the academic landscape in the social sciences and humanities need an infusion of socio-cultural relevance, conceived as a function of how these disciplines respond to the national concerns while taking into account global imperatives. As such, the crisis in the disciplines presents an opportunity to engage with the burning issues in academia. Moreover, a growing recognition of the value of indigenous knowledge (Brush & Stabinsky, 1996) provides a useful and much needed counterpoint to earlier discourses that denigrated such knowledge systems. Premised on this understanding there continues to be a need for a radical overhaul of the whole epistemological paradigm underlying the current educational system in South Africa.

Contending theories of transformation of (higher) education

In her article 'Contradictory transformations: observations on the intellectual dynamics of South African universities', Sheehan points to the reality that although the master narrative of colonial-apartheid had been overthrown, it was apparent that this was a result of a historical compromise hence there would be no expropriation of the expropriators (Sheehan, 2009). Nonetheless, there was consensus on the fact that the landscape of (higher) education was one 'largely dictated by the geo-political imagination of apartheid planners (Asmal, 1999) and had to be re-imagined. Too many people and communities had been left behind under the colonial-apartheid due to structural inequalities and discrimination.

Although resistance to colonial-apartheid spawned a rich history of ideas and approaches on transformation, a notable feature of oppositional politics was the silence on the concrete specification of the means by which transformation of colonial-apartheid education was to be effected and a lack of transformatory vision and philosophy of education (Badat, 1997). In the post-1994 period, there has been a wide array of transformation-oriented initiatives seeking to effect institutional change. These have included the definition of the purposes and goals of (higher) education; extensive

policy research, policy formulation, adoption, and implementation in the areas of governance, funding, academic structure and programmes and quality assurance; the enactment of new laws and regulations; and major restructuring and reconfiguration of the higher education institutional landscape and of institutions. These initiatives have often tested the capacities and capabilities of the state and (higher) education institutions and have affected the pace, nature and outcomes of change (Badat, 2010).

In my doctoral thesis, *Prospects and problems of transforming universities in South Africa*, with special reference to the right to be an African university, I identified four contending theories of transformation of higher education in South Africa. These theories are: the protectionist, the institutional autonomist, the micro-level pro-change, and the macro-level pro-change (Lebakeng, 2004). These theories are informed by vested interests and are contested over converging historical narratives.

The protectionists cast the issue of transformation in terms of standards and knowledge systems. The core of their argument is that standards, especially at universities formerly for white colonial-settlers, will inevitably be lowered as higher education institutions redefine their priorities to accommodate the rising numbers of indigenous African, Coloured and Indian students. It is a tendency that argues that quantity as a result of massification, that is, the broadening of the educational landscape on the basis of gender, age, and race inevitably undermines quality (Vilakazi & Tema, 1991; Vera, 1996).

As Jansen pointed out, three aspects of the use of standards have been prominent, namely, standards of entry, engagement and exit. Initially, standards of entry were used as a mechanism of denying students who were not white access to study at universities meant for white colonial-settlers (Jansen, 1995). Owing to transformative pressures, subsequently the focus shifted to standards of engagements and exit. Whereas the arguments for standards of entry were used to keep indigenous African, Coloured and Indian students out of these institutions, those of engagement and exit have ensured that the very few who manage to enter actually face horrendous engagements or do not exit successfully. Stories of white lectures discouragingly telling, especially indigenous African and Coloured students that mathematics, medicine and science are not for them are abundant.

The protectionists have a fierce opposition to any theoretical/philosophical pronouncements that suggest or recommend the abandoning of the elitist colonial nature of (higher) education in South Africa. For them, colonial traditions of education have benefited South Africa by taking the country out of darkness. In particular they are firmly opposed to the Africanisation of scholarship in terms of research, what is being taught, how it is being taught and the purpose for teaching it. Critically, for them the restructuring is a front for an exclusivist Africanisation agenda which will inevitably lead to the lowering standards, encouraging poor scholarship and intellectual anarchy (Makgoba, 1996).

These doom-laden assumptions about Africanisation fail to take into account the historical reality of epistemicide and exclusion. By excluding the African experience in the conceptualisation, construction and design of education in South Africa, only white colonial-settlers had a part in the conceptualisation, construction, design and application of such academic standards. There is, therefore, a need to distinguish between a socially responsible notion of pursuing standards and excellence from one that seeks to reproduce past inequalities. The protectionists fall in the second category.

