CHAPTER 12

Conclusion: Going Forward: The Problems of African Agency and the Proposition of the Critical Theory of the Introspection of African Agency

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Introduction: stretching the meaning of African agency

The notion of African agency suggests the enabling of the African Self – an aggregation of Africans' physical space and psyche as a collective, their appreciation of who they are, their self-understanding and their ability to strive for emancipation – self-determination. It entails the quest to amplify the voices and capacity of Africans to influence processes and practices around the globe. The desired end is to extricate themselves from what Mignolo (2011: 45) references as the 'receiving end of global designs'. It also envisions their ability to be in control of their affairs and forge (or rediscover) their civilisation. This is set against the backdrop of the order of civilisations, which Therborn (2021) defines as large, enduring cultural configurations of the world. In the discussion of civilisations, sub-Saharan civilisation is designated as the only non-literary civilisation of the world (Therborn 2021: 231). Its history is mostly ignored in the delineation of the history of civilisations. The region is often regarded as the limbo of the international system (Bayart and Ellis 2000: 217). Africa, in general, is only slightly represented by the Ethiopian and Egyptian literary civilisations (Wescott 1970: 65). African agency is thus a collective pointer at the quest by Africans to be formidable in the world. It represents the quest to ameliorate the African Self from the limbo to which it was condemned by colonialism and the modern expression of imperialism.

African agency is rooted in two dynamics: self-understanding and

self-determination. The self-understanding of Africans relates to the issues that shape and shake their identity, and how their identity can be empowered to attain the confidence to articulate their interests and concerns. This is what is transmitted as being '… conscious of what it means to be an African subject' (Sefa 2018). And to appropriate Chinua Achebe, at this point, in promoting African agency, the intention is to undo the 'notoriously inaccurate' ways in which 'an image of Africa' was and remains presented by the other (Achebe 1978: 11). Relatedly, the self-determination of Africans points to the amelioration of their capacity to be in charge of their destiny. It entails progress in political organisation, economics, preservation of culture, and technological advancement. According to Sefa (2018: 117), self-determination also relates to struggles over the interface of the black skin, body, psyche, hegemonies and politics within the diaspora communities, and the imperative of the strategic reinvention of Africanness.

The dynamics of African agency are a reaction to external intrusion, including colonialism, as the most instructive. Colonialism and the (new) expressions of imperialism demand that the rest of the world imitate Western Europe and the United States. Where Africans have been required to adjust to Western ways of organising life, the African Self, in the end, has been fractured (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009). This is manifested through protracted psychological, sociological, political and economic distortions that portray Africans as an inferior collective that had to be subjugated. Colonialism is thus a reference to historical situations that entailed political and economic inequality, and social subjugation of the rest of the world by European imperial powers (Bayart and Ellis 2000). There were, however, variations in the approaches used to subjugate Africans. This depended on goals and the perceptions of the colonialists. The perceptions adopted were dependent on three issues: the level of political organisation of a particular African indigenous political formation, the intentions of the coloniser, and the time-based interests and demands of the coloniser.

For instance, whereas the overriding intention of the coloniser was the subjugation of the African peoples, in some societies they preferred the colonial logic of assimilation. In other contexts, they leaned on the

colonial logic of difference. Assimilation was aimed at 'refashioning' the colonised into 'European' persons. This is discussed as 'proximity to whiteness'. Assimilation, therefore, relates to how one prefers to present their bodies and ideals. It includes how they express their core values and the ethics that guide political, social and economic life in a given space. The logic of difference targets the separation of the coloniser (settlers) from the Africans to insulate the settlers from the 'primitive'. Apartheid was guided by the logic of the 'permanence of difference' in the name of promoting 'good neighbourliness'. This order of things was sustained through the apartheid education system after 1945. However, before that, the colonial order of indirect rule emphasised assimilation, with educated South Africans regarded as naturalised Europeans (Pillay 2021: 408–409).

