

DE-GLOBALIZING AFRICAN 'TRUTHS': SOME INSIGHTS FROM FRANTZ FANON ET AL

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Abstract: Globalization, with its advance in technology and cross-fertilization of ideas, has many benefits in certain areas of non-tangible contribution, yet it reveals an asymmetry that is harmful and deliberately inimical to the survival of Africa and other Third world nations. One prominent area of this harmful asymmetry is in the global knowledge-flow about Africa and Africans and their effect on intellectual development. What do we disseminate about Africa that the African would cherish as his intellectual heritage? How do we disseminate them? Moreover, through which medium do we disseminate them? This paper argues from the Internalist viewpoint that the African researcher wallows in self-condemnation to the intellectual, cultural possession of the West. The reason for this position is threefold. It posits, firstly, that the African scholar is a marginal man in the politics of knowledge; secondly, that the relevance of discourse on Africa is determined by western scholarship; and thirdly, that the linguistic medium of disseminating 'African truths' is foreign. Drawing insight from Fanon's radical decolonization thesis, this paper proposes a conscious, deliberate and revolutionary acculturation of the African mind through a revisionist epistemology of history. Other than this, Africa will continue to be consumers of second-hand recycling of her own ideas and values, through injurious devices of cultural expropriation.

Key words: Globalization, African scholar, Fanon, cultural expropriation

Introduction

Although the term globalization is gradually becoming familiar in public discourse, in practice, the tendencies and processes it variously signifies have been the fulcrum of human development from time immemorial. As a philosophy of social integration, globalization has often been associated with a variety of tendencies, socio-economic inclinations and events. Amongst these are the following: "economic liberalization characterized by a 'free market' world economic order, Westernization or Amer-

icanization, the internet revolution, global integration.¹ Stripped of the intellectual jargons that adorn the term in public discourse, globalization, in its most general sense, entails global integration, whereby barriers and frontiers are broken in order to establish a single unified de-territorialized social existence. In this regard, William Scheuerman's description of globalization is informative: "Globalization refers to fundamental changes in the spatial and temporal contours of social existence, according to which the significance of space or territory undergoes shifts in the face of a no less dramatic acceleration in the temporal structure of crucial forms of human activity."² Viewed from this standpoint, the idea of social evolution, man's striving to live in the world and the existential dynamics that construct him both physically and symbolically are indices of globalization.

However, this generic connotation of globalization flies in the face of many thinkers, who have come to strictly associate globalization with a 'free market' world economic order; or Westernization or Americanization, all of which are characterized by the dominance of Euro-American forms of political, economic, and cultural life. Under such dominance, poor countries are schemed out of the benefits of globalization, because "the benefits and opportunities of globalization remain highly concentrated among a relatively small number of countries and are spread unevenly within them."³ In such a lopsided relationship, these countries are exploited and show-cased as scapegoats of underdevelopment, even as open market and information revolution remain parlous. The result of such dominance is a harmful asymmetry that reveals itself in the domain of knowledge-flow, whereby the benefit of globalization as a veritable process of social integration through free flow of information, is hampered. With special attention given to Africa, this paper reckons with the Internalist thesis that the problems facing Africa today are traceable to internal factors.⁴ Drawing insight from Fanon's radical decolonization thesis, this

- 1 Anthony Okeregebe, "The African Mind in the Globalised Space" in *A Study in African Socio Political Philosophy*, pp. 187-200, ed. Anthony Okeregebe, S. B. Jegede, J. O. Ogunkoya (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 2012), 190; William Scheuerman, "Globalisation" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2010. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/globalization/> (accessed February 12, 2012).
- 2 William Scheuerman, "Globalisation" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2010. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/globalization/> (accessed February 12, 2012)
- 3 Kofi Annan, *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the Twenty-first Century*, (New York: United Nations, 2000), np.
- 4 Muiyiwa Falaiye, "Theoretical Black Activism and Social Change: Beyond Walter Rodney and George Ayittey" in *Sparks of Resistance, Flames of Change: Black Communities and Activism*, ed. Muiyiwa Falaiye (Lagos: Foresight Press, 2005), 45; Cf. George Ayittey, *Africa Betrayed*, (New York: St. Martin's Press,

paper proposes a conscious, deliberate and revolutionary acculturation of the African mind through a revisionist epistemology of history. The feasibility of this acculturation project rests upon Fanon's philosophy of social engagement, which sees the practical value of philosophy to effect individual commitment and social responsibility.

