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How Not to Do Transformative Education in Africa: Nosing Out Red Flags in Decolonisation

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Abstract: Transformative education is an approach to learning that aims to fundamentally change the way learners engage with knowledge and their environment. While all modes of education lead to some form of change, transformative education seeks to create a fundamental change in the way people think and act. From the onset, the nerve to embark on transformative education in Africa is geared towards giving Africa agency: that she may rise above her prevailing circumstances. Nevertheless it must be pointed out that transformative education is but one trend, out of many others, that seeks (like the gadfly of the African conscience) to sting and stir the continent into action. But if care is not taken, transformative education will, like many other preceding ideological trends in the awakening of the African conscience, chant the cart to the edge of the cliff where its ruin and that of the entire continent is inevitable. Thus, for transformative education to be effectively executed, there is cause (especially in contemporary Africa where strong winds of change blow across the continent) to examine, as this paper seeks to do, the factors that led to the demise of other ideological trends and to chart a way forward for the efficient implementation of transformative educational ideals in Africa's combat against the remnants of colonialism. We are, however, strongly critical of the decolonial process, of static culture and tradition, particularly from the traditional philosophical perspective. Africa must embrace modernization which is different from westernization.

Keywords: Transformative education, decolonization, identity, culture, tradition, modernization.

Introduction

From the onset, the nerve to embark on transformative education in Africa was geared towards giving Africa agency: that she may rise above her prevailing circumstances. Nevertheless it must be pointed out that transformative education is but one trend, out of many others, that seeks (like the gadfly of the African conscience) to sting and stir the continent into action. But if care is not taken, transformative education will, like many other preceding ideological trends in the

awakening of the African conscience, chant the cart to the edge of the cliff where its ruin and that of the entire continent is inevitable. Thus, for transformative education to be effectively executed, there is cause (especially in contemporary Africa where strong winds of change blow across the continent) to pause and ask ourselves: (1) why did similar enchanting ideologies with a promising hope for the African people fail? (2) was the cause of their halt internal or external? (3) what lessons do we learn from this?

Answers to these questions can be summarized as follows: the major cause for the halt of similar enchanting ideologies on the African continent has, in our view, been the ideological warfare that perpetuates contempt among African scholars. This ideological warfare is fed by a certain misconception of what the task of decolonisation and modernisation demand or entail.[1] The person that so clearly brings this to our notice is Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò in his book ~~*Against*~~ *Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously*[2] wherein he distinguishes between two types of decolonisation: the first type (which for him is the original and true movement) set out to dismantle the colonial oppression as a prerequisite for African independence in all its ramifications; the second type (itself the perversion of the original/true movement) sets out to dismantle *all* colonial influence, the appropriation of which necessarily corrupts so-called values of Traditional African Society. Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò argues that, while the first group, far from shunning modernity, rather appropriated it to good effect: the benefit of the African people, the latter, on pain of the colonialists' appropriation of the same with the effect of the wreckage (culturally, economically, socially, spiritually and politically) of the colonies to the disadvantage of the colonised, wrongly identify modernity with colonialism. As it turns out then, the factors that animate the stagnation of growth in Africa come largely from within, for although there are constant claims to the contrary as evident in the blame game syndrome as we constantly point to outside forces for our own undoing, the fact is that when two kinsmen fight against each other, it is the enemy that benefits. However, the good news is that it is possible to forge a synergy from the warring factions, a task we set out to accomplish in the paper.

To achieve this task requires, first and foremost that, we identify those red flags which transformative education must avoid in order not to fall into the same pit as the preceding ideologies have done.

Identifying red flags in Contemporary Decolonial Discourse

One major strand in contemporary decolonial discourse is what can be described as negative intellectualism. By negative intellectualism can be understood a situation in which intellectuals become engaged in infighting on the basis of ideological difference rather than addressing the core issues of the day. This practice manifests itself in several ways. In the first place, we encounter this in ideological polarization. This is a situation whereby intellectuals become entrenched in their viewpoints, focusing on attacking each other's beliefs rather than collaboratively exploring solutions. In the second place, negative intellectualism distracts the scholars concerned from focusing on important issues. The warring factions drift from the original topic or problem, paying more attention not on the quest for truth, but settling ideological scores, resulting in a lack of progress or understanding on critical matters. When this happens, the factions fail to glean from Joseph Joubert's advice that, "the aim of argument, or of discussion,

[1]For more on this literature, see Kwame Gyeke, *Tradition and Modernity Philosophical: Reflections on the African Experience*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997; Jonathan O. Chimakonam, *Ezumezu: A System of Logic for African Philosophy and Studies*, Switzerland, Springer, 2019.

[2]Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2010; Africa Must Be Modern: A Manifesto, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2014; *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics (and Everything Else)*, United Kingdom, Pluto Press, 2022; and ~~*Against*~~ *Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriosuly*, United Kingdom, C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd. Epub, 2022.

should not be victory, but progress."[3] In an attempt to win their opponents and their candidates, such intellectuals prefer to cage themselves in what can be termed echo chambers, engaging primarily only with like-minded individuals which may rather reinforce biases and prevent constructive dialogue with those holding differing perspectives. They forget so soon that philosophy's characteristic feature is to be found in the dialectic wherein thesis and antithesis clash to produce a synthesis.