Nevertheless, regardless of how colonialism was pursued and expressed, the quest for African agency remains sacrosanct. The mission is to promote African difference and authenticity. This quest is universal to Africa and the formerly colonised as a collective (Sefa 2018: 128–130). This is because of the collective fate of subjugation endured by Africans. This fate extends into the aftermath of colonialism – the postcolonial. To date, Africa remains 'pushed to the very periphery of world affairs', as A. A. Mazrui (1987) put it. What is more concerning is that, even among the formerly colonised – technically referred to as the Global South collective – the largest extent of Sub-Saharan Africa remains wretched. Albeit with some pockets of progress, the region continues to be plagued by high levels of poverty, disease burden, illiteracy, political violence, conflict and failed political transitions. The current state of Sub-Saharan may not necessarily be attributed to its colonial past, but rather to its postcolonial pitfalls. The struggle for African agency remains a problem.

This chapter, therefore, interrogates the following questions: What are the problems of African agency? How can African agency be strengthened? To sustain the discussion, the chapter argues that strengthening African agency requires the streamlining of the internal organisation of the African Self. Based on that argument, it proposes the critical theory of introspection of African agency as the approach to enable the examination of the internal organisation of African agency.

To substantiate the argument, it draws on secondary literature about colonialism and decolonisation, coloniality and decoloniality, the African Renaissance and the history of world civilisations.

The chapter is therefore organised in four philosophical stretches of African agency: In the first stretch, it delineates colonialism and coloniality as the problems of African agency. The second stretch explains the performative and practical actions that have been preferred to bolster African agency. In the third stretch, it discusses the logic of introspection that draws on the imperative of internal organisation. The fourth stretch, as the conclusion, provides the working tenets of the critical theory of introspection of African agency. The immediate focus, at this point, is on the problems of African agency.

Disaggregating the problems of African agency

In the general treatment of African agency, the intrusion of external actors, specifically Europeans, into the space (territory) and the mind (psyche) of Africans is presented as the major problem of African agency; one in which it is perpetually entangled. Intrusion elicits emotions related to anger and the collective memory of deprivation and destruction. This is discussed as the problem of colonialism.

Colonialism as a problem of African agency

Colonialism was both territorial and metaphysical. 'Territorial' refers to the cartographical demarcation and appropriation of African land by European powers during the nineteenth century. The actions undertaken in the process of appropriation were, at their worst, genocidal – as exemplified by the case of Namibia. Part of the critique of the dominance of colonialism is the charge that colonialism, especially territorial control, was a crime against Africans. Reparations have been demanded, as in the case of Namibia regarding the genocide of the Herero and Nama people by the German colonialist government in the early twentieth century (Bhambra 2022). The territorial control also entailed the supplanting of native authority to impose colonial administration. The decolonisation

agitations of the later years of the twentieth century targeted the undoing of territorial dominance.

The metaphysical control of the African Self relates to actions that were undertaken to guide the behaviour of Africans. This is discussed as the existence of the European metaphysical empire in Africa, as substantiated by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. To Ngũgĩ, there exists an intangible, non-physical, and non-geographical metaphysical empire marked by an invasion of the mental universe of the formerly colonised peoples (Abumere 2025: 8). It entails the ceasing or colonising of the minds and bodies of the Africans. This was done through the colonial processes of socialisation – the 'significant mobilisation of the societies which (colonialism) held in subjectivity' (Bayart and Ellis 2000: 221). This process took two major forms: inculcation through Christian values (the Christianising mission of the colonial state) and through education (the pedagogical mission of the colonial state).