Global Information/Knowledge flow and Africa

Generally, the concept of knowledge-flow is a neologism in management studies that refers to the process of sharing knowledge and information within an organization. It concerns the sharing of information, skills, techniques, etc within an organization, or its transfer from one organization to another.⁵ However, in the context of this paper, knowledge-flow concerns the mechanism of sharing knowledge for the mutual benefits of those who share them. It concerns that which is known and can be known about the parties, and how that which is known can be shared, and the fundamental principles of 'shareability' of knowledge; that is, the modalities for openness and receptivity so that knowledge can be shared. It also entails the means, technological or otherwise, of sharing this knowledge.

As a phenomenon of social integration, knowledge-flow is subsumed within the gamut of information-flow systems. The phenomenal shape and development taken by world telecommunication systems, the possibility and reality that ideas can be shared without barriers as well as the fact that information can pass on from one place to another without filter or censorship, have been heralded as the positive effects of globalization. It seems true therefore that "exploits in information technology, and the resultant 'villagisation' of the globe have been of tremendous benefits to the both developing and developed countries alike."⁶ Yet, in the history of global information and knowledge-flow, the prevalence of imbalance has been the norm, even though globalization is assumed to address this breach. As early as the 1960s, the American communication theorist, Wilbur Schramm, had identified and examined some lopsidedness in the global flow of information.⁷ Building on Schramm's finding, Herbert Schiller observes also that when it comes to important global matters such

1992).

5 Jim Kane, "Why Knowledge Flow is the Core of Knowledge Management Today" in *Information Management*. Paragon, 2016. Available at: <http://www.consultparagon.com/blog/knowledge-management-in-the-workplace-time-for-change>

6 Okeregbe, op. cit., 191.

7 Wilbur L. Schramm, *Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in the*

Developing Countries (New York: Stanford University Press, 1964).

as satellites and the military, there are little meaningful inputs from developing countries.⁸

When it comes to Africa, the information imbalance is worse. Except for issues or matters that are exclusively African, Africa is seldom considered in the important discussions that concern the global community. Not only is Africa's contribution to important, positive and influential global matters relatively non-existent, but also its presence in the information highway is dismal. Wayan Vota writing on Africa's poor representation in *Wikipedia* quotes Mark Graham thus:

Remarkably there are more Wikipedia articles written about Antarctica than all but one of the fifty-three countries in Africa (or perhaps even more amazingly, there are more Wikipedia articles written about the fictional places of Middle Earth and Discworld than about many countries in Africa, the Americas and Asia).⁹

In the academic circle and intellectual research works, African contributions are sidelined except such contributions either service the powerful Western intellectual communities, or elucidate negative impressions of, and misrepresents Africa. The reason for this as we shall see has to do with the politics and power of knowledge. This dynamics of knowledge power causes one to embark on some reflection about knowledge-flow in Africa and raise some pertinent questions, as for example, What is the character of discourse on Africa? What do we disseminate about Africa? How do we disseminate them? What is/are the consequences to the politics of knowledge in Africa?

The Character of African Discourse

To the question, what is the character of the discourse on Africa, the answer is simple. An uncritical response is that, what passes as true knowledge of, and about, Africa is what is dictated as such by the West. In consonance with Mudimbe's analysis of Africa's gnosis, the knowledge of, and about Africa, since the ancient classical period, has been, and is still, managed by external powers with an intellectual and cultural mis-

8 Herbert I. Schiller, *Mass Communications and American Empire* (New York: Beacon Press, 1969).

9 Wayan Vota, Righting Wikipedia's African's Information Imbalance" Available at:

<http://www.ictworks.org/2009/12/08/righting-wikipedias-african-information-imbalance/> [Accessed July 4, 2016].

sion.¹⁰

Long before Africa and its peoples became an established course of study, narratives about the continent have come to global spotlight as the creation of curious Western minds, who by their assessment were encountering the unfamiliar, namely, a hitherto unknown race of humans, with a mode of life completely different from what they were used to in Europe. Earliest narrators and natural historians, such as Pliny the elder and Ptolemy who brought Africa into the social consciousness of their Graeco-Roman kindred might have been very baffled by the inexplicable difference between their own world and the world of those they called *ethiops* or the blacks.¹¹ Whatever it was they presented to their world, by this epistemic encounter, formed the basis for the barrage of denigration directed at the African. However, in today's world, although the news from Africa does not contain the exoticism of the ancient period, the same antediluvian prejudice, created by the notion of difference, still permeates our unbalanced information world order. As Falaiye observes:

Given this mindset, if Africa and its peoples are to be understood, they must either be left alone and contemplated on from afar, or be analysed, broken into parts, dissected, and explored. To understand, by this token, would entail intellectual conquest of that which must be known.¹²

Such epistemic conquest takes the form of organized and systematic alteration of the way and manner Africans see themselves, their world and their place in it. Thus, the intellectual mission of this enterprise is to redefine, reinterpret Africa's fast-changing society and evolving cultures from a multidisciplinary standpoint. In subjecting Africa and its people to various pre-determined schemata of investigation, it is assumed that the truth about Africa and its people could be made known. Analysis, by this assumption, becomes a technique of understanding Africa, and thereby positions its cultures and peoples as an appendage of the dominating global powers. In this redefinition and re-interpretation, a whole worldview, history, cultural traditions of the objectified phenomenon, namely the African, are either obliterated or re-thought.

To accomplish this intellectual mission, it relies on a methodology of appropriation, influence, control and subjugation unveiled as African Studies. Although African Studies, in a value-neutral sense, is an inter-

10 V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)

11 Kofi Awoonor, *The African Predicament: Collected Essays*, (Accra: Sub Saharan Publishers, 2006), 388.

12 Muyiwa Falaiye, *African Studies in African Universities*, 2016 Faculty of Arts Open Lecture, Onabisi Onabanjo University, 2016, (Ago Iwoye: OOU Mass Communication Press, 2016), 12.

disciplinary cluster that takes up Africa as a subject of study, its connection with anthropological researches has raised moral questions about its epistemic integrity as a genuine science of Africa and her peoples. Commenting on the collaboration between anthropology and the culture of imperialism carried out by colonialism, Falaiye has this to say: "...anthropological researches, upon which African Studies has relied for intellectual guidance, are said to have colonization as a mission, for if the African experience is understandable in anthropological lights, control of the continent and its people could be effectively carried out."¹³ Besides, as influential African philosopher, Paulin J. Hountondji, has laboriously pointed out, there is nothing that commands any respectability for the African in that nomenclature. Apart from his explanation that the grammatical case of the term African studies (African history, African philosophy, African linguistics, etc) suggests a "discourse on African" rather than a "tradition developed by Africans within Africa," there is the assumption in African studies "that Africans themselves were not conscious of their own philosophy, and that only western analysts observing them from without could give a systematic account of their wisdom."¹⁴

For many decades, this methodological anarchism has ruled the intellectual world of the up and coming young African scholars. From history to philosophy, literature to sociology and from religious studies to linguistics, the canons of universalism becomes the principle of legitimacy for African scholars. Yet, it is to this disciplinary amalgam that young African scholars run to for guidance. Since this is the case, we should also ask, what do we disseminate about Africa? Under the guidance of an externally controlled African knowledge base, it is difficult to contemplate any fructifying intellectual exercise. This is because with such a tradition Africans tend to investigate subjects and disseminate information and knowledge on Africa, which are of interest, first and foremost, to a Western audience; and we rely on the West for this knowledge about ourselves and our world.

The Problem of disseminating African truths

Now, we need to ask, how do we disseminate knowledge about Africa? To ascribe legitimacy to their intellectual cause, African scholars felt, as some still feel, that it was fashionable to ape the Western tradition, or attempt to impress their patrons by examining African experiences with the lenses of the Western mind. To illustrate this, two historical hangovers

¹³ Ibid., p. 15-16

¹⁴ Paulin J. Hountondji, "Knowledge of Africa, Knowledge by Africans: Two Perspectives on African Studies" *RCCS Annual Review Issue 1* 2009. URL : <http://rccsar.revues.org/174> ; DOI : 10.4000/rccsar.174 (Accessed July 4, 2016).

would suffice.

The first is the notorious tradition of universalism that has plagued philosophical scholarship in Africa to such a point of denying the existence of African philosophy. In African philosophy, although recent scholars are gradually venturing into areas of investigation that were hitherto anathema to the traditional view of philosophical scholarship, the theoretical frameworks and methodologies by which such research works make sense, are built upon Western episteme. Thus, whilst the philosopher-scholar is required to gather mainly what people say and think about a certain idea or concept, the explication of such a concept or idea is valued only in Western terms. Apart from the like of Bodunrin, Hountondji, Oruka, and Wiredu who globalized the African philosophy controversy, Hountondji has continually revisited this debate in contemporary terms, especially as it concerns knowledge-flow about Africa.¹⁵