Consider for instance, the absence of concord between the ethnophilosophers and the professional philosophers in African philosophy.[4] The latter group attacks their modern counterparts daring to advocate the need to forage in un-African territories (particularly the West) in search of epistemic enlightenment for the good of Africa. Jonathan O. Chimakonam's *Ezumezu: A System Logic for African Philosophy Studies*, for instance, pours scorn on professional philosophers like Paulin J. Hountonji, Kwasi Wiredu, Henry Odera Oruka, and Peter Bodunrin on the simple basis that they "gave themselves the flamboyant name: professional philosophers…thereby announcing their influence from Plato and Aristotle". According to Chimakonam,

> By calling themselves professional philosophers, they had drawn the line between themselves and those they ridiculed as unprofessional or which is worse, ethnophilosophers…The arrival of this set of African philosophers in the 1940s representing the colonial European mission derailed the development of original thinking in African philosophy and held it back for decades.[5]

Even when Chimakonam acknowledges the significant intervention that these professional philosophers brought into the movement of African philosophy, he nevertheless waters it down in the following manner:

> Granted that their campaign for rigour was timely, it nonetheless was not supposed to be the ultimate focus. That the African traditional thought was not rigorous, so what? that was not the task facing African philosophers. The task before them was the construction of a philosophical paradigm or methodology which foundation would not be the Platonic and the Aristotelian framework. Had they focused on constructing this methodological paradigm, the need to show that the traditional philosophers were in error would not have arisen. [6]

It is quite stunning that Chimakonam should indeed reduce these philosophers and their works to such ridicule, to the point where he describes them as "the egg-heads of the universalist school like Paulin J. Hountondji, and Peter Bodunrin, and others like Marcien Towa", adding that they represent a group of Africans who due to their long years of miseducation, are still under the spell of Western imperialism.

In this way, negative intellectualism not only diminishes the quality of any intellectual discourse, it also has an adverse effect on society: such behaviour from intellectuals can contribute to a toxic environment wherein public discussions become polarised, making it harder for the broader audiences to engage in complex issues.

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[3] The Andrew Zone "~ The Aim of Argument or of Discussion ~ Joseph Joubert", Uploaded on You Tube, Jun 27, 2018.

[4] For more on the ideological clash, see, Tsenay Serequeberhan (ed.), *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings*, Paragon Issue in Philosophy, New York, Paragon House, 1991.

[5] Jonathan O. Chimakonam, *Ezumezu: A System of Logic for African Philosophy and Studies,* Switzerland, Springer, 2019, pp.83-84.

[6] Jonathan O. Chimakonam, *Ezumezu: A System of Logic for African Philosophy and Studies,* Switzerland, Springer, 2019, p.84.

INTERROGATING THE CONCEPT OF DECOLONISATION

In his book titled *Africa Must Be Modern: A Manifesto,* Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, sets out to argue that Africa must be modern. He directs his argument on the need for modernisation against the thoughts of the African ethnophilosophers who wrongly attribute modernization to Westernization. According to Táíwò, decolonisation long ended proving how this is so is the task of his most recent work titled ~~*Against*~~ *Decolonisation*. Underlying his ~~*Against*~~ *Decolonisation* is the view that there are two types of decolonisation:

> [The first connotes the making of] a colony into a self-governing entity with its political and economic fortunes under its own direction (though not necessarily control), which I refer to in the book as decolonisation$_1$. 'Decolonisation' today, however, has come to mean something entirely different: forcing an ex-colony to forswear, on pain of being forever under the yoke of colonisation, any and every cultural, political, intellectual, social and linguistic artifact, idea, process, institution and practice that retains even the slightest whiff of the colonial past. I call this decolonization.[7]

Táíwò recounts that decolonisation is proliferated in a number of ways but always with the same intent. He opines:

> Any aspect of any ex-colony that mirrors what was there during the colonial period is treated as evidence of continuing colonisation. Any institution that can be traced to colonial times must be shunned once colonisation has supposedly ended. The ultimate nebulous claim is that *decolonisation is complete only after all forms of domination are overturned.* In this way, decolonisation is equated with human emancipation, and this is why some people speak of 'the myth of decolonisation' in Africa.[8]

Nevertheless, he also acknowledges the fact that the reasons for this hostility towards modernity deeply rooted in the recesses of the minds of most Africans can be traced right back to the time of European slavery and slave trade.

For him, the fact that colonialism used modernity as a vehicle subordinate, subjugation and exploit the territories, also justifies why many identify the one with the other:

> [M]uch of the hostility towards modernity abroad in the continent is due to the conflicted nature of the relationship between Africans and modernity once colonialism was clamped on the continent. From then on, many Africans came to misidentify modernity with colonisation and westernisation and a plague-on-all your-houses attitude sedimented in much of the continent towards modernity-as-colonisation-and-westernisation.[9]

It is on this premise that Táíwò challenges our African decolonisers to demonstrate to us why we should decolonise beyond the needs to broaden our repertoire or take seriously works of thinkers outside of the Euro-American canon, which many people as it turns out, already do without subscribing to the idea of decolonisation, and to consider what the consequences of decolonising the phenomena he accuses them of ignoring or sidestepping would be. Táíwò's further analysis on the issue reveals that what these advocates of decolonisation fail to realise is that they are guilty of the same crime they accuse the Euro-American counterparts of. For instance, when we have successfully dismantled every colonial legacy (if only we could), we would be the very first

