

ON THE KANTIAN INFLUENCE IN AFRICAN THOUGHT AND THE NOTION OF TRANS-COLONIZATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

Kant is a major enlightenment philosopher who has influenced modern African philosophy enormously directly and also indirectly in some ways. I shall explore some of these influences, critique them, relate them to the burning questions of decolonization and trans-colonization and point to ways of adapting and maximizing the best of these influences. To achieve these objectives, I shall begin with a review of Kant and the enlightenment in relation to Africa.

The enlightenment period otherwise known as the age of reason was a time when some scholars put their faith in reason as not just the basis of final epistemic authority but also the instrument to solve all problems. The age begins more or less formally with Rene Descartes. He explicitly and consciously broke with the epistemic traditions and orientation of the past, which was composed of reliance on authority and its supporting genius (especially that of Aristotle) and cognitive traditionalism and its back-looking orientation (that is, the idea that all knowledge has been given or revealed to the ancients and subsequent scholars have to rely on their authority to gain knowledge).

Resistance to this type of supremacy of authority and traditionalism, which gave rise to such authorities and divinities of knowledge as Hermes Trismegistos in the ancient world, had been building in philosophical circles of the scholastic and medieval times, because people thought that reason (a great gift of God to humans in the thoughts of St Augustine of Hippo in North Africa, for example) played a central role in providing humans with knowledge and guidance, and so should count for something in its own right – medieval philosophers thus came to the doctrine that God is rational, quintessentially so, I would

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say.² And, thus it did not seem right to say that all knowledge was revealed to the ancients, especially since these ancients were pagans – the fullness of reason could not have been revealed to them. This dissatisfaction with authority and a back-looking traditionalist gaze in scholasticism culminated in the Cartesian break, in which Descartes proposed reason as the only foundation and source of true knowledge.

There were, however, those who while rejecting the epistemic authority of the ancients and cognitive traditionalism, preferred to seek true knowledge in and through the senses, because for them reason can give formal knowledge but little or no information about matters of fact. The accumulation of new facts about the real physical world, can only come through senses and observation, therefore it is to the senses that we should turn for true knowledge. Thus, scholars were torn between rationalism which advanced the formal, often tautological, world of logic and the order of thought with its certainties but little matters of facts and empiricism which advanced facts based on sense observations with its huge virtually unresolvable deficit of certainty. This was the situation in the time of Kant, who then stepped into the breach to achieve a synthesis that would give reason its proper place in the knowledge making process as well as in the being and reality of human existence and the world generally. Since, my purpose in this paper is to discuss and evaluate the Kantian influence on modern African thought, I shall not go into a general discussion of Kantian epistemology, ontology, and his ethics and political thought that follow from them, rather I would limit myself to those aspects of Kant's thoughts that influenced modern African thinking.

2. KANTIAN SUPREMACY OF REASON

The centrality of reason in Kant's thinking emerged in his synthesis of rationalism and empiricism. Kant imposes the dynamic, creative but factually, largely, fruitless reason of Descartes on sense data to produce phenomenal knowledge.³ Sense data in themselves are basic but formless and meaningless; they have to be ordered to produce meaning and knowledge. With this ordering comes the inherent forms and structure of reason, which reason in its dynamism can enlarge to give more meaning and knowledge.⁴ Thus, Kant came to describe philosophically, more accurately, the modern scientific orientation and method, which Galileo more or less invented with his marriage of demystified mathematics as the formal description of a world that is populated by dynamic atoms, molecules and objects.⁵ This synthesis raises important questions in epistemology, ontology, ethics and social philosophy broadly.

If the structure of the conceptual scheme (reason) enables us to determine the facts, since there could be more than one conceptual scheme, then there could be different facts or truths. Relativism begins to bang on the door of the otherwise impregnable universalist Kantian scheme.⁶ The West had enthroned reason backed by the empirical facts that it generates in the Kantian philosophical-scientific scheme but there are different forms of reason (coherent logical schemas), which enable us to interpret the world differently. How are we to determine which of the schemas with its associated facts gives us the truth or more truths? These were

not big questions for the West in the time of Kant and the century or so that followed. This was partly because the emphasis on reason in its scientific form in the West goes back to the medieval times and the success of the empirical sciences and the confidence it gave Western intellectuals was such that the scientific approach came to be seen as the only right approach by many, not just in the field of the natural sciences but in all areas of inquiry, hence the emergence of the positivist approach that sought to extend the natural scientific method and its undergirding philosophical assumptions to social studies and the humanities, and the rise of such schools as the logical positivists in philosophy.