The behaviour, as an outcome, became either formal, inclined to the standards of the colonial master, or informal ('primitive'), and was related to the indigenous ways of the Africans. The colonial master perceived African bodies and minds as childish. Hegel thought that Africa was an 'enclave', '… the land of childhood removed from the light of self-conscious history and wrapped in the dark mantel of the night' (Bayart and Ellis 2000: 217). To extract the Africans from the 'dark mantle of the night' of their 'primitiveness', the African bodies had to be whipped for the mind to learn, adjust and adopt the 'civilisational' experience of the master. Africa was thus reduced to the level of a 'laboratory of modernity' for the European powers to test the workings of their schemes of modernity (Bayart and Ellis 2000: 223). The African, as the insignificant other, whom the 'extraordinary missionary' Albert Schweitzer referred to as his brother, albeit a junior one, had to be moulded into European ways. In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the African was a 'prehistoric man', 'a savage counterpart to the refined [European]' (Achebe 1978: 2–8). What was standard and progressive was measured according to the yardstick of the coloniser. Whatever fell below the threshold of European socialisation was considered to be primitive.

Whereas the intention in this chapter is not to amplify the discussion

about the struggle against territorial dominance, a mental note should be made about the fact that, as in other parts of the Global South such as Latin America and Asia, practical actions had to be undertaken by the African anti-colonial movements of the 1950s and 1960s to uproot colonial administrations from the African space (Medina 2017). This is what is transmitted as decolonisation – the processes undertaken to eradicate the effects of colonisation, which related to the '… forceful subjugation and occupation of a territory by another state or political power which imposes its will and administration on that territory, known as a colony' (Olugbemiga 2020: 96).

Territorial dominance was arguably supplanted in some parts of Africa, where large tracts of land are still owned by people whose allegiance is generally to foreign actors. However, the metaphysical dominance – related to control of the African mind and body – endures to date. This is reflected in the extent to which Western values are a measure of progress in African societies. Good education is that which reflects Euro-American standards. A strong moral campus is supposedly obtained from the Christian conscience. Also, the proper ways of engaging in politics and economics are legitimised by Euro-American liberal templates of political and economic organisation. These aspects of intrusion persist to date, with the Euro–America zone and systems presented as the 'possessors of knowledge' and juxtaposed with the 'ignoramuses' of the African systems (Olugbemiga 2020: 98). This is what is discussed as decoloniality: '… the hidden web of relations governing our inherited intellectual configuration and modernist Eurocentric understandings of knowledge, ethnocultural identity, world history, racial background and religious traditions' (Medina 2017: 297). The critique is that socialisation and modernity, as rooted in Western European standards, reflect the continuity of colonial modernity – the colonial Eurocentric systems of domination and exclusion (Medina 2017: 281). Yet the continued essentialisation of the Eurocentric episteme and standards creates not a sophisticated but a confused African. Ndlovu-Gatsheni references such Africans as '… alienated [Africans] who are socialised into hating the Africa that produced them, and liking the Europe and America that rejects them' (Olugbemiga

2020: 97). As such, territorial decolonisation was generally realised, but metaphysical decolonisation remains a work in progress, thus Ngũgĩ's treatise *Decolonising the Mind* (Ngũgĩ 1986).

As a result, there have been calls for the 'delinking' of the African Self from what Mignolo (2011: 49) refers to as the 'bubble of imperial modernity'. To Ranuga (1986: 184), delinking entails '[the] process of disalienation whereby colonized minds are emptied of their incapacitating Western values and filled with the proud and psychologically liberated self [as] a necessary part of the struggle for total liberation'. However, unless African agency is intended to create a robotised African, delinking should be kept simple, as a means to facilitate the 'opening of doors to another thinking [indigenous African epistemologies] (Mignolo 2011: 48). The aim should not be to discard the already settled influences from elsewhere, but rather to facilitate a new intercultural communication where the 'universalising cosmovision' of European Self enters into a harmonious existence with the indigenous (Mignolo 2011: 49). I have particularly added that delinking is 'not to completely discard', simply because '… we are no longer what we were once and cannot rewind the tapes of our complex cultural life to a single knowable point of origin' (Ellena 2001: 48). Senghor (1962: 189) spoke of the '*vertical solidarity*' (emphasis added) which binds us to Europe'.