The second theorists, the institutional autonomists, take a position that is opposed to the declaration that 'the university in Africa occupies too critical a position of importance to be left to determine its own priorities' and that it should therefore 'accept the hegemony of government'. They vociferously assert the autonomy of higher education institutions against any form of state 'interference'. This position takes its cue from the position that 'a university has to be insulated from the hot and cold of politics'. In this vision of higher education governance, states should simply fund education and the institutions would then exercise their discretion in allocating and spending the funds, as well as in appointments, decisions on the curriculum, access and promotions. For instance, initially the then Afrikaner universities championed a position of assertive insistence on defending the right to maintain an Afrikaner character (Hugo, 1998).

The fundamental assumption of the institutional autonomists is that reflective and rational individuals in positions of power and academics in these institutions can identify imperfections, such as racism and sexism, of such institutions and logically come up with appropriate mechanisms to address them. This assumption needs to be rendered problematic given the implications thereof. Given that those expected to supposedly display benevolence are some of the same people who thrive on epistemicide in South Africa, the approach is rather mischievous. Essentially, the institutional autonomist theory functions as the guardian of the status quo ante by superficially tinkering with the problems facing higher education in South Africa. This is a situation where change is clearly a painful process, especially for those whose interests are threatened by changing the conditions that preserve and privilege them.

The micro-level pro-change conceptualise change in a piecemeal and incremental sense. Three factors are noteworthy. First, its time perspective on transformation is incredibly long. Thus, its proponents continually urge indigenous Africans and other groups to be elastically patient, accepting relatively small changes with the assumption that time and goodwill are the ultimate handmaidens of an improved lot. Second, transformation is perceived as occurring most legitimately and effectively from the top down, that is, it is driven by the benevolence of the enlightened and not through popular social struggles. Third, the theory focuses on few aspects of transformation such as access and governance and does not accord other aspects such as curriculum (the whole way in which teaching and learning is organised) and syllabus (the content of what is taught) priority status. The proponents of this theory are extremely superficial in their historical analysis as they only speak to the immediacy of apartheid-ism and thus inadvertently forestall and undermine the transformation process. For Dlamini, the reason for incremental change is that some people accept change in principle but have difficulty with which aspects of change should be effected (Dlamini, 1995)

The macro-level pro-change is primarily concerned with a broader and more nuanced understanding of transformation, namely, a holistic, totalising, radical and comprehensive change. Accordingly, this theory does not view the transformation of tertiary educational institutions as an insular process detached from similar processes

in the society as a whole. In fact, education in general and higher education in particular, is seen as carrying the burden of providing the intellectual and cultural leadership to accomplish the transformation of South African society. According to the proponents of this theory, apart from structural aspects such as mergers, the master narratives of the new educational dispensation must be framed as the quest for Africanisation (Seepe, 1996; Ramose, 1998) and by the desire to insert indigenous knowledgesystems in the design and construction of education (Lebakeng, 2010). In that way, scholarship will be made relevant rather than remain antiseptic and removed from lived experiences in the country.

This means grounding the university in South Africa in African realities and experiences and having it informed by indigenous African philosophies both as part of its being and to reject the idea that the country is an outpost of Western civilisation and traditions. Of essence here is that all talk of 'rainbow nation' and 'multiculturalism' will remain an illusion as long as: (a) indigenous African people, who are a demographic majority remain a cultural and social minority and (b) the forms of social imagination that predominates encourage exclusivity by making a single western ethnographic reference. Clearly, the macro-level pro-change theory offers a more sophisticated and nuanced historical understanding of fundamental issues. The theory allows for the location of historical dynamics and processes of epistemicide within the broader context of the history, polity and sociality of the country. This is even more important given that South African universities remain profoundly untransformed in their institutional cultures and epistemological paradigms despite the new dispensation (Lebakeng, 2004; Lebakeng, Phalane & Nase, 2006).

From the foregoing, we can conclude that South African universities have been caught up in a complex field of forces with conflicting pressures. The result is a state of disharmonious and contradictory transformations

- one stemming from the politics of liberation and the other from the demands of globalisation (Shaheen, 2009) and the desperate need to preserve the ill-gains of the colonial 'right to conquest'. The result is that the nature and orientation of the social sciences and humanities have not changed fundamentally. Colonial knowledge production and orientation continue to dominate and characterise the construction of knowledge and the design and development of education in South Africa (Lebakeng,

2010).