In respect of Africa, both the continent and its peoples were studied scientifically. This gave rise to anthropology and the efforts of such scholars as Levy-Bruhl, for whom the African was pre-logical because they applied some types of mystical, metaphysical notions of being and their relations in the formation of their conceptual schemes which were not commensurable with the Western scientific model. Yet the logic of the African conceptual scheme like that of pre-modern Europe and other parts of the world relied on the relation and connection of essences (and universals) regardless of the different “phenotypical” stuffs of their embodiments, which offers as rational a scheme as any, once one accepts the basic assumptions, as one may surmise from Robin Horton’s arguments.⁷

3. KANT AND SOME MAJOR ISSUES AND PROBLEMS IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

The emerging field of African philosophy and related studies had to confront this sort of denigration of non-Western conceptual schemes and epistemic orientations and accompanying colonial racism. However, although scholars like Placide Tempels, Robin Horton, Olubi Sodipo, Barry Hallen, et al showed that Africans were not pre-logical but alter-logical (not in the sense of having alternative laws of thought but in the sense of having an alternative train of thought, new questions and problems emerged. Some major questions in this regard include: do different epistemic orientations and conceptual schemes have the same veridic status as well as have the same epistemic fecundity in terms of generating truths and knowledge? And how can we establish the case one way or the other, especially if there is incommensurability? These are important questions in the African environment because the African must choose his/her epistemic orientation, categorial framework and conceptual scheme while trying to understand and integrate the theoretical constructs and bodies of facts generated by alternative conceptual schemes and epistemic orientations – that is maintain epistemic orientational integrity, which is an aspect of the general epistemic virtues that underpin knowledge generation.

3.1 CHOICE OF EPISTEMIC ORIENTATIONS

I have tried elsewhere to clarify the issues involved here and show the rational basis for a choice in this regard by first establishing ways of reducing incommensurability and pointing to

verisimilitude.⁸ In the first place, in the empirical field, given basic intersubjectivity, a scientific community, indeed a knowledge community, can be composed of people from different races, creeds and cultures. People can agree as Newton-Smith argues on the quality and quantity of observation statements on an intersubjective basis across cultures, creeds, races and languages (provided there are proper translations, which is not much of a problem at this level).⁹ We may therefore readily apprehend and evaluate the veridic status of observation statements of different conceptual schemes and epistemic orientations in respect of observable nature and thereby find verisimilitude and the basis of rational choices. However, this is not possible with non-tangible values and notional entities (such as metaphysical and moral realities and values) because they are underdetermined by empirical observations. These values underpin our assumptions, choices, and commitments to given ideologies/worldviews (which regardless of the degree of their systematic formulation) constitute guides to our life, including guides to the sorts of epistemic orientations and conceptual schemes a person upholds. These values at the most general level also compose our supreme beliefs and values; and they are perforce of their being underdetermined by empirical observation more open to incommensurability.

I have argued elsewhere that we may reduce the possibility of incommensurability and achieve more verisimilitude in this sphere by seeking out the radius of consistency of systems of thought, which is a combination of the internal consistency and horizon of consistency of systems of thought (something like the verticality or depth of consistency and the extendedness or extension of consistency in terms of the fields of reality that are brought under a systems purview and accounted for).¹⁰ This relates to truth because every experience of truth is necessarily an experience of consistency, at least in part; that what is perceived or experienced must remain itself in, and for, the duration of the experience. Thus, the Aristotelian law of identity is constantly affirmed and reaffirmed in our experience and expression of truth from any of our three basic sources of information, reason, intuition, and the senses. Therefore, whatever reality may be, in so far as humans can experience it, consistency and the principle of consistency are a necessary part of it.¹¹

However, there remains the possibility of two or more incommensurable systems having perfect radii of consistency or the same radii of consistency, which makes a rational choice of one over the other very hard if not impossible. In such a situation, consequences in terms of sponsoring better technological outcomes and such like could be applied to make a better or the best choice in respect of competing systems of thought. Thus, the relativism brought into African thought in modern times is reduced but not entirely eliminated.

But, why did relativism become an issue in modern African thinking in the first place, one might ask? The answer to this, already discernible from the foregoing is that it seemed to be a viable response to the Eurocentric monistic standards of reason espoused by European modernity which also served to denigrate the person, humanity, and culture of other people. African philosophy was thus born in a struggle against modernity as an anti-thesis of European modernity as Chukwudi Eze and others have argued.¹²

However, some African scholars realize that relativism or the embrace of full-scale relativism will arrest the universalizing, veridic growth of African thought, parochializing

and ghettoizing African thinking. The human quest for knowledge in and through epistemic orientations apparently inherently seeks some type of Laplacian comprehensiveness, which relativism negates ultimately. Therefore, part of assuaging epistemic concerns and curiosity as well as exercising normal levels of scholarly protectionism (in maintaining the integrity of an epistemic orientation or conceptual scheme) is the integration of other theoretical constructs, bodies of facts and assumptions of other real or potential contending epistemic systems in an ever-expanding radius of consistency of an epistemic orientation. Further, the world is globalizing on account of the global utilitarian value of technology in real and potential terms and the consequent globalization (or globalizing tendency) of the economic sphere. Consequently, African scholars have been divided between hard relativists, who are often essentialists, seeking out differentiating essences in diverse fields which set Africanity apart. Here we see scholars like the historian Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and core ethno-philosophers such as K. C. Anyanwu. This group of scholars are likely to accept that there are many universal systems of knowledge, a 'pluriverse of knowledges' that are basically incommensurable.

On the opposite side, we find people who see relativism as unjustifiable compartmentalization; who project some type of universalism; scholars who think that though there are diverse systems of knowledge there is enough intercultural communication, penetration and understanding to allow epistemic fusion of horizons that would allow a person to subsume and account for the theoretical constructs and bodies of facts of other systems. These are the Universalists or 'Universalizers', among whom would be found such scholars as Kwasi Wiredu.