[7] Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, *Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously,* United Kingdom, C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2022, Epub, n.p.n.
[8] *Ibid*.
[9] *Ibid*, p.xxvi.

people to go about screaming at the top of our voices that we have been marginalised by the Europeans and Americans, and that they have excluded us from the table of negotiations.[10]

INTERROGATING THE STATICNESS OF IDENTITY, CULTURE AND TRADITION

Though central to our establishment of transformative education, explicating in comprehensive terms the concepts of "Identity", "Culture" and "Tradition" is quite a daunting task. With respect to the question as to who an African is, there are three personalities that one must make reference to. First on the list is Thabo Mbeki's poetic speech titled "I Am An African"[11] delivered to the South African Parliament on 8 May 1996 on the occasion of the adoption of the final South African Constitution by the Constitutional Assembly. Mbeki's speech is an articulation of an inclusive ontology of Africanness which when read from a South African perspective could be analysed as "an attempt to transcend the legacy of apartheid and its pantheon of races"[12]. According to Ngwena, the speech "seeks to consign to memory the idea of 'Africans', 'Coloureds', 'Indians', and 'Whites as South Africa's races in favour of a deraced oneness – Africanness. From a broader continental perspective, the speech speaks to deraced pan-Africanism after the colonial moment."[13] The following lines from Mbeki's poetic speech clenches the message home:

> I come of those who were transported from India and China, whose being resided in the fact, solely, that they were able to provide physical labour, who taught me that we could both be at home and be foreign, who taught me that human existence itself demanded that freedom was a necessary condition for that human existence. Being part of all of these people, and in the knowledge that none dares contest that assertion, I shall claim that – I am an African.[14]

Ali A. Mazrui. Mazrui, too, a man whose hybrid identity influenced his thinking on identity is a living testimony of a triple heritage: first as a descendant of Arab-Muslims, then as an African, and finally, as a respected intellectual product of 'Westernized' institutions of learning such as Manchester and Oxford universities in the United Kingdom. This is how Mazrui located his personal story in the discourse of reinventing Africa and Africanity:

> I was born and brought up in Mombasa, one of the old Islamic city-states of East Africa. A historic landmark in the old town is Fort Jesus, from which the Mazrui family once ruled the city. Not far from the Fort is the old Supreme Court of Mombasa where Sheikh Ali-Amin bin Ali Mazrui used to hear appeal cases under the Shari'a. He was Kenya's chief judge of appeal under Islamic law. Sheikh Ali-Amin was my father. At the time of my birth and coming of age in Mombasa, Kenya was under British colonial rule. After the death of my father, I went to study at Manchester and Oxford rather than Al-Azhar (even though he would have preferred that I had studied at Al-Azhar) and that effectively widened my exposure to the Western branch of my own heritage. How much of a product of Africa's triple heritage am I? Am I a walking embodiment of that complex cultural mixture? Of course, it is not just my own identity that is affected by the Triple Heritage, but any identity in Africa as a whole. Who are the Africans? This heritage encompasses the full diversity of African identities and lifestyles, including two commonly discussed

[10] Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, *Against Decolonisation*, United Kingdom, C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2022, Epub, n.p.n.
[11] Thabo Mbeki, "I am an African", available at http://www.soweto.co.za/html/i_iamafrican.htm, Accessed 1/10/2024.
[12] Charles Ngwena, *What is Africanness? Contesting nativism in race, culture and sexualities*, South Africa, Pretoria University Law Press (PULP), 2018, p.195.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Thabo Mbeki, "I am an African", available at http://www.soweto.co.za/html/i_iamafrican.htm, Accessed 1/10/2024, n.p.n.

> and often romanticized types of African civilization: complex kingdoms and empires on the one side and decentralized 'tribes without rules' on the other.[15]

In its expansive African imaginations Mbeki and Mazrui are an affirmation of Hall's thesis about identity according to which, identity is real and imagined, complex, dynamic, fluid and open-ended, unlike the racially saturated Africanness that was bequeathed by colonial and apartheid discourses. The two articulations of Africanness espoused above can be understood as the decentering of the race of Africanness.[16] Undeniably, race is present, but it only exists both as an historical record and a socio-political phenomenon, and not necessarily as an essence.

The concept of race essentialism is equally shared by a good number of Africans back home, especially among the youth. One only needs to glance through the various media platforms and listen to, or read the conversations in these to understand the wind of change that is blowing across the continent. We now turn to address the concepts of "culture" and "tradition" that permeates the discourse on decolonisation, in that order.

CRITIQUING THE NOTIONS OF "CULTURE" AND "TRADITION" AND CHARTING NEW IDENTITIES

It is Kwasi Wiredu who said:

> The study of African culture has, as a rule, been undertaken from an anthropological point of view. It cannot be denied that this has provided important insights, but amid the exigencies of the cultural transition that is taking place in contemporary Africa there is a need for critical and constructive analysis. Philosophy has obvious responsibilities in this connection…[17]

In an era of cultural transition, we cannot afford to be clingy and anachronistic, rather, we are called upon to recognise, as does Charles Ngwena that "Identity [is] becoming and being."[18] If identity is becoming and being, it suffices that all ideologies on racial essentialism are a myth since identity is in a flux. Situating himself on the post-modern camp, Ngwena, argues that perhaps the only time when one could discuss Africa as a monolithic entity was at the moment of its naming. He however observes that that time had long past.