As it concerns African literature, Chinweizu, Jemie and Maduiké have identified and critically analysed the attempts at colonial inculcation of foreign imperialist literary standards and values as criteria for judging African literature and orature.¹⁶ According to them, in order to express the African experience, African writers – novelists and poets – have fallen victim of the Eurocentric charges against African literature imposed by the colonial intellectual tradition. This thinking is to the effect “that African literature in English, French or Portuguese are appendages of British, French or Portuguese national literature.”¹⁷ Adrian Roscoe, who is reputed to be the British spokesman of this European appropriation of African literature, was quoted to have stated: “If an African writes in English, his work must be considered as belonging to English letters as a whole, and can be scrutinized accordingly”¹⁸

In compliance with the Eurocentric standards set, a coterie of African scholars themselves became the purveyors of this intellectual arrogance, by deriding African orature as deficient in the qualities that make a good novel,¹⁹ and by infusing African traditional lores with obscurantist, syncretic and obfuscating devices and mannerism to conjure what became known as African poetry. The extravagant Latinization, the controlled anglophile symbolism, deliberate classicism, insincere cultural transmutation evident in the poetic description of typical traditional Af-

15 Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* 2nd Edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.)

16 Chinweizu, Onyechekwa Jemie, Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature, Vol. 1: African Fiction and Poetry and Their Critics*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980).

17 Ibid., 10.

18 Adrian Roscoe, *Mother Is Gold: A Study in West African Literature*, quoted in Ibid., 8.

19 Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike, op. cit., 50 f.

rican life-worlds and experiences, demonstrated the colonial intellectual heritage onto which the African knowledge base had been festooned.²⁰ In sum, many African scholars depend on Western *epistemes* and intellectual culture to make sense of their world. All these form the point Ruch and Anyanwu were driving at when they argue:

By subordinating African cultural facts to the assumptions, concepts, theories and worldview suggested by the Western culture and developed by the Western thinkers, confusion ensues. The knowledge arrived at with the Western principles of understanding is not the knowledge of the African cultural reality but enlightened rationalism of knowledge emancipated from the African cultural world.²¹

That African scholars are yet to wean themselves of this surrogacy is evident in the indiscriminate globetrotting young African scholars embark upon from Africa to the Europe and America, just to seek legitimacy for their career. This tragedy is further compounded by the seeming inexorable fact that European languages are the means of scientific expression, and the means by which African scholars can make sense of themselves.

The Consequence: Cultural Expropriation

One glaring consequence of this superimposed intellectual tradition on the African knowledge base is a menace of globalization, which Papa Gueye N'Diaye has termed Cultural Expropriation.²² Interpreting N'Diaye, cultural expropriation may be viewed as a re-interpretation of a culture (for instance African culture) by a purported dominating culture (any western culture), with the intention of trading a non-African vision to Africans.²³ To understand expropriation, one has to note the fact that to receive documentation of the underdeveloped world, especially Africa, you must go to the great American universities or to London, Paris, or to Germany. The danger in this is that a non-African vision, for instance, is being traded to Africans, who uncritically accept it because they do not have the means and resources to organize long-term projects and researches without the assistance of the developed world.

A sad and embarrassing trend of this menace has been identified and treated by Sulaimon Adebawale, when he discusses the marginality of

20 Ibid., 163 ff.

21 E. A. Ruch and K. C. Anyanwu, *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1981), 77.

22 Papa Gueye N'Diaye, "Cultural Development in Africa: Evolution, Experience and Prospects", in *UNESCO Cultural Development: Some Regional Experiences* (Paris: UNESCO Press, 1981), 20.

23 Okeregbe, op. cit., 194

African researchers and academics to lend their voices to a compendium of voices in matters concerning Africa and the black man. In his journal article, “The Scholarly Journal in the Production and Dissemination of Knowledge on Africa: Explaining Some Issues for the Future”²⁴, Adebowale explores the marginality of the African researcher in the politics of knowledge, as well as the greater challenge that waits the African with the explosion of the internet, owing to the harshness of the economy of the southern hemisphere.