Given this divide and tendencies, African scholars are exposed differently to some of the pitfalls in the African environment. The relativist and essentialist tend to err in the direction of romanticism, errant scholarly protectionism (that is 'erraticism', which is the deliberate undervaluation or overvaluation of facts or avoidance of facts) and sociocryonics, which Olufemi Taiwo defines as "the ignoble science of cryopreserving social forms, arresting them and denying them and those whose social forms they are the opportunity of deciding what, how, and when to keep any of their social forms."¹³ While the universalist, especially those who are also primarily driven by identitarian concerns tend to err in the direction of hermeneutic supervention (the imposition of interpretations on the life-situations and contexts of the past that give meanings alien to the life-situations and contexts, amounting to supervening layers of interpretation and alien meanings).

The modern African scholar has to navigate away from these obstacles and other forms of revolt against reason, if truth and knowledge is to be found. Before going further to explore other issues and aspects of the Kantian influence on African scholarship, it would be necessary to dilate on the sociology and psychology of knowledge that undergird the African epistemic context. As already indicated, Africa's insertion into modernity as not just the other but the anti-thesis of modernity and the attendant severe racism that went with this, meant that the African psyche was seared, giving rise to the sort of alienation-negativity complex that Franz Fanon described and the challenge of positivizing the African being.

3.2 THE BLACK PROBLEM, NEO-BLACK PROBLEM AND CONFLICT THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT

This complex and challenge is at the bottom of knowledge making in Africa. They constitute the existential concern and the attendant epistemic concern that has driven knowledge production in Africa from the 19th century onwards. However, the attainment of independence from the 1950s onwards, meant that the primary development agent in terms of building capabilities in knowledge and education, healthcare, and other basic needs and functions is no longer the colonial powers of Europe but the African and African governments. So, it turns out that to the initial problem of racism and a debased, submerged and subalternized African identity which Fanon referred to as the Black problem, we must now add the neo-Black problem. This is the problem of achieving development as self-capacitation and self-realization in a social context (that is optimizing agency and concomitant capabilities) which function to raise positive freedom and development as freedom emanating from enhanced capabilities.¹⁴ The Black problem is a problem of removing constraints (particularly externally imposed constraints of colonization, coloniality and racism) and thereby achieving negative freedom; it is chiefly a struggle against exogenous forces. The neo-Black problem is primarily a problem of self-capacitation, which has to be addressed by the removal of internal obstacles to the optimization of agency and capabilities and the freedom such a being can exercise. Are the two types of freedoms and Black Problems necessarily linked, such that attainment of one implies the attainment of the other and vice versa? Many African scholars and politicians would want us to believe that they are necessarily connected in a linear manner moving from negative to the positive such that the attainment of negative freedom virtually automatically leads to the attainment of positive freedom, largely ignoring the qualitative difference between struggling primarily against external factors and struggling primarily against internal factors. For these scholars and politicians, Kantian influence indirectly flowing through Hegel, Marx and the neo-Marxist perspective of the critical theorists, the anti-thetic opposite bears the seeds, indeed fruits, of progress so that once it takes over a system, such a system virtually automatically expresses the ideals and being of the new dominant forces and progress is recorded. Here we come in direct contact with the conflict theory of progress first put forward strongly and systematically by Kant.

The basic contour of this theory is that out of conflicts, including wars, social progress (in the broad sense in which it includes, political, economic, public moral progress and so on) is made.¹⁵ The progress begins, and is embedded, in the individual who by nature is composed of conflicting social (gregarious, convivial, peaceful) and unsocial or asocial (aggressive, domineering, exploitative conflictual) elements. The former breeds happiness and complacency, the other dissatisfaction, unhappiness and striving. The individual is stirred by the later to seek acquisitions, power, and dominions and in the ensuing conflict between individuals reason plays the role of brokering peace by the development of more satisfactory social relations that is more equitable and rationalistic. In addition, this stirring of individuals and conflict triggers the desire for more knowledge and military technology, a good deal, if not all of which, is readily converted to useful peaceful technologies, production processes and organizations in

the post conflict peaceful times. The process goes on from tiny social units in an ever-growing rationalization and expansion of social units until a world government is achieved, by which time technology and human wellbeing would have expanded maximally.

This theory of the utility of conflict in human progress was taken over by Hegel and systematized even more in the dialectics of progress via a thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis. Hegel populated his dialectical structure and its progress, ultimately, not by free, choice-making, responsible human beings but by moments of the self-gazing Absolute Spirit in search of total self-vision, using human minds and bodies to achieve its objective. Marx took over Hegelian dialectics but populated the contending terms with human classes seeking their material self-fulfillment on earth. And, critical theorists, following Marx's materialist bent have come to populate the contending forces by humans but not just classes; the contending forces could now be anything based on existential concerns, identities and a 'Foucaultesque' power divide, from race and religious identities to gender and sexuality, et cetera.

4. DECOLONIALITY, TRANS-COLONIZATION AND AFRICAN IDENTITY

The dialectical conflict approach seems to have suited the anti-colonial struggle well. Colonialism was pitted against nationalism. In this regard, the general sentiment was that once colonization, which was holding the African down was removed, the African will flourish automatically more or less. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana expressed this well in his claim: "seek you first the political kingdom and the rest shall be made unto you".¹⁶ However, as independence was gained and Africans started to manage their own political and legal affairs, it was readily seen by both the intellectuals and politicians that the expected progress was not being made as rapidly as expected. The cause for this was pinned on the continued control of the local and international economy by the capitalists and colonial powers. Already in the 1950s with grant of limited self-government, Nnamdi Azikiwe argued in Eastern Nigerian Parliament thus: "the view of this Government is that economic freedom must be won side by side with political freedom; otherwise, self-government becomes meaningless".¹⁷ In Ghana, Nkrumah tagged this presence of the West in the economy, neo-colonization.