> Literally, centuries have passed, complete with their historical ruptures, including the advent and sedimentation of European colonialism, anti-colonial struggles, modernity, the hybridisation of cultures, capitalism, Christianity, Islam, African independence, the post-independence eras and globalising processes. Consequently, without equivocation, we ought to concede that framing Africanness in terms of an integral, originary and unified identity, which was never there in the first place, is even less convincing today.[19]

In the place of this fixated identities, we are better served by a historically conscious concept of Africanness whose identification can only be achieved through a balance or stable transformation. This balance, or stability is not static but fluid, metamorphosing and morphing to mark the interval or what Ngwena calls an "in-betweenness" – between reversal and the emergence of something that was not there before but is never quite fully completed – as, indeed, is the case

[15] Ali A. Mazrui, quoted in R. E Laremont, et al. (eds), *Africanity Defined: Collected Essays of Ali A. Mazrui: Volume 1*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002, pp.99-100.
[16] Stuart Hall, "Cultural identity and diaspora" in Rutherford, J (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Lawrence & Wishart 1990, pp.222-237.
[17] Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p.1.
[18] Charles Ngwena, *What is Africanness? Contesting nativism in race, culture and sexualities*, South Africa, Pretoria University Law Press (PULP), 2018, p.26.
[19] Charles Ngwena, *What is Africanness? Contesting nativism in race, culture and sexualities*, South Africa, Pretoria University Law Press (PULP), 2018, p.25.

with any identity category.[20] It is our firm conviction that identity's fluidity could be explained from the perspective of cultural fluidity and this in turn can be premised on the organic nature of culture itself.

Terry Eagleton rightly observes that

> The very word 'culture' contains a tension between making and being made, rationality and spontaneity, which upbraids [i.e. rebukes or scolds severely with indignation and anger] the disembodied intellect of the Enlightenment as much as it defies the cultural reductionism of so much contemporary thought. It even hints towards the political contrast between evolution and revolution – the former 'organic' and 'spontaneous', the latter artificial and *voulu* – and suggests how one might move beyond this stale antithesis too.[21]

The idea that culture is a product of the tension between "making and being made, rationality and spontaneity" reminds one of the Hegelian dialectic, a "triadic process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis" in which "Hegel claimed that contradictions are universally present and account for all change and movement in both thought and the world."[22] In this edifice, what is particularly striking is the fact that the dialectic constitutes a rational and autonomous process of self-development of the world. It was this firm conviction which compelled Kwame Nkrumah to develop the celebrated philosophical system of *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonisation,* born out of what he described, following Marx and Engels, as "social contensions". Sapped and saddled by the burden of the triple heritage: the Islamic, the Judeo-Christian and the Traditional elements that choked and befuddled Africa's progress, Nkrumah was forced to reevaluate his conscience within the compelling "social contensions":

> The evaluation of one's own social circumstance is part of the analysis of facts and events, and this kind of evaluation is, I feel, as good a starting point of the inquiry into the relations between philosophy and society as any other. Philosophy, in understanding human society, calls for an analysis of facts and events, and an attempt to see how they fit into human life, and so how they make up human experience. In this way, philosophy, like history, can come to enrich, indeed to define, the experience of man.[23]

The evaluation of social circumstance which beacons on all and sundry to analyse the facts and events would sooner than later make them realise that although their past greatly contributed in the fashioning of the present, it is no guarantee that they should cling to certain ideologies of that same past. If the said analysts of the past are objective, open-minded and indeed avid for the genuine growth of their society, they would not be at pains to drop off certain anachronistic practices which threatens the new values they have created. But if they are hardcore traditionalists, clingy and nostalgic to the past glories (especially those that confer on them an enviable status for which they may be tempted to remain in power to the peril of the society) then the stagnation of the society in question is inevitable.

Tradition, like culture, is construed in static terms. However, a closer look at the concept suggests that this is quite wrong. According to Kwame Gyeke, it is fallacious to polarise tradition and modernity. For him, if we grant that "every society in the modern world inherits ancestral cultural values", our philosophical disposition would imply "that modernity is not always a rejection of the

[20] *Ibid*.
[21] Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2002, p.10.
[22] Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy*, U.S.A, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004, p.179.
[23] Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization*, U.S.A, First Modem Reader Paperback Edition, 1979, p.4.

past," a fact which would cast "serious doubts on the appropriateness of perceiving tradition and modernity as polar opposites."[24] Part of the problem stems from the manner with which discussions on the question of tradition have been pursued. Scholarship on the issue gives one the impression that notion of tradition is bound to the creed in the theological prayer "as it was in the beginning it is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen!" Gyekye captures the gnawing polarity thus:

> The polarity derives from a different sense given to the notion of the *traditional* – depicted by sociologists and anthropologists as rural, agrarian, prescientific, resistent to change and innovation, and bound by the perception of its past. By contrast, the modern is characterized as scientific, innovative, future oriented, culturally dynamic, and industrial and urbanized. It is the alleged contrast that grounds the polarity between the traditional and the modern – between tradition and modernity.[25]