The efforts to delink the African space from territorial colonialism were of a practical orientation, and in most cases the Africans mobilised themselves into violence to contend with colonial administrations. The Africans rose above themselves, for as a people they had been characterised as vessels of emotions. The Europeans were under the illusion that the Africans were underdogs who could not undertake a coherent and protracted struggle against colonialism. As noted earlier, the Africans generally managed to supplant territorial dominance. However, the fight against metaphysical dominance remains. Thus, coloniality is the problem of African agency, to which this chapter turns to explain at this point.

Coloniality as a problem of African agency

The moment of coloniality refers to instances where the social, political, economic and intellectual (epistemic) aspects of coloniality are transported into the present (Pillay 2021). The notion and practice of coloniality is disaggregated into three logics: the coloniality of power, which illustrates how the global political order is tilted towards the Euro–America zone; the coloniality of knowledge relates to the Euro–America domination of knowledge generation and legitimation; and the coloniality of being sustains the objectification of individuals (Olugbemiga 2020: 97). The coloniality of being helps us to understand the contemporary forms of African agency. It explains the location of Africa within the ecosystem of human experience in relation to politics, economics, culture and technology. It also sustains the discussion of racism as the determinant of the interaction between the former colonisers and the formerly colonised peoples. Racism essentialises 'race as structure in thought', where the Africans are clustered in the 'zone of nonbeing' – below the line of the human – with their humanity questioned, and the Europeans in 'the zone of being' – existing above the line of human, enjoying access to rights, material resources and social recognition (Pillay 2021: 395). This enhances the self-identification of the Europeans as being of higher quality.

The ideology and intellectual foundations of modernity (indicators of progress) that continue to be sustained in the formerly colonised spaces are thus pegged on the Euro–American notions of development as the standard rubric. It is suggested that the racist-inclined vision of modernity is traced from the Western European colonial project, which is traced from 1492 and the conquering of the Americas (Medina 2017: 280–281). Where the decolonisation movement targeted territorial dominance, the current wave of decoloniality is focused on devising ways of delinking the African Self, particularly the mind, from the sustained expressions of coloniality. It provokes an anticolonial consciousness marked by the urgency of Africans to protest, to push back against subjugation to reclaim their dignity, as the central pillar of African agency (Sefa 2018: 123–126). Therefore, in the struggle for African agency under the chains of coloniality, protest has been material.

Protest has utility. It has a cathartic effect. It soothes the emotions and pacifies the memory of those affected by subjugation. The manifestations of protestations have been variously explained in what is referenced as indigenous scholarship. The literature in this category is either 'transformative' or 'reactive and emotive' (Doxtater 2004: 620). The reactive and emotive is of performative effect. Sefa (2018: 123) identifies the performative as 'discursive wrestling'. It is guided by the logic of 'We have at least told our story' and 'We have told them off'. The transformative actions related to the practical actions are expressed in the logic of the questions that guide African action, thus, 'What can we do to liberate ourselves?' This logic reflects the truism that human development is governed by an inescapable paradigm of struggle (Doxtater 2004: 622). To bolster African agency, particularly against coloniality, two forms of action have been preferred: the performative and practical.

The performative (reactive and emotive) has been essentialised. Achebe's (1978) decolonial discourse was a dramatised protest against what he describes as '… a preposterous and perverse kind of arrogance in reducing Africa to the role of props for the breakup of one petty European mind'. To him, the target of the struggle for African agency is the 'dehumanisation of Africa and Africans' (Achebe 1978: 9).