In the response and fight for economic decolonization and freedom, all that was needed, it seemed, was for the African to claim the economic and administrative sectors by way of policies of expropriation, preferential treatment in business and public service, generally, known as Africanization (in Nigeria, it was also known as Nigerianization and indigenization). Through this type of decolonization policy, partially or wholly, expropriated companies were handed over to Africans as the new owners and or managers; the top jobs in the public service were taken over by Africans; and, Africans were favored in government contracts, et cetera. Unfortunately, as with political decolonization, the outcome has been totally disappointing to Africans. For the consequences have been massive mismanagement, corruption, relative underperformance, and collapse of both the public sector and the expropriated firms. Today, Africans from both the left and right of the political spectrum distance themselves from

Africanization as a rather fraudulent and failed policy of the rapacious African elites. Thus, this disappointment with economic decolonization tags along with the disappointment with political decolonization which is expressed by the rather widespread notion and conviction across different demographics of the desirability of some type of recolonization because Africa was not really ready for independence.¹⁸ The synthesis did not deliver the expected progress. Yet, many contemporaneous African scholars are tied to the conflict theory of progress.

Currently, within this approach, the focus is on decoloniality as the progressive synthesis and panacea. The dividing line separates the knowledge (epistemic or cultural) colonizers (the haves) and colonized (the have-nots). The West (Europe-North America and typical societies elsewhere), it is argued, has developed an epistemic orientation, conceptual scheme, and knowledge system which she has used to control and dominate the rest of the world. Part of this domination lies in the standardization of the Western knowledge scheme as the global standard, which all other epistemic efforts and values must conform to in order to receive recognition. Western knowledge thus becomes the one universal knowledge; all other epistemic orientations and their products are relegated as substandard, inferior, and largely false processes and products. And this is not merely in terms of knowledge about nature, but also ethical knowledge and practices, other philosophical and cultural values, et cetera. Western self-understanding and propagation of this cultural imperialism (which is also referred to as her cognitive empire) exploded, if not originated, in modern times, and enlightenment philosophers like Kant contributed to it in various ways (as a matter of fact, Kant, Hume and some others of this 'enlightened age' held racist views).

The cognitive empire of the West is sustained in many ways including but not limited to control of the educational processes and institutions, their curricula and pedagogies, their research agenda, methods, and application of results; control of mass media and information; control of other cultural institutions such as religious institutions; et cetera.

With global control of these institutions and processes directly or indirectly, the West establishes here standards as the universal, right standard. Other peoples and cultures must struggle to fit into the one universal standard and in the process relegate or discard their traditional or indigenous knowledges (including values and technologies) and often also languages as substandard things regardless of their virtue, veridic statuses, and utility in their environment and beyond. Thus, the West achieves the colonization of the mind, which is an insidious form of colonization that allows the West to control the world without physical force and the appropriation of the sovereignty of other peoples and states. This is coloniality; at once insidious, ubiquitous, surreptitious, and resilient, outlasting physical colonization and in some sense prior to physical colonization. Decoloniality must take place if Africa would develop. The mistake of the past, in a sense, was not spotting coloniality and seeing the need for decoloniality, early enough; and once decoloniality is achieved development will automatically follow. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni writes, "the world has to be decolonized and coloniality must be expunged from the world if Africa is to be allowed space to chart its autonomous and endogenous development path. Therefore, development emerges as nothing other than the act of decolonizing the present racialised global power structure in place since 1492."¹⁹

Like the dependency theory of (under)development, which was developed in Latin America, the idea of the cognitive empire, coloniality and decoloniality was first developed by Latin American scholars, Aníbal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, et al. Further, like the dependency theory, this neo-Marxist variant has its flaws, especially when applied to Africa. The first thing to be noticed about the claims concerning coloniality is that once again we are being sold a panacea that would automatically transform our lives. Our experience with the failure of the two previous forms of decolonization should prompt us to be cautious and discerning. This third wave of decolonization in Africa should be scrutinized properly to avoid the deceptions, woolliness, unjustifiable claims, and expectations that went with the failed political and economic de-colonization of the past.

From the epistemological angle, we can see that at most the general level of a knowledge making process, we find an epistemic orientation and a supreme categorial framework within which we find conceptual schemes, theoretical constructs, methodologies (which constitute paradigms) and the bodies of facts they generate. And we also see that paradigm shifts, to use a Kuhnian term, are less radical, though apparently more frequent than orientational shifts.

Every sovereign society has its dominant epistemic orientation and final epistemic authority, which provides the framework through which such a society seeks to increase her knowledge – a process and activity humans constantly engage in if they are to survive in any given environment; and, which, as already indicated, is tied first and foremost to their existential concerns. The knowledge elite of a society, that is her main knowledge producers and agents are the key operators and custodians of an epistemic system. In the West, the main agents of knowledge (knowledge specialists) are the scientists, philosophers, scholars, and researchers; these operate and maintain the Western epistemic orientation which has been described as the rational-scientific epistemic orientation (because final epistemic authority lies in the combination of reason and sense experience).