However, there are three factors, three evils that is, which society must guard against even as we transpose from the traditional to the modern society. In the words of Kwasi Wiredu, they are: "anachronism, authoritarianism a supernaturalism", respectively.[26] Should society persists and stubbornly insists to cling to these three evils, it would be left in a state of perpetual inertia. But what do these concepts mean in the first place? According to this Ghanaian philosopher, "Anachronism" is the refusal to "perceive anachronistic [out of place] things for what they are" and to dispose of or revise them "as the case may require."[27] For instance, the reason why one generation prefers to adopt some cultural values, beliefs, and practices to the neglect of others is due to the fact that as society evolves, people begin to get a clearer view of things than those of the preceding generations. As far as "authoritarianism" is concerned, any social organization is authoritarian "if it entails any person being made to do or suffer something against his will, or if it leads to any person being hindered in the development of his own will."[28] In simple terms, we might say authoritarianism is "the unjustified overriding of an individual's will."[29]

TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION AND THE PROSPECTS FOR A MODERN AFRICA

Transformative education constitutes learning values that encourages critical thinking and an examination of one's own beliefs and values. It brings into focus the social, emotional, and cognitive aspects of learning. Rather than an emphasis on rote memorization or mechanistic learning, transformative education encourages learners to dig deeper into what they are being taught and consider how it applies to their lives and the world at large. Questioning the status quo and confronting the social and systemic issues affecting daily life becomes central to the learning process. Four key principles are widely accepted as underpinning practices of transformative education: respect for the process of transformation, a focus on the individual's experience, fostering inclusivity, and encouraging critical discourse. Transformative education practices change how knowledge is understood and experienced, creating a new way of seeing the world. These practices must be widely adopted in contemporary educational systems. Transformative experiences have the potential to impact individual learning outcomes significantly, resulting in elevated levels of student engagement. However, without the knowledge of how to implement transformation within education, the responsibility falls on student learners to seek change for

[24] Kwame Gyeke, *Tradition and Modernity Philosophical: Reflections on the African Experience,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p.217.
[25] *Ibid*,
[26] Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p.1.
[27] Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p.1.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] *Ibid*.

themselves. Therefore, there is a need for educators to understand how they can create transformative processes through their practices.[30]

Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò in his book titled *Africa Must Be Modern: A Manifesto*, solemnly declares:

> I propose to argue in this manifesto that in order to join the forward march of the rest of the world – a world that has seen its erstwhile peers in misery in Asia and Latin America redeem the promise of "freedom for all, life more abundant" for their inhabitants Africa must embrace, not just engage with modernity, and seek aggressively to install modern societies all across the continent. Put differently, I propose to do a spirited defence of the necessity of modernity as the way out of Africa's current prostrate position respecting the quality of life in it and the dismal prospects of its teeming majority.[31]

This declaration, however, is not new. The only difference between Táíwò's declaration and the preceding ones is merely a matter of tone. The former's tone is so urgent and fervent that the reader dares not drop the book until she has devoured it from cover to cover in order to understand the abscess he is trying to incise. The abscess is this:

> Over time I have discovered that many of the issues that ail Africa are not very different from those that other humans situated in other parts of the world have to deal with. The issues include but are by no means limited to the following: procuring a good living from the bounties of nature using the products of human ingenuity such as science and technology and by so doing freeing up more leisure for more people in which they can contemplate such arcane topics as the meaning of life, the best life for humans, what happens to us after we die, and ancillary themes. Put more specifically, Africans, no more or less than any other people, face the challenge of ensuring, for themselves and their posterity, *lives that are free of the trinity of hunger, disease, and ignorance*. They want to live in healthy environments. They want to lead hopeful lives where they can always expect that the future, near or far, will be better than the present, that they will have more control over the direction of their lives, that they will not live under regimes in the constitution of which they have had no hand, and that they will live long prosperous lives marked mostly by happiness.[32]

Several factors have stood as stumbling blocks to the realisation of this dream prominent among which is Africa's historical encounter with Europe. However, while this is true, it also appears there is another stumbling block from within Africa herself: the negative intellectualism which breeds infighting among African scholars themselves, thereby preventing them from seeing beyond ideologies. We have discussed this issue at length in the first part of this chapter and we have seen its impact not just among the warring scholars themselves, but also on society at large. Aside Táíwò, there have been a host of other African scholars who lament the same fate. Paulin J. Hountondji[33], Kwasi Wiredu[34], Valentine Y. Mudimbe[35], and Bernard N. Fonlon[36] all lament the

[30] McEwen L, Edward Strachan G, Lynch K. "Shock and Awe or Reflection and Change: stakeholder perceptions of transformative learning in higher education." 1970.
[31] Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, *Africa Must Be Modern: A Manifesto*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2014, p.9.
[32] *Ibid*, pp.7-8.
[33] Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, Translated by Henri Evans with the collaboration of Jonathan Rée and Introduction by Abiola Irele, U.S.A, Indiana University Press, Second Edition, 1996; Franziska Dübgen & Stefan Skupien, *Paulin Hountondji: African Philosophy as Critical Universalism*, Switzerland AG, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
[34] **Kwasi** Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1980

fact that, in defense of the place of the African in a world that denied her such space, the ethnophilosophers could not see beyond the chanting of songs of a glorious African past now lost. These scholars, including Táíwò himself, have unfortunately been scolded for being unsympathetic with the lot of the black race. However, since the colonial encounter, it appears much of what passes for African scholarship has been largely reactionary and most often, this reactionary scholarship does not, in its apologetics tells Africa and Africans which way they should take to come out of the mire into which they have been steeped centuries past.