The imperative of performative actions

Performative actions against coloniality and other forms of intrusion relate to rhetorical protestations. The performative largely draws on *narratives of return* – discourses that reminisce about the glorious past of the formerly colonised, to protest and argue against the forms of coloniality. The essentialisation of the *narratives of return* is a form of resistance, struggle and emancipation. They bear the romantic yearning of past times (McArthur 2022: 1685). The precolonial (the indigenous), which the colonial supplanted, is presented as the alternative to aspects of colonial modernity. The *return* to the indigenous is projected as an approach to reinventing the African Self so that it gains the agency that was and continues to be sustainably eroded by expressions of coloniality. The performative actions are exemplified in the lyrics of Rastafarian

musical traditions, as transmitted in their humming of African roots and cultures, and their relationship with 'Babylon' as the ultimate true sense of liberation from subjugation. But on the emotive side, the performative conveys the message that dehumanisation as a result of colonialism and its continuities, such as racism, translates into anxiety, insecurity, feelings of devaluation, abandonment, hypersensitivity and worthlessness (Forsythe 1973: 161). This is made particularly vivid by the disorientation expressed in (sub-) genre of the ragamuffin lyrical traditions, which reflect the absurdity of subjugation that pushes one to the brink of what is 'mental'. The lyrics of ragamuffin music are thus inclined to sound-bite nonsense such as 'punaany it so nice/ punaany it so slick/ come put your lips on a 12-inch d***k' (Louis 1994: 82–83). Doxtater (2004) would dismiss this as noble savagism, but one has to appreciate the legitimate disenchantment behind the absurdity of the nonsense of the ragamuffin lyrical style. They are protesting domination.

Protest is beyond what is reasonable and unreasonable. We are taught that '… oppressive logic produces an energy of discontent, of distrust, of release within those who react against imperial violence [regardless of whether one will be construed as obscene and stupid]' (Mignolo 2011: 46). Being consistently expressive is key to protesting against external intrusion. Some of the performative protests are well-reasoned and logical. A case in point is how, in the quest to undo the pejorative identification of Africans as savages, Achebe retells a story as told by British art historian Frank Willet. The story is about a mask from the Congo which Gaugin gave to Maurice Vlaminck in 1905. To Achebe, 'The mask in question was made by [Conrad's] other savages living just north of Conrad's River Congo… the Fang people – and are [to Achebe] without a doubt among the world's greatest masters of the sculptured form' (Achebe 1978: 12).

Onokerhorage (1975) returns to the glory of the Bini civilisation of the Benin Kingdom to illustrate that urbanisation was native to Africa even before colonisation. Also, the romanticisation of the City of Timbuktu – the symbol of the modernity of Mali (1100–1700) and Songhai (1325–1591) – is instructive of the reinvention of the past to compensate for the inadequacies of the present (A. A. Mazrui 2005: 71). Precolonial African civilisations – including Benin, Mali, ancient Egypt,

Ethiopia, Great Zimbabwe and the rock-art traditions of southern Africa – are often invoked as sources of pride for the African Self (Banda and Saayman 2015: 132).

Pio Zirimu and Austin Bukenya's orature outlines the importance of folktales, epic poems, songs, myth spells, proverbs and riddles, among other formats, that fortify African ways of knowing. Micere Githae Mugo's juxtaposition of African orature and human rights illustrates how the 'zone of being' – human rights – is part of the African human experience as transmitted through orature. Cheikh Anta Diop's return to the narratives of precolonial Africa – the great kingdoms of Mali, Songhai and Ghana – debunks the Eurocentric view that aspects of modernity, such as urbanisation, are an importation of colonialism. Ngũgĩ's return to his linguistic roots, when he decided to start writing in Gikuyu, indicates that African languages can enable the expression of the Self, contrary to the legacy of colonialism and the imperial languages (Olugbemiga 2020: 99–101). The imperial languages included Italian, Castilian and Portuguese (derived from the European Renaissance), and French, English and German (derived from the period of the Enlightenment). The six languages remain the expressions of European imperial modernity in the world (Mignolo 2011).