There is a knowledge trickle-down effect from the knowledge specialists or elites and their bodies of knowledge to the folks; people in other walks of life, who make use of such knowledge to enlarge the folk-knowledge that is available to the ordinary folks and the population in general. And, vice versa, the knowledge elites encounter lacunae in their knowledge, which need to be addressed, in their interactions with ordinary folks.

In Africa, the knowledge specialists were the traditional doctors (*dibia*, *sangoma*, *babalawo*), of whom there were different types and classes (such as diviners, ‘sacrificers’ and herbalists).²⁰ They were the professional philosophers, scientists and scholars of the traditional societies of Africa. And the epistemic orientation with which they worked has been described as empirico-ratio-intuitionism or ratio-intuitionism, because final epistemic authority lies in intuitive perceptions – defined here as information obtained without the direct mediation of reason or the senses.

What then is the objective of decoloniality and how justifiable and practicable is it. If the boulder crushing Africa is to be raised by decoloniality and genuine de-westernization, requiring the removal of everything Western from our culture and knowledge making processes

particularly, then we must remove everything Western as demanded by Grosfoguel and endorsed by Ndlovu-Gatsehni or at least de-center the West (and ‘en-center’ or center Africa).²¹ But what do these things really mean. Does it truly mean that the Western rationalist-scientific epistemic orientation and its technological derivatives must go, and we would replace them with the traditional African ratio-intuitionist epistemic orientation and traditional African technology? Is this necessary, desirable, or indeed possible given the penetration of the Western epistemic orientation and her institutions in Africa? We have to be clear about, not just what should be removed or de-centered but what should replace them, the picture of the world that follows and the mechanism and reality of achieving all these things in order to avoid anarchy and counter-development in the long run (I am of course assuming that people will prefer ordered and calculated progressive steps to grand ideas that could lead to counter-development or utopias that in reality are anarcho-utopias).

Firstly, it is not necessary because the two epistemic orientations and their specialist agents exist side by side in African societies, publicly demonstrating their capabilities and offering members of the public choices as to which orientation and its products to patronize. There is, of course, the question of which epistemic orientation is receiving or should receive more government sponsorship than the other. But this is not a difficult issue to resolve, especially if sponsorship is tied to the production of beneficial and publicly utilizable knowledge. In this regard, I must say that the African public is capable of deciding, based on utility and other relevant criteria, which of the contending epistemic orientations offers them a better choice in a given context. The pre-colonial Igbo already made that choice in many ways by saying *oyiboka*, (modernity is better or greater than the ways of tradition).²² Broadly speaking, the choice people make in this regard depend on a combination of factors adumbrated below.²³

First, the explanatory strength of a conceptual scheme (and thus its intellectual appeal): This is the capacity within a conceptual scheme to coherently, comprehensively, and in a rationally satisfactory manner, account for actual and possible worlds. The more a conceptual scheme is able to do this the better its rational firewalling membrane and the greater its capacity to contend with and withstand alternative and rival conceptual schemes and imaginaries.²⁴

Second, the nature of the evidential support proposed by a conceptual scheme for its own substantiation and falsification: All ideologies have some set of conditions that prove their claims to be true or plausible and conversely those that do the contrary. These conditions can be classified broadly as material conditions and non-material or trans-material conditions. Take, for instance, communism. Improvement in the quality of life of the lower classes and people generally was supposed to be proof of its superiority over capitalism, and its legitimacy was interwoven with this. But comparatively, it was not able to deliver a higher quality of life than the capitalist alternative. People began to lose patience with it and then revolted against it. It should be noted that the relative value of materiality and trans-materiality depends on historical contexts.

The third notion which is closely related to the above notions is the preservation of life. A conceptual scheme within which individuals can find a relatively higher degree of self-preservation and freedom (in terms of Sen’s capabilities) especially in respect of life-threatening

issues such as the basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, education, and security is most likely to draw people than one that fares relatively poorly.

All three factors combined give us what may be referred to as verisimilitude-non-substitutivity. This is largely a converse of Popper's falsifiability criterion, which says that in so far as an epistemic orientation and its products provide relatively higher verisimilitude and better praxis in terms of technology and organization than reason, moral duty and pragmatics demand it should not be substituted by a relatively underperforming epistemic orientation but rather preferred to such a relatively underperforming epistemic orientation. From the foregoing, the idea of *oyiboka* is among other things an expression of preference for the rationalist-scientific epistemic orientation and conceptual schemes in a wide range of contexts (it does not seem that the Igbo would say this for all contexts), based on verisimilitude-non-substitutivity. Since this is the judgement and choice of the Igbo (and indeed most African communities) in relation to modernity, it should be obvious that they would not see any reason to completely de-westernize (throwing away everything that came with *oyibo*); this type of decoloniality is therefore not necessary.