Drawing insight from Zeleza’s 1997 study of five English-speaking Africanist journals in the social sciences between 1982 and 1992, which demonstrated that African authors do not get published in these journals, in comparison with their counterparts from the north, Adebowale observes that, while ‘Africa’ features prominently in the titles and focuses of these journals, “scholars originating from the continent find it difficult to be published in them.”²⁵ Reasons adduced for this include quotidian distractions and mundane pre-occupations of the world outside the university, the harsh economic climate, the striving after basic things of existence, all which affect the Ivory Tower. While suspecting biases of editors and publishers of such journals, he also puts the blame on the attitude of a greater percentage of African scholars to evaluate the success and benefits of their intellectual enterprise based on Western scholarship. Adebowale, however, warns: “With its current dominance of the global knowledge flows and agenda, academia from the west determines the standard in other academia as well.”²⁶

Because the standard for African academia is determined by the Western academia, the centre of *Africana* discourse comes to be located in the West, as articles and essays on Africa authored by Africans find their way into foreign libraries and institution. Moreover, since published works on Africa by Africans are domiciled in the West, it becomes clear that the tendency for what may be termed profound scholarship for an African scholar is one that appeals to the West and services non-African readership. The result, as Hountondji remarks, is that “our scientific activity is *extraverted*, i.e. externally oriented, intended to meet the theoretical needs of our Western counterparts and answer the questions they pose. The exclusive use of European languages as a means of scientific expression reinforces this alienation.”²⁷ Although Hountondji insists that

24 Sulaimon Adebowale, “The Scholarly Journal in the Production and Dissemination of Knowledge on Africa: Explaining Some Issues for the Future” in *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3: 1, 2001, 26.

25 *ibid.*, 33.

26 *ibid.*, 34.

27 Hountondji, 2009, *op. cit.*, 7.

this trend described is one that obtained fifty years ago, the institutional demands on scholars today by African university administrators to ‘publish in foreign journals or perish’, the celebration of foreign journal publications as high-rating boosters for universities, and the craze for acquisition of foreign or international publications in one’s intellectual kitty, are attestation to this prevalent tendency. So, rather than fostering a horizontal knowledge-sharing activity with African scholars, what is promoted by this ‘extraverted scientific activity’ is a top-bottom or vertical discussion between African scholars and their counterparts from the north.²⁸

When such a tendency becomes a tradition or develops into an intellectual movement, the inevitable consequence is the gradual estrangement of the African from the roots of his life-world. In the parlance of some blunt critics, it is cultural alienation. When the individual is estranged from, cut off from, or uprooted from his life-world by the concourse of history, he has a fragmented meaning of his existence and the world around him. This is because s/he can neither give genuine expression of his world, nor fit into another culture because of lack of acceptance. American sociologist, Robert Park, was said to have characterized these African and black men as ‘Marginal men’²⁹. Marginal men, Park allegedly explains “exist in two cultural worlds and in two different societies at the same time, without being totally a part of either.”³⁰ The deadly effect of this situation is captured thus:

As a cultural menace, cultural alienation is one of the most devastating effects of the triad of colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalization, in that it is a deliberate incapacitation of the African’s state of spiritual becoming, a deliberate denial of his existentiality as well as a truncation of his mental potentialities, through a freezing of his power of being and acting.³¹

A Fanonian Evaluation

There are many ways scholars have responded to this problem of knowledge-flow between Africa and the West. Amongst the various approaches such as cultural misappropriation, inculturation and emerging

28 Ibid.

29 Robert Park, cited in Muyiwa Falaiye, “Riots, Revolts and Black Nationalism: The African American Experience” in *African Spirit and Black Nationalism: A Discourse in African and Afro American Studies*, ed. Muyiwa Falaiye (Lagos: Foresight Press, 2003), 150.

30 Muyiwa Falaiye, “Riots, Revolts and Black Nationalism: The African American Experience” in *African Spirit and Black Nationalism: A Discourse in African and Afro American Studies*, ed. Muyiwa Falaiye (Lagos: Foresight Press, 2003), 150.

31 Okeregebe, op. cit., 196.

African partnership initiatives, the position of Franz Fanon stands out. While some Africanist scholars such as Walter Rodney, Julius Nyerere, Claude Ake, amongst others have maintained an Externalist position by romanticizing the African past and blaming the West for the predicament of the African and his inability to wriggle himself out of the epistemic quagmire caused by lopsided knowledge-flow, certain others have blamed the African for his woes. The latter, known within the circles of African philosophies of development as the Internalist thesis, cautions against the indiscriminate ascription of blame on the west. The Internalist paradigm argues that the African predicament is traceable to the intellectual poverty, moral insensibility, and the lack of political will of the African to address the problem that has befallen the African. Though often misconstrued as either an Externalist or an Internalist, Franz Fanon was a political philosopher whose response to the challenges of colonialism and neo-colonialism was neither exclusively Externalist nor exclusively Internalist. Whilst he posited that the present African condition had the imprint of the colonial situation, he equally observed that the effects of colonization have subsisted through the instrumentation of African collaborators whose action and inaction churn out the policies that drive socio-political, economic and cultural development of the continent.