Mafeje (1991) returns to the precolonial agrarian experiences of the interlacustine kingdoms in East Africa to counter the Eurocentric theories and definitions of production, political and economic power. He aims to make a case for Africa's capacity for self-organisation. The same path is pursued by Chami (2006) in his treatise *The Unity of the Ancient Black Africa 3000 BC to AD 500*. He dismisses the Hamitic myth that suggests that Black people are not responsible for Africa's ancient civilisations. He uses historical linguistic and archaeological evidence to make a case for the civilisation of the Bantu people – the ancient Azania and its achievements. This is identified with the Azania intellectual/philosophical tradition that chastises 'white ignorance' to underscore African agency through the liberation struggle. Chami's work offers a critique of settler-colonial sciences of social, political and economic control (Ndumiso 2021: 6–8).

The performative discourses about African agency are therefore emotive. They decry Africa's colonial past and the imperialism of the

present. They chastise the dominance of the African Self as a collective space (territorial control) and the disenabling of the African collective mind (metaphysical control). However, without a proper course of practical action, without targeted actions aimed at supplanting the metaphysical control of Africans, the supplanting of coloniality remains at the level of bedtime stories. This only soothes African agency rather than strengthening it. Practical actions to strengthen African agency are of functional necessity. It is therefore worth delineating at this point the imperative of actions in the promotion of African agency.

The imperative of practical actions

From the discussion of colonialism and coloniality as problems of African agency, the external is presented as the major thread in the oriental carpet of difficulties that afflict African agency. A plethora of discourses have been thus sustained to protest against the actions that colonialism and the ongoing aspects of coloniality have inflicted on African peoples. However, the journey to ensure that the machinations of external intrusion are thwarted today and in the future requires less of the performative and more of the practical actions. To continue with the performative is to fit into the racist narratives of Lord Milverton (1956: 181) that, 'The African, by our [European] standard, is apt to be emotional, unstable, and spasmodic, lacking tenacity, independence, and foresight, but predominantly social, avoiding personal responsibility and loving the spins of words.'

To make a clear distinction between the performative and the practical actions, let me draw on the biology of the human body. If African agency is taken as the heart of the African Self: the performative soothes the heart, and the practical builds the muscles that enable the heart to withstand stress and pump blood for the entire body to function. Building the muscle of African Agency is self-determination. Soothing requires cushioning the heart (what the narratives of return do for African agency) and the muscles from the cause of trauma (the colonial past and coloniality). This does not necessarily strengthen the heart – African agency. Building and strengthening the muscles (facets of African civilisation – the economy, politics and culture) for them to offer strong support to the heart requires

training the muscles to grow and endure the trauma that is part of the inevitabilities of our existence as beings. The soothing comes easily. It begins with self-pity and blaming the other (what decoloniality does). It requires the mere dramatisation of experience to attract pity and sympathy. So long as the cause of the trauma can be identified, performative actions can be forthcoming, including shouting out at the oppressor and the injustice. The performative actions in this case are a precondition. The rhetoric against the external as the oppressor is essentialised by the victim.

The strengthening of the muscles so that the heart can function better focuses on the external cause of the trauma, but does not dwell much on the causes, rather on the inadequacies of the victim that made the body vulnerable to trauma. The desire to empower the victim in this regard is practical. The aim is to practically engineer strength in the muscles that have suffered trauma, to help them withstand it in the future. Exercising the muscle to encourage growth, therefore, becomes essential. So, as suggested earlier, taking African agency as the heart of the African Self, two choices can be made to bolster it: either to soothe African agency, or to build its muscles against external intrusion.

Therefore, juxtaposed with the performative actions, the practical actions against coloniality are guided by the question of what needs to be done to strengthen African agency – how best can the muscle of the African Self be grown to endure the trauma and stresses of external intrusion? This explains the necessity of the actions to empower African agency. These include all articulations of the struggle for the economic, political and social empowerment of the African Self related to self-determination and attempts to regroup and address the challenges to development (Mabogo 2002). This desire is the realisation of the aspirations of the African peoples. These are discussed as expressions of the African Renaissance (AR), a term and a practical approach to African liberation popularised by Thabo Mbeki during his tenure as President of South Africa from 1999 to 2008.