By the same token, radical decoloniality is not desirable. The ideological choice made by the Igbo in *oyiboka* seen through the lens of the above criteria is at least in part due to a feeling that modernity offered better life chances, less suffering on account of hunger, diseases, et cetera, and more possibilities of material goods to deal with basic and secondary human needs. Thus, it would be counter-developmental to deny the Igbo, indeed the African, modernity and its possibilities based on rationally unfounded ideological grounds. Further in this regard, it seems to me a moral duty for the African to weigh the truth-generating capabilities of an epistemic orientation relative to contending ones and to decide objectively based on veridic statuses and possibilities, technological outcomes, functionalities, and consequences, et cetera in order to address the well-being and self-realization of peoples. This is as much a moral duty as it is a moral duty to fight colonization and coloniality.²⁵ However, the situation of post-independence coloniality in which physical/material coercive force has receded allows one to decide, choose epistemic orientations and conceptual schemes more objectively based on truth statuses, utility and development as self-capacitation and well-being. Not to decide along these lines would mean succumbing to errantism and other forms of rebellion against reason and respect for persons as ends (and the other-regarding values ensconced in it). Therefore, while people like Ndlovu-Gatsheni would say: "what Africans must be vigilant against is the trap of ending up normalizing and universalizing coloniality as a natural state of the world. [And that] It must be unmasked, resisted, and destroyed because it produced a world order that can only be sustained through a combination of violence, deceit, hypocrisy and lies."²⁶ I would say that it is an even greater moral obligation to choose epistemic orientations and conceptual schemes based on the above developmentarian criteria, especially because this is a general human problem. We know that Africans, African empires (of which there were many) and African aspirations to an African world order had (and still have in some cases) their own asocial, inhuman hierarchization and exploitation, coloniality and penumbra of coloniality, and that a major fight today in places like Nigeria, Sudan/South Sudan, et cetera is the fight against internal colonization of the most brutal, inhuman, and retrogressive types. The cure

for this general human malaise can only be found in reasonability and ontological beneficence including especially as they are expressed in and through the choice, and nature, of epistemic orientations, value systems and organizations.

A question might be raised about the identity of the subaltern (in this case the African) in respect of the pro rationalist-scientific orientation endorsed here, including the challenge posed by going about knowledge making, application and education in the ‘foreign’ language of the colonizers, say English, French, et cetera. Let me first clarify my view by stating that I do not endorse the existence of the rationalist-scientific orientation to the exclusion of other orientations, even if it is dominant in a given context. Rather, I am saying that this orientation should not be discarded on sentimental identitarian grounds to the detriment of truth, verisimilitude, functionality and the well-being of humans; and, conversely, non-dominant epistemic orientations need not be stamped out with State power except on grounds of the propagation of manifest anti-human crimes, falsehoods and such likes. Further, I would say that we are duty bound to evaluate all the epistemic orientations available to us regardless of their origin and provenance, choose the most promising and then integrate as much as possible valuable elements of the alternative theoretical constructs, methodologies and bodies of fact to achieve hybridity, especially heterosis, that is, hybrid vigor. In this way coloniality will be transcended, not by throwing away the utilizable elements in the colonial deposit (‘colonina’) but by appropriating them via rational evaluation, transforming and adapting them via indigenous creativity, fusing them with indigenous knowledge and creating new forms, expanding the possibilities and realities of knowledge; thus, emerging beyond both the pre-colonial and colonial starting points in an ever forward, progressive motion – this is trans-colonization or trans-coloniality (and trans-colonialism, as the case may be).

Africanity in this does not rely so much on heritage (for inherited culture is but one way of identity affirmation, allotment, or appropriation) but on self-reproduction or self-objectification (of states of mind) through creativity (artistic, organizational and technical of all types) and productivity (of all types); by this means the African stamps his/her life value on reality, bringing forth Africanity. Further, since this process goes on in Africa, in relation to problems and challenges of existence in Africa and the truth value of all these efforts are determined at least in part by the African context, then the entire creativity, rationality and productivity is shaped by the African context and thus can be said rightly to reflect Africanity. In this way we would be able to diffuse the tension and conflict between identity (and the anti-developmental traditionalism or essentialism or unfounded alternative utopianism that it evokes or drives in some ways in the African, and the general colonized peoples’, context) and modernity (and the development that goes with it). This is the direction of trans-colonization or trans-coloniality, which unlike decolonization (especially the radical type) does not hold “identity... [to be] more important than modernity”, because of the enormous real and potential negative consequences of this view for self-capacitation, wellbeing and development, as mentioned above, but rather gives identity its proper and realistic place as largely the total productions and self-objectifications of living peoples in their life-worlds; thus, reconciling it with the self-capacitation, wellbeing and good-life of living persons, that is, development, which is the deepest of human desires.²⁷

Lastly, in respect of the indigeneity or otherwise of the language of science and arts in relation to our cognitive growth and development, whilst I would agree with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and others that language bears the accumulated wisdom of a people and their mode of thinking and enables its native speakers recognize and communicate their most subtle ideas, feelings, intuitions, et cetera with ease, thus resulting in better creative works, I would agree with Chinua Achebe that the use of a 'foreign' language in Africa, as elsewhere does not arrest cognitive growth and creative output, though it might make it a bit more difficult.²⁸ For example the use of Latin (the language of Rome, imposed on others via Roman imperialism) as the language of science, philosophy and the arts by scholars of different nations and vernacular for more than a thousand five hundred years did not stop the scientific, artistic, literary and general cognitive development of the nations of virtually the entire, northern, central and western Europe. The science, literature, philosophy, et cetera in this area, of people like Aquinas, Descartes, William Amo (of Africa), et cetera were done in Latin. Therefore, Achebe's proposal of making the 'foreign' language to express African realities, sentiments, intuitions, rationalities, et cetera, by 'bending' it, 'tweaking' it, 'innovating' with it, thereby Africanizing it and making it do what the African wants it to do, is germane and the realistic, pragmatic option. (This in no way should stop the efforts of African linguists in the development of our local languages and preparing to take over from the foreign languages as the language of research, education, and creativity).