By this stance, both Externalist and Internalist factors are implicated in the African predicament; yet the onus of addressing this problem rests solely on the African who must take responsibility for his own political salvation.

Either bearing this in mind, a Fanonian response may entail a judicious use of violence, which many have construed as Fanon's justification of violence as a model of African revolution, or a model of political action rooted in moral philosophy. Since the problem of knowledge-flow on Africa concerns postcolonial situation, the more appropriate of Fanon's approaches focuses on the notions of commitment and responsibility, which are moral categories.³² Here, man is viewed as actional;³³ that is, being primed to act, to reach out to the other, and to engage with the collective. Interpreting this position, Jinadu explains that what Fanon means to emphasize is the practical value of philosophy to effect commitment and social responsibility; "that philosophy should be used to organize and mobilize one's cognition of self and others."³⁴ In consonance with this approach, an evaluation based on Fanon's philosophy of social engage-

32 L. Adele Jinadu, *Fanon: In Search of the African Revolution* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980), 125.

33 Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, transl. Charles Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 222.

34 Jinadu, op. cit., 126.

ment could be contemplated. To put Fanon in perspective, it is pertinent we re-expose the questions raised by Jinadu in respect of this philosophy of social engagement: What is the basis for human action and conduct? In what does the rationality of human conduct consist?³⁵ These two questions could be collapsed to one: Where lies the value of the rationality of human action? In response to this question, Fanon, in the interpretation of Jinadu, thinks that the rationality of human action may be found, firstly, in the natural capacity for collective human life to progress. It is argued here that in the collectivity of progressive human life, individuals who make up the collective have a capacity for self-improvement. As it concerns the African, s/he has a propensity of being taught values for his self-improvement as well as a capacity for unlearning that, which is inimical to his existence. Fanon seems to have echoed this point when he writes: “It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self; it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world.”³⁶

The rationality for human action could be found also in the introspective action of creative and re-creative process of collective life through decisions of self-conscious human beings. He remarks: “I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself.” The logical end of this continuous creation and re-creation of collective life is expected to terminate in social mobilization. Thus, rationality for human action has its value in its teleology, its ultimate purpose, which is to facilitate the individual’s self-knowledge, and to enable him recognize his freedom to make choices that would be beneficial to the collective, and to act responsibly towards achieving it.

This model of social and political action is consistent with his doctrine of collective self-retrieval and self-renewal advocated in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In the section on National Culture, Fanon admonishes the African scholar to unconditionally affirm African culture by extricating himself from the malady of indecision that confines him to a ‘universal standpoint’, and metamorphose from being a patronizing intellectual whose work mirror European literary devices, and a confused intellectual romanticizing the African traditional past,³⁷ to an intellectual awakener of the people, whose work becomes “a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature.”³⁸ Fanon had earlier on called on this

35 Ibid.

36 Fanon, op. cit., 231.

37 Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Middlesex: Penguin Book, 1967), 171–179.

38 Ibid., 179.

knowledge moulder of the people to protect his culture, having realized the untruths of the colonial culture. According to him,

The native intellectual who has gone far beyond the domains of Western culture and who has got it into his head to proclaim the existence of another culture never does so in the name of Angola or of Dahomey. The culture which is affirmed is African culture.³⁹

Applying the Fanonian Thesis

When this Fanonian thesis is applied to the subject of this paper, one is confronted with the demand of the contemporary African knowledge builder to realize the following:

- i. the necessity for collective self-awareness if we are to understand the socio-historical process that underpins lopsided knowledge-flow in Africa;
- ii. the need to tell the African story the African way;
- iii. the obligation to be fair to Africa by ensuring that all the accumulated knowledge of centuries on different aspects of African life be shared with the people who live there.

Concerning the necessity for collective self-awareness, African intellectuals and purveyors of knowledge must realize that their point of departure is one of mental and cultural violence meted on the African through deliberate concoction of untruths and intellectual demonization of his life-world. These, as Ogundowole observes concerning Nigeria and Anglophone Africa, have been carried out, through structures “social, economic and political institutions, administrative methods and principles, the English Language, and the British Commonwealth phenomenon.”⁴⁰ According to him, by our retention of these, “we have chosen to remain English even though ethno-, and socio-genetically we are not.”⁴¹ He writes:

As a people who have once suffered a nearly wholesale transformation of their natural, traditional, life setting under an imposed (or, rather, a superimposed) alien culture and world view, a near solution of the fundamental problem of our life time could hardly be short of an analogical retreat from the...superimposed worldview and the resultant cultural estrangement.⁴²

As the history of world civilizations has shown, no dominating power carries out such enterprise with regarding the other in opposition;

³⁹ Ibid., 170.