The African Renaissance as the anchor of the practical actions

Whereas Rosey (1953) had earlier used the phrase to refer to African arts

and beauty as indicators of a modern community, the more enthusiastic and seminal exposition of AR was transmitted during Thabo Mbeki's delivery of his 'I am an African' speech on the occasion of the adoption of the post-apartheid Constitution of South Africa in 1996. To popularise the term, the Centre for African Renaissance Studies was founded at the University of South Africa in Pretoria (Banda and Saayman 2015). Critical to AR is the question of African empowerment. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) was developed as the engine for the AR. Its mandate was two-pronged: to fight poverty and deliver sustainable development to Africans (Bongmba 2004). Thus, AR is a call for the recovery of the self-esteem of Africans. It draws on Diop's narrative of return, which positions Africa as the cradle of humankind and civilisation (Mbata 2006).

Also, the self-identification of Africans is central to the discussion of AR. This explains the location of the question of: who is an African, and what is African? The rather philosophical answer was that: '… [an African is] one [who] is black to the degree that one is not white or brown, [and] one is similarly African to the degree that one is not coloured, Indian or European' (Mabogo 2002: 63–64). This sense of the African Self was further amplified by Chatterji (1974: 259) in his welcoming of Léopold Sédar Senghor to the Sahitya Akademi (India's National Academy of Letters). He restricted what an African is to 'self-expression for the Black Man in a Modern Age'. Of course, this racialised reference to the African Self is parochial, for it excludes other people – the Indians, Europeans and others who were born and raised in Africa and have only Africa as home. The African Renaissance must not be seen as ethnic resistance (Ntuli 1998: 16).

The discussion of the AR has, therefore, been punctuated with some points of contention. The first point of contention is whether the use of European-derived categories, such as 'renaissance', is empowering. To counter that contention, one may argue that the self-identification of Africans is drawn on European-derived categories. Senghor's Negritude, which relates being an African to the Black African spirit as its Essence or Quality of being Black, is a Latin-French word (Chatterji 1974: 264). Also, the formalisation of Negritude and the assertion of the African Self

in the world of civilisation may not have occurred had it not been for the Paris meeting between the Black students Aimé Césaire of Martinique and Senghor of Senegal, who formed the movement towards a common cultural identity for all people of African descent (Davidson 1979: 3).

But it also seems to be the natural order of civilisation that no civilisation is self- sufficient. Civilisations draw from others. The so-called four major living civilisations of the world – Chinese, Indic (Indian), Western and Levantine civilisations, in addition to the Islamic, Russian and Judaic civilisations – are all successors of civilisations now considered deceased: Egyptian, Hellenic, Mexican, Peruvian, Mesopotamian, Byzantine, Cretan, Roman and Persian (Wescott 1970: 70). In that regard, Senghor (1962: 189) is of the view that it is true that Europe brought destruction, but that it also gave Africans the values they lacked, along with technical skills and methods of production. This includes the English and French languages, which many Africans use to communicate. In essence, to criticise the AR on account of its derivation as a word is to lose sight of its imperativeness.

The validity of the general sense of the AR has also been questioned. The critique is that, instead of the general sense of AR, we should be discussing the Nigerian, Kenyan, Ethiopian, Zimbabwean or South African Renaissances (Mabogo 2002). The intrusive criticism of AR is that it is illusory, for its faith in the future is anchored on the prospects of the past, which is a non-starter for Africa's empowerment (Boloka 2007). When all contentions are considered, I am of the view that for the sake of the liberation of the African Self, all suggestions matter to the promotion of empowerment, except that one must interrogate the question of whose agency is being furthered by the practical approaches to the promotion of African agency.

Thus, in the discussion of Africa's self-determination as a central pillar of African agency, the question of whose agency is or should be promoted is of utility. This requires critical reflection on the internal organisation of African agency. This is the basis of the critical theory of the introspection of African agency:

The internal organisation of African agency: internal colonialism?

Two conflicting issues have arisen with regard to the internal organisation of African agency: the agency of the governors and that of the governed. It is a contradiction that in the quest for the agency of the governors, the cost has often been the relegation of the agency of the governed to the level of lesser citizens, or the complete dismantling of the agency of the governed (through forms of alienation, including abuse of citizen rights and dispossession of their land by the governors – the political elites). In some African countries, leaders are adapted to and imitate the actions of the coloniser, for they have appropriated the colonial script of subjugation to cling to addictive power. The oligarchical tendencies and sometimes the exclusion of the majority by the minority from state power are similar to the colonial order, where the colonial administration used coercion to subdue the native majority.

Colonialism was based on three technologies of power – discourses, procedures and rules or prescriptions – to turn Africans into subjects. In doing so, Africans were imprisoned, beaten, obliged to perform forced labour, deported, or executed (Bayart and Ellis 2000). As if in imitation of the colonial past, coercion of the mind has been elevated to the level of a practical imperative by many contemporary African leaders. Violence and coercion have been adopted as a means of retaining power and of survival. Many African leaders thus employ deception to govern. Propaganda, the privileging of the perspectives of the dominant, has for many become the national agenda to be adopted by citizens at all costs (Sefa 2018). Many African political elites ride on the imperative of liberation, promising a better life for the citizens, but later concentrate on amassing wealth and privileges at the expense of the general good. They are characterised as 'the big men [who] draw resources from the State … the State resources that could have been invested in improving society's overall welfare' (Kalu 2018: 36). The Ndung'u and Waki commissions' reports underlined the involvement of Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first President, and his family in politically motivated illegal acquisitions of land on the Kenyan coast and in the Rift Valley region during the 1960s and 1970s. Close friends of the Kenyatta family and the core members of Kenyatta's political

party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), were gifted the land meant for indigenous communities. This stifled efforts to correct land-related colonial injustices in Kenya (Towett 2021). These injustices were carried forward into the postcolonial era. The reinvention of these tools of social control by African leaders in a bid to subdue their citizens is what constitutes internal colonialism.

In addition, internal colonialism is reflected in the extent to which colonial methodologies and principles of political control have been used by African leaders – Africa's modern kings – to ensure that citizens are subjected to their wishes. In essence, the problem of African agency can no longer be attributed to the colonial master but to contemporary indigenous African leaders with an exaggerated sense of entitlement and worth. To them, the empowerment of Africa's people is a form of gifting, not a service they are supposed to offer. They eschew democratic accountability by 'playing fake democracy', to use Beck's term (Beck and Fernandez 2021: 9). They use instruments of state power, including the security apparatus, monetary resources, and bureaucracy, to subdue their people and adulterate democratic processes such as elections. In worst cases, in a manner reminiscent of the beating with a whip as a colonial method of domination, the citizens are usually flogged into submission by the military and other security agencies that, ironically, have the constitutional mandate of protecting them.

Militarisation of political routine is reminiscent of colonial occupation, which leveraged military power (Bayart and Ellis 2000). Violence was central to the colonial matrix of power, related to the institutionalisation of colonial structures of domination (Mignolo 2011: 47). The socialisation of the native to be loyal to the colonial power at different historical moments emphasised the nearness of death. To illustrate, the paradigm of power in the sixteenth century was 'convert to Christianity or I will kill you'. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' callous promise was 'civilise or I will kill you'. The twentieth century's promise was 'develop or I will kill you', and the twenty-first century promise has so far been 'democratise or I will kill you' (Beck and Fernandez 2021: 5). In effect, the colonial paradigm of power, 'I will kill you', has