From the foregoing, one can see that the conflict theory of development as expressed in radical decolonization has its limits in the African context. Part of the problem here is that there is no necessary and assured progression from oppositionality and conflict to peace, harmony, and development. The Kantian idea that reason intervenes to bring about an ever higher progression, to be realized on the grounds of both rational endorsement and might, until a world government expressing global rationality is achieved, does not take into consideration that this world order would be acceptable to only those who have bought into it for ideological and practical reasons, others (the ideological and power minority) would struggle against it, in order to achieve a global order after their own images. So, it is understandable that after the achievement of the League of Nations and United Nations (which look like quasi world governments after the Kantian vision), conflicts have remained, perhaps even multiplied globally. The conflict model, thus, is prone to perpetual conflict and fissiparity, it can only be rescued from this by a wholehearted theory and praxis of cooperation, peace, and harmony – a cooperation theory of development. It should be clear that since there is a multiplicity of rationalities, some of which could be incommensurable and not easily reconcilable, appeal to the social, cooperative dimensions of humans should be foundational in social theory, at least as a complement to the conflict perspective. As I have argued elsewhere, one may conceive reason independent of the will/affectivities that enable it flourish and vice versa, however, in reality any given manifestation of reason is tied to enabling manifestations of conative and affective states and vice versa, such that they constitute the sides of a single coin. I cannot go over all the arguments deployed to establish this idea here.²⁹ Let it suffice to say that one may think of the idea of full reasonability at one end of the spectrum (consisting of the principle of consistency and the associated principle and states of ontological beneficence – freedom,

altruism, et cetera) and at the other end, insensibility (consisting of the opposite principle of inconsistency and the principles of ontological malfeasance and apathy). Real progress based on blossomed reasonability therefore cannot be achieved by apathic rationality, because in the full context of social relations, humanity, and community, it will manifest its nature as instrumental reason with a narrow focus and radius of consistency. Therefore, the unsociality/asociality that breeds conflict may be transcended not merely by the expansion of instrumental reason but rather by an increase in reasonability, which implies a radial extension of the principles of consistency (transcendental reason) and ontological beneficence. This is better achieved by a focus on ontological beneficence and Kantian sociality.

Further, ontological beneficence and sociality are more germane to the epistemic virtues (rational rigor, conscientious and steadfast focus on impartiality and truth as well as on concomitant sobriety and courage, creativity) which enable us to acquire the knowledge we need, at least within the framework of the rationalist-scientific epistemic orientation, to control and direct nature and human affairs for public and private good. Technology cannot grow without knowledge, which in turn depends on the epistemic virtues rooted mostly in the principle of consistency, ontological beneficence, and the Kantian social. Therefore, real progress is to be found, in part, in ontological beneficence and the social, contrary to Kant or at least far more than he claims.

It is true that conflict and the unsocial/asocial drive technology, as Kant claims, however, we can see the negative effects of this impetus in the threat to the planet and human existence. The threat of mass extinction due to weapons of mass destruction developed on account of the arms race, the threat to the environment and climate change, new diseases, et cetera show the limitations and the flipside of the supposed technological advantages acquired on account of conflict and the unsocial. Obviously, conflict may lead to development in a limited way and within the backdrop of strong pre-existing sociality, reasonability, commensurability, and harmony, such as might be found in a community with strong consanguineous bonds or ideological bonds such as a religion or well-founded political bonds and stability; otherwise, there will be perpetual conflict, fissiparity and underdevelopment.

Following from the above and given the context of the formation of modern African societies (which include a multiplicity of worldviews and ideologies, some of which are incommensurable; a multiplicity of competing traditional states and ethnic groups; the arbitrariness of the colonial boundaries; the arbitrariness and violence of the colonial states, which continue to thrive based on sheer brutal force, mostly; the underdevelopment of civil society; the partiality of the basis of ethicality in the traditional ethical systems; et cetera), a conflict model of progress would only bring counter-development, as it has indeed done over the decades, since independence. Africa needs to develop her own indigenous theory of development which would privilege reasonability, cooperation, and harmony (and their undergirding values), positive practical justice which emphasizes non-vengeance, a defining African quality, as Dr Aggrey says, and related values that can help the continent build better, more viable communities and states.

5. CONCLUSION

From the forgoing, one can see that Kantian constructs, theories and perspective have had tremendous influence on spheres of modern African thought from epistemology to ethics and social and political philosophy. These influences have not always been direct; some have been mediated by other modern thinkers and even post-modern thinkers. Further, some of these influences have helped Africans articulate their own thoughts in the context of the struggle against colonization. However, as I have tried to show, it appears the Kantian influence has to be critiqued, adapted, remodeled and pruned in order to make for positive impact in the changing circumstances of Africa.