⁴⁰ E. K. Ogundowole, *Evolving National Awareness through Philosophy and Communication Practice* (Lagos: Correct Counsels Ltd. 2007), 35.

⁴¹ Ibid., 39.

⁴² Ibid., 36–37.

and so to counter the furtherance of knowledge as control and influence, there is need to recognize the difference between “They” and “We”; and accentuate this opposition. E. K. Ogundowole has this in mind, when he tries to show how the idea of opposition can be harnessed by an evolving society to further its own consciousness and instinct for survival and prosperity. It makes a society’s awareness of (and its coming to terms with) antagonism the basis for that society’s growth and prosperity, even its very survival. “No people ever prospered without first developing the idea of a real or imagined enemy.”⁴³

In furtherance of this position, Ogundowole appeals to the postulations of Social Psychology, especially as developed by the Russian Boris Porshnev. According to the Porshnevian thesis on the ‘They-We’ distinction in social psychology, a society is never really self-conscious until it comes in contact with another from which it can distinguish itself. In other words, for a people to refer consciously to itself as ‘we’, it has to encounter and dissociate itself from some ‘they’. ‘We’ is simply those who are not ‘they’. Thus the notion of outside ‘they’ is prior to, more primary than, that of ‘we’ in “generating the self-awareness of a community.”⁴⁴ Since a community’s awareness of the need for survival and prosperity can only come after its basic self-awareness, it follows that survival and prosperity cannot come unless a community can develop an idea of opposition, an idea of some “they” from which it can dissociate itself.

Armed with this mindset of opposition, we are psycho-socially equipped to tell the African story the African way. Telling the African story the African way is the product of a mental sojourn of many metamorphoses, as Fanon made us to understand.⁴⁵ It is a task, which imposes on the African intellectual the pangs of duty and responsibility, having recognized the truth about Africa. In a radical sense, it entails a ‘re-historicization’ of the African world, by purging it of the dubious scientificity and universalism imposed on it by a West-dominated African Studies. Such purging may take the form of decolonization of African studies and African literature, the promotion of self-retrieval through cultural education and by amplifying folk wisdom, not merely as ‘ancient sayings’ but as critical ideas by which Africans live; all of which researcher, Muyiwa Falaiye, riding on the crest of Odera Oruka’s sage philosophy, has treated in detail.⁴⁶

43 Ibid., 43.

44 Ibid., 37

45 Cf. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit., 178-9

46 Cf. Muyiwa. “Philosophic Sagacity and the Problem of Transmitting Knowledge Without Writing: The Ekiti Yoruba Experience”, in *Hekmat Falsafeh (Wisdom and Philosophy)*, vol. 2 no.1, 2006. Tehran: Allameh

However, one of the most audacious telling of the African story in a most profound manner has come from the *Bobapitan* himself, Professor Toyin Falola, and his retinue of intellectuals and burgeoning scholars. In works too numerous to cite, Falola has embarked upon a one-man mission of ‘re-historicization’ of the African world by traversing all areas of the humanities and engaging in ‘genre-bending’ to establish the truth about knowledge on Africa and about Africa. In his recent lecture which sought to dispel some untruth about symbiotic relationship in global civilization, Falola writes:

The appearance, and sometimes, the unstated reality, is always that we owe everything to outsiders, we are losing everything, and we give nothing. Not so. The Yoruba have given a lot to the world. Our hands, too, are on top! Let us switch the hands, although the understanding of circulation of ideas and cultural ideas is not about one hand being on top. The Yoruba are truly global, and have contributed to globalization in ways that are substantial.⁴⁷

His detailed examination of the contributions of the Yoruba to global civilization touches on the nationalization of the Yoruba culture around the Atlantic, the infusion of Yoruba in academic fields, the preservation and exportation of the Yoruba medical and healing systems, the facilitation of political understanding of pre-colonial systems, amongst others.⁴⁸ Telling the African story in such an African way demands a sacrifice of one’s time, talent and treasure. Even in scribbling this, one is also reminding oneself that telling the African story the African way is a bold mission driven by passion and conviction. Thus convinced, it becomes some kind of obligation for the African purveyor of knowledge on Africa, a deliberate negation of which should fill him with sadness and shame.