We are not belittling the great contributions of African revolutionary writers such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Mwalimu Kambarege Nyerere, Leopold Seder Senghor, Frantz Fanon, Thomas Sankara, Nelson Madiba Mandela, and the list continues. We are specifically referring to African philosophers in from the 1960s right up to our time. While the task of those mentioned above was to combat colonialism and in turn win for the African a "safe heaven" (if we may call it that) through the attainment of both political and economic independence, African writers from the early 1960's till date have sought to replicate just the kind of narrative that qualifies only as narrative for narrative sake. It was a narrative which merely happed on African worldviews aimed at proving a point: mainly that Africans had a philosophy. What they failed to do was to draw a line between *worldview* and *mindview*. Thus, Mudimbe was apt in his observation that:

> The fact of the matter is that, until now, Western interpreters as well as African analysts have been using categories and conceptual systems which depend on a Western epistemological order. Even in the most explicitly "Afrocentric" descriptions, models of analysis explicitly or implicitly, knowingly or unknowingly, refer to the same order. Does this mean that African *Weltanschauungen* and African traditional systems of thought are unthinkable and cannot be made explicit within the framework of their own rationality? My own claim is that thus far the ways in which they have been evaluated and the means used to explain them relate to theories and methods whose constraints, rules, and systems of operation suppose a non-African epistemological locus. From this viewpoint the claim of some African philosophers such as O. Bimwenyi… and E Eboussi-Boulaga … that they represent an epistemological hiatus should be taken seriously. What does this mean for the field of African studies? To what extent can their perspectives modify the fact of a silent dependence on a Western episteme? Would it then be possible to renew the notion of tradition from, let us say, a radical dispersion of African cultures?[37]

We thus need to swap from our worldview to mindview. In the same light traditional philosophers should graduate from a projection of African worldviews in the African metaphysical, epistemological, political and ethical systems. After presenting the worldview and distinguishing it from that upheld by the West, what next? Are we just to sit, observe, and describe the African universe (in African cosmogonies and cosmologies) and then tell tall romantic tales about them, claiming in the process that this is what makes Africa unique? Such research is problematic because it does not necessarily address the issue of high illiteracy, unemployment, crime wave, hunger, disease and death on a continental scale. In my view, a shift from romanticising African worldviews. And this is where we must draw a further distinction between both. In my view, the difference between a worldview and a mindview is this: a worldview refers the world as it

[35] Valentine Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, London, Indiana University Press, 1988; *The Idea of Africa*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994; **Kwasi** Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1980.

[36] Bernard Fonlon, *The Genuine Intellectual,* Yaoundé – Cameroon, Buma Kor Publishing House, 1978; Challenge of Culture in Africa, Mankon-Bamenda, *Langaa* RPCIG, 2010; "The Idea of Cultural Integration", all found in The Digitised Version of Abbia, 2019.

[37] Valentine Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, London, Indiana University Press, 1988, p.

imprints itself on the mind (in the Lockean and Berkeleyian of *esse est percipii* – to be is to be perceived, flawed as the concept may be); whereas, conversely, a mindview, depicts the mind as it puts that imprint from the worldview into form, designing it to take the shape that the individual pleases. Elaborating on the mindview, Chimakonam says that:

> A mind view as I conceive it is the intellectual scope of thought, its processes and approaches relative to any individual or society or age…. What this tells us is that *the way an individual thinks about realities constitutes his mindview; the way individuals in a society think at on average constitutes the psychographic analysis of that society's mind. now any radical shift from the conventional mindview of an age constitutes an intellectual revolution.*[38]

The world does not imprint itself on an inert mind, but on an active one. In turn, through its conscious, cognitive powers the mind has the capacity to transform that worldview into a form which when/if implemented could become a great asset for humanity. Unfortunately, however, this fact is often taken for granted, even when Walter Rodney has made it quite clear that development in general, and economic development in particular (whether individually or collectively), are all initiated in and activated by the mind.[39] In this way, he argues that certain conditions are necessary for us to achieve development: at our individual levels, it would require "increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, [a sense of moral duty and] responsibility and material well-being."[40] This is where the characteristics of modernity set in. Witness, too, that these principles, true to the spirit of the modern and postmodern age, would conflict (as in the triadic processes of thesis, antithesis and synthesis in the Hegelian dialectic) with traditional/conventional principles.

What then are the characteristics of modernism on which we seek to build our philosophy of transformative education? They are, to quote Táíwò, "(1) the principle of subjectivity; (2) the centrality of reason; and (3) the idea of progress" – all heralded towards the establishment of a new reality shaped by modernity, which was "stymied when colonialism was imposed on the continent beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century".[41] Let us look at the first of these principles: subjectivity (or in other words, individualism). We have indicated that some African cultural values such as communalism, socialism, egalitarianism and communitarianism are necessarily hostile towards the concept of subjectivism or individualism. in their view, this concept is Western and shows a world of people who enjoy living in isolation and secluded from the rest of society. Yet, however, it is paradoxical that it is on these Westerners often chided for their individualism that Africa relies heavily for technological advancement. These technologies were not build by a community, it was individual effort that necessitated these inventions we are now enjoying. Moreover, there is a dearth of research in Africa on the concept of individualism because African scholars have proven to be too clingy to their own ethic system that they do not see the need to study that of other people. On individualism as a seeming threat to the African values identified above, Táíwò argues that the greatest fear is the idea that an individual be go out of social grip:

> What is more, where individualism is the principle of social ordering, in the Africans' understanding of it, the individual is prior and superior to the community and the interests of the community are routinely sacrificed to those of the individual.