Abstract: This paper reviews Kant's direct and indirect influences on modern African philosophy and contemporaneous thought, especially regarding colonization, modernization, decolonization and trans-colonization. The paper explores and evaluates the quest for Africanity and the carving a unique African identity through a relativist interpretation of the Kantian epistemic framework as well as his conflict theory of progress. The paper argues that this sort of approach, which is ensconced principally in the decoloniality project, is not justifiable on epistemic, moral and developmentarian (utility) grounds. The paper proposes trans-colonization and heterosis, grounded in creativity, especially epistemic creativity, as a more justifiable and practically viable and developmentarian integration of modernity and Kantianism into the African experience.

Key Words: Alienation-negativity complex, coloniality, conflict theory of development, decoloniality, epistemic orientation, final epistemic authority, heterosis, incommensurability, radius of consistency, reason, trans-colonization, verisimilitude-non-substitutivity.

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NOTES

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² A personal note from the author: I am grateful to the Africa Multiple, Cluster of Excellence, University of Bayreuth, Germany for the Bayreuth Academy Fellowship that was offered to me in the 2019/2020 session. This paper is in part a fruit of this fellowship. Reuben Abel 1976, p. 180.

³ Cp. Kant, Immanuel, "The A Priori and the Empirical" 1976, pp. 587-597.

⁴ Cp. Kant, Immanuel, "The A Priori and the Empirical" 1976, pp. 587-597.

⁵ William Sahakian, *History of Philosophy*, p. 129-130.

⁶ Kant working at the most general level laid out the universal structure of reason and the human mind. However, these universal forms are structures (bones) without embodying stuff/substance 'flesh'; they have to be embodied, historicized with fundamental ontological and epistemological assumptions to become the interpretative frameworks, (categorical frameworks to use the term of Kantian scholar Stephan Körner) that they are meant to be. We thus must move from supreme laws thought and structures of the mind to supreme trains of thought, supreme beliefs and values or categorical frameworks and the possibility and reality of competing categorical frameworks. See Stephan Körner, *Metaphysics: Its Structure and Functions*, 1984, p. 2-19, 222.

- ⁷ See among others the following: Robin Horton, “Understanding African Traditional Religion: 1 January 1973, p. 14-30.
- ⁸ Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, “Decolonization, Trans-colonization and Development,” (Forthcoming Publication) 2021/2022.
- ⁹ William Herbert, Newton-Smith, *The Rationality of Science*, 1981, p. 36.
- ¹⁰ Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa*, 2019, p. 83-94.
- ¹¹ Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa*, 2019, p. 94-107.
- ¹² Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Postcolonial African Philosophy*, 1997, pp.1-17.
- ¹³ Olufemi, Taiwo, *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa*, 2010, pp. 10-17.
- ¹⁴ Amartya, Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 1999, p. 74
- ¹⁵ Immanuel, Kant, “Nature’s Plan in Human History,” 1976, pp. 377-388.
- ¹⁶ Kwame, Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, 1973, p. 164
- ¹⁷ Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Zik: A Selection from the Speeches of Nnamdi Azikiwe*, 1961, p 229.
- ¹⁸ Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa*, 2019 pp. 281-285.
- ¹⁹ Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Perhaps Decoloniality is the Answer? 2013, p 10 (The italics and emphasis are mine)
- ²⁰ Joseph C. A. Agbakoba, “An Evaluation of Knowledge in Traditional African Thought and Its Impact on Contemporary Times, 2004, pp. 129-131.
- ²¹ Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), “Perhaps Decoloniality is the Answer? p. 5
- ²² *Oyiboka* is a combination of *oyibo* + *ka*. *Oyibo* means literally white man or white person and connotatively the culture, especially the science and technology that the 19th century pre-colonial white persons brought to Igbo land. And, *ka* means bigger than or greater than or better than.
- ²³ The conditions presented are, with very little modification, excerpts from Joseph C. A. Agbakoba (2019), *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective*, pp. 336-337.
- ²⁴ The notion of a cultural firewalling membrane expresses the idea that our cultural life like our biological life depends on a combination of agential receptivity and reactivity (used her in a physiological sense, and analogically, to show that humans, individually and collectively, try to fight off cultural ideas and influences that they deem inimical to their person and society – indicating some type of social immune system. A society without this sort of firewalling capacity or a contextually effective one will be tossed around by all sorts of external influences and would be unable to chart or follow its own self-determined development trajectory. For more details, see note 21 above, pp. 115-121.
- ²⁵ Adele Jinadu brings out the moral dimension and importance of Fanon’s views in the latter’s African liberation project. The same dutifulness against colonization, which is always a contextual matter, I think, can also be established in favor of trans-colonization. See, L. Adele Jinadu, “The Moral Dimensions of the Political Thought of Franz Fanon”, *Second Order*, Volume V, Number 1, 1976, pp. 30-35.
- ²⁶ Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), “Perhaps Decoloniality is the Answer? p. 6.
- ²⁷ Akarui, Hotaru (2018), “Decolonization: African Literature and Indian English Literature”, published online, <https://cherrywitch.wordpress.com/2018/02/12/decolonization-african-literature-and-indian-english-literature/> February 12, 2018. Accessed: 27/09/2021, 12:13 pm.
- ²⁸ See, for instance, Akarui Hotaru (2018), “Decolonization: African Literature and Indian English Literature”.
- ²⁹ Joseph C. A. Agbakoba (2019), *Development and Modernity in Africa*: pp. 83-107.

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