Yet, the sadness and shame should be weightier for him who has the wherewithal to tell the African history but refuses to. From personal experience, one has come to realize that, many of us who claim to be students of African culture, even after coming to terms with the true knowledge about Africa and have come to see the deception of the civilization and culture that have been bequeathed to them, are hamstrung by quotidian pursuits to tell the African story. They think of the consequences of their ‘new Africanness’ on their family, friends and associates with whom they have lived in perennial deception and conquest. Others remain at the superfi-

Tabatabaei University, Tehran, Iran.

47 Toyin Falola, “The Yoruba Factor in the World”, The 9th Splash FM Anniversary Lecture, held at the Conference Centre of the University of Ibadan, on July 8, 2016.

48 Ibid.

cial level of tokenism by reeling out *magni opera* and essays eulogizing African truths, but negate those truths by living a lie. Some others in the diaspora have become champions of African knowledge abroad, enriching foreign audiences with resources garnered from Africa, but lack the slightest conviction of interfacing with people in the motherland. Either for its tendency to alter discourses on Africa, or for inhibiting robust research in African scholarship, the unwillingness to interface with scholars on the continent is a disservice to Africa. Hountondji's remark in this regard is very instructive and bears reproducing in its entirety. He counsels:

Things should also happen in Africa, therefore, and not always or exclusively outside Africa. Fairness to the Black continent demands that all the knowledge accumulated throughout centuries on different aspects of its life be shared with the people who live there. It demands that adequate measures be taken to facilitate a lucid, responsible appropriation by Africa of the knowledge available, the discussions and interrogations developed elsewhere. Such appropriation should go hand in hand with a critical re-appropriation of Africa's own endogenous knowledges and, beyond, a critical appropriation of the very process of knowledge production and capitalisation.⁴⁹

Instrumental to this realization is the conscious endeavour to promote the study of African history in schools. For a long time, until recently, the teaching of history was suspended in public secondary schools in Nigeria. The reason adduced for this action, which is traceable to the global, consumerist trend that empowers science, technology education, business and commercial studies, is that the study of history has no economic value for the student. However, it is cheering news that nationalistic African thinkers and policy makers are now realizing the costly mistake of its ban.

This realization is also writ large in the bold and ambitious activities carried out by such endeavours as the Toyin Falola Annual Conference on Africa and the African Diaspora (TOFAC) and the revitalization of *Africana* scholarship initiatives in the United States of America. It is to the glory of an emerging African intelligentsia that TOFAC is generating African epistemologies through its conferences, and thereby consciously balancing the lopsided global power relations concerning Knowledge about Africa.

49 Hountondji, 2009, op. cit., 7.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it has been established that, as it was in the period of colonization, in this age of new globalization, the young African scholar is a marginal man in the politics of knowledge. This is because what the powers of today's world, that is, the Western intellectual culture and traditions, have sanctioned as discourse on Africa, are the doctored truths they want the African scholar to disseminate as knowledge. To get this done, they have provided Western canons, epistemes and linguistic devices as instruments of universal knowledge. For the uncritical African, who has chosen to wallow in this Eurowestern epistemic ethnocentrism, the result is an estrangement, a cultural uprootedness and marginality that makes him a menace to his African roots.

Drawing insight from Fanon's philosophy of social engagement, that transforms individual commitment to social responsibility by moralizing individual actions in collective life, it was argued that if the contemporary African knowledge builder is to be a genuine purveyor of African truths she has to realize the following: (i) the necessity for collective self awareness if we are to understand the socio-historical process that underpins lopsided knowledge-flow in Africa; (ii) the need to tell the African story the African way; and (iii) the obligation to be fair to Africa by ensuring that all the accumulated knowledge of centuries on different aspects of African life be shared with the people who live there.

The point being raised here is the possibility of generating indigenous knowledge system. One potent way of getting this done is through a conscious and deliberate process of deglobalization. Barring any concise definition of what this process may be, deglobalization entails a reversal of the tendencies and processes that put less powerful countries or peoples in positions of disadvantage, subordination and inferiority in the globalization balance. For the African it entails telling the African story the African way. It demands the development of indigenous epistemes through a concerted effort at mental decolonization, intellect restructuring and committed cultural awareness creation. It means rewriting our own history in our own way, presenting our art, life and worldview in a manner we cherish, and sharing what we own, in the best way we deem fit and right, without sacrificing our ontological integrity.

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