[38] Jonathan O. Chimakonam, *Ezumezu: A System of Logic for African Philosophy and Studies*, Switzerland, Springer, 2019, pp.5-6.
[39] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, with a postscript by A. M. Babu, and an Introduction by Vincent Harding, Robert Hill and William Strickland, Washington D.C., Howard University Press, 1982, pp.1-2.
[40] *Ibid*, p.1.
[41] Olúfémi Táíwò, *Africa Must Be Modern: A Manifesto*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2014, p.41.

> Where there is a conflict between the individual and the community, the individual often wins; the community is not permitted to bend he will of the individual to conform to communal preferences and the individual in her person, place, or plan of life may not be interfered with except at the invitation of the individual concerned.[42]

So individualism that is preached here does not necessarily detache the individual from the society. Rather, the individual is given the breathing space she deserves, only to permit them to think about the problems of human existence, find solutions to them, and then in declare their findings to the world. Separating from the community does not necessarily make the individual less of a person as it is often erroneously claimed by advocates of African communalism. Instead, individual effort towards social progress is encouraged and this becomes a great booster for others to embark on similar gestures. Take, for instance, the contributions of Rene Descartes to the field of artificial intelligence just by making a single observation: "*Cogito Ego Sum – I think, therefore I am*". Can anyone say that such a discovery did not inch the world forward in the direction of progress?

As concerns the second principle – reason, we would say this, too, is connected to the principle of individuality. When Aristotle declared man a rational animal, and later, Descartes confirmed this in his famous dictum reason is one of those things that is evenly distributed among men (though he too sheepishly denied Africans the right to participate in this free and evenly distributed gift of nature) he was not talking arrant nonsense. Rationality is what distinguishes one person from the other. They may have been given the free gift of reason, but that does not imply that they all reason alike. In the same way, within the individualist theoretical framework, the individual is supposed to be the author and owner of her beliefs or lack thereof. When she shares her beliefs with others she is supposed to have her own reasons for holding them.[43] What's more, what the principle of reason confers on the individual is the right to be different. Being different means being unique, and having the right to make decisions for oneself and not having to be compelled to do what every other person is doing simply because that is how society wants it to be. Being different requires one to develop a sense of autonomy with respect to certain beliefs, including morals, religious faith, sexual preference, and how to conduct one's private life. Informing all these is another basic recognition that is another part of the modern inheritance: "the fallibility of our judgment arising from the radical insufficiency of our cognitive tools."[44]

Moreover, the critiques of rationalism and individualism, in Cameroon, for instance, are still to take stock of this new development that is coming to Africa. I have here with me, two examples of how clinginess to African cultural values has in many respects silenced the ordinary African even on matters where he is supposed to protest. To my mind, socialism and communalism in Africa are often espoused and implemented ridiculously. Consider, for instance, the case of overloading, on the one hand, and case of Covid-19, on the other hand. Let us sample the first case: that of overloading which in many respects is one of the reasons responsible for road accidents in Cameroon in particular and elsewhere in Africa. It is a common practice for drivers to carry more passengers and goods than is required and knowing fully well that the capacity and condition of their car, on the one hand, and the law, on the other hand, do not permit this. When the said driver arrives his destination safely, he is hailed for being an expert in driving; but, paradoxically, in the case of a ghastly accident, the same passengers who hailed the former for his expertise in driving, blame the leaders (the government) of the country, road contractors for corruption and

[42] Olúfémi Táíwò, *Africa Must Be Modern: A Manifesto*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2014, p.41.
[43] *Ibid*, p.58.
[44] Olúfémi Táíwò, *Africa Must Be Modern: A Manifesto*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2014, p.58.

embezzlement of tax payers' money that could have been used to ensure the construction of good roads; and in some cases, they even shift the blame to witchcraft.

The case of Covid-19 is another glaring example which demonstrates the gross abuse of the notion of communalism and socialism. During the outbreak of Covid-19 medical experts advised social distancing in a bid to curb the spread of the virus. It was advised, for instance that drivers should not carry more than three passengers in order to maintain the one-meter social distancing as prescribed by medical experts. Paradoxically, drivers and passengers alike flouted this ordinance. What's more, the law enforcement officers were themselves partisans to this practice. Yet, if any passenger became infected, various speculations would be given, none of which would acknowledge the fact that the said individuals did not heed to medical advice. Africans prioritise communalism and socialism even in situations that common sense demands them to slacken the rules for their own benefit. These may appear to be petty issues, but in reality, these are issues that need to be urgently addressed if we are to make progress.