Towards relevance in the social sciences and humanities in the South African academy

In times of crisis there is an inevitable return to fundamentals. Questions such as the relation of knowledge to the world of experience are revived, often in a disharmonious way (Mafeje, 1976). That such a state of affairs obtains in the social sciences and humanities can only be judged by the existence of contending theories of transformation.

Agrawal points to 'the failure of modern science and grand theories to improve the life chances of native peoples' as reason for a shift in how indigenous knowledge is perceived (Agrawal, 1995). In South Africa, indigenous knowledge has forcefully featured in various agendas and has been reflected upon in both academic and practitioner contexts (Nel, 2005) and has gained both conceptual and discursive currency in the last twenty-odd years (Horsthemke, 2004). This has to be understood within a context of general dissatisfaction with the state of the relevance of Western epistemological paradigms in the social sciences and humanities. Thus, indigenisation of the social sciences and humanities has, as one of its core tenets, decolonising the African mind. The central objective in decolonising the African mind is to overthrow the authority that alien traditions may still exercise.

A reconstructive challenge would then consist in revitalising the historical and cultural possibilities of the African legacy, interrupted by colonial-apartheid. In terms of education it would mean inscribing the African experience in the construction of knowledge and design of education (Ramose, 2002). As things stand, the nature and orientation of colonial-apartheid social science and humanities education is not suitable for the new mammoth task of democratisation. However, there are some positive developments. Among these is the fact that South African history is no longer presented purely within the parameters set by a colonial-apartheid society or broadly framed as the history of European expansion to the continent. Rather, it is in the process of being assimilated into the history of the African continent. As part of this new understanding of African history, African civilisation and how Europe underdeveloped

Africa, indigenous African knowledge, in all its ethnographic sense and particularism, is found to be important.

That the successors in the title to the benefits of the unjust wars of colonisation continue to make sustained effort to reaffirm, defend and perpetuate Western epistemological paradigms at the expense of indigenous knowledge systems is an on-going problem with which to contend. However, the biggest challenge is the dearth of philosophically grounded scholars capable of reshaping the contours of an African university through inscribing indigenous knowledge systems in the design and construction of the social sciences and humanities.

Although a great deal of work has been undertaken in the area of indigenous knowledge systems, most of it is descriptive, anecdotal and truncated and fail to theorise the issues. Such work is empirically grounded but still lacks the relevant epistemological paradigm, philosophical underpinnings and theorisation to liberate the disciplines from the tyranny of received knowledge, monolithic epistemology and dominant Western rationality. There is a need to recognise the historical, institutional and normative baggage of the disciplines and so as to explore their appropriation, localisation and grounding in an emancipatory and transformative agenda. This position does not, as alarmists tend to warn, imply dispensing with everything that emanates from Western universities in general or European ones in particular. The implications are quite clear: Africans cannot continue to slavishly adopt and embrace every aspect of these disciplinary sources. Of course apologists would see such historical recollections and intentions as an ill wind that does nobody any good as it offends the sensibilities of European intellectual traditions.

It is my contention that this is neither innocent of racism nor free from the intention to preserve and perpetuate the gains of the questionable 'right of conquest'. Such accusations are meant to discourage endeavours aimed at creating space for indigenous African knowledge and constitute part of the politics of discourse management in the social sciences (see Sithole, 2009). This is part of the traditional ways of circumscribing and pre-empting the entry into discourse of indigenous systems and modes. We can only allay such overriding fears by taking a leaf from that African wit, Pitika Ntuli who once said: 'The fear of dying gave birth to medicine. The

fear of indigenous knowledge systems could give rise to a new thrust in scholarship' (Ntuli, 1999).

The central objective in indigenising the social sciences and humanities is to address the confluence of crises facing such disciplines and thus salvaging them from being marginalised, rendered irrelevant to the point of being destroyed. This means overthrowing the authority that alien traditions have continued to exercise in teaching, research and publications. More importantly, it is an attempt to privilege African scholarship in terms of research, teaching and publication in order to assume a respectable position in world scholarship. This could only be possible if these disciplines were grounded on African experiences and aspirations and reflected/articulated African hopes, wishes, sensibilities, dilemmas and predicaments.

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