As regards the third principle – progress, Táíwò holds strongly the fact that knowledge is primordial in the development of every nation. In spite of this, he points out that in Africa, the bank of knowledge capital is completely bankrupt. This is because Africa does not cherish the idea of science and the transformation of her local communities into knowledge communities. Worse, it would be intellectual suicide to propose to a hardcore traditionalist that she should borrow from the Western world. According to Fonlon,

> For men of this mind, if anything is to be genuinely African, it must be shorn of all foreign influence, it must spring up, unalloyed and clean, strait from the genus of Africa. Such a purist therefore might say:
>
> "This new integrated culture
>
> of yours with the African stream
>
> diluted by French and English
>
> currents, call it whatever you
>
> please, but don't call it African."[45]

However, a close study of the issue reveals that Africans may not necessarily have any problem borrowing from the West but for the fact that they were enslaved by Europeans. For as he observes:

> Indeed, hardly an African nationalist would find anything to quarrel with in cultural borrowing between African peoples; if African borrows from African, [sic] that's borrowing from a brother! Thus it is not so much against the borrowing in itself, as against the people from whom it is done that the African purist rises [sic] up his arms. This is confirmed by the fact that all but the whole of the resentment that rankles and testers on this issue is directed against borrowing from the whiteman. But if the whiteman had not been the soulless, heartless slaver and humiliator of the African that he was, if he were not the arrogant jeerer of things African, the self-assured proclaimer of his own cultural superiority, would borrowing from his culture still provoke bitterness? I don't think so. The indignation is leveled against the whiteman's arrogance and wickedness, not his culture.[46]

Still, he contends that Africa has no choice than to borrow. When we consider the rate at which some ex-colonies in the world are advancing economically, politically and technologically, it is

[45] Bernard Fonlon, "Idea of Cultural Integration," in The Digitized Version of Abbia, 2019, p.8.
[46] *Ibid*, p.9.

not because they insisted on developing only home grown solutions to their at the fact that other ex-colonies in the world. Rather, it is because they know that one of the principles of development borrowing from others even if these people are our enemies. Political science teaches us that in politics there is no permanent friend, as well as there is no permanent enemy. We must pull with the tides of time lest we lag behind with slippered footsteps in the name of developing African solutions to African problems. Ali A. Mazrui gives us a perfect example from Japan on how this can be done without necessarily harming the African continent:

> In this connection it is worth bearing in mind important differences between the westernization of Africa and the modernization of Japan after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Japan's original modernization involved considerable selectivity on the part of the Japanese themselves ("Western Technique, Japanese Spirit"). The whole purpose of selective Japanese westernization was to protect Japan against the West, rather than merely to submit to western cultural attractions. The emphasis in Japan was therefore on the technical and technological techniques of the West, rather than on literary and verbal culture. The Japanese slogan of "western technique, Japanese spirit" at the time captured this ambition to borrow technology from the West while deliberately protecting a substantial part of Japanese culture. In a sense, Japan's technological westernization was designed to reduce the danger of other forms of cultural dependency.[47]

The tragedy of Africa is that she copies irrelevant things from the West, then blames the West for being responsible for her underdevelopment. Even when African scholars such as Nkrumah and Nyerere had made it clear that while borrowing from others is a good initiative and should be embraced, the added that we ought to do so purposefully, (for as the African proverb goes, "a goat does not eat every grass it sees") we have rather resorted to copying what is inapplicable in our context.

These concerns are quite pertinent and require that all scholars, be they traditionalists, professional/modern or conversational philosophers, settle their ideological differences, come on board, and negotiate empathetic conversations that would lead to the development of the African continent. It should be noted that ideological differences exist even in those countries from which other nations in the world rush to for cultural borrowing, and even when these ideologies reach the public audience, at some points the warring factions forget their differences (even if superficially) and deal with issues of public interest first. The same is to be expected of our African scholars.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore and expose the red flags inherent in contemporary decolonial discourse as a way of guiding transformative education towards the right path. It began by identifying the negative intellectualism that characterise the decolonial discourse. From there it proceeded to discuss issues related to African identity, culture and tradition and finally, it discussed Africa's possibility of gearing towards the future. The following points can be established: transformative education must evade all these red flags if it is going to offer anything different and better from what preceding ideologies have done; while recognising that the issue of race is essential in the discourse, it must embrace the fluidity or flexibility of the concept of identity, culture and tradition and turn away from those ideologies that leave no room for tolerance; transformative education must embrace modernity as it is the only way through which we can transpose from a mere description of our African worldviews to imposing our respective mind views on our respective African societies such that we are able to come out with a development agenda that reflects our realities; transformative education must also be critical about

[47] Ali A. Mazrui, "Towards Re-Africanizing African Universities: Who Killed Intellectualism in the Post Colonial Era?" *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol.2, No.3&4, Fall&Winter 2003, p.141.

its own methods so as to know which of its ideologies are authoritarian, anachronistic or supernaturalistic, and it should be willing and ready to lay of some of these ideas if they prove ineffective or insensitive to the plight of the people; finally, transformative education must promote the ideology of eclectic cultural borrowing, so that we do not end up like in the current context where we copy everything, including that which is harmful to us. It is our hope that by implementing these suggestions we would heal the continent of Africa from ignorance, disease, death, illiteracy, crime wave and unemployment. Still, we acknowledge the fact that the debate continues, for as we earlier on demonstrated, the dialectic is necessarily for the growth of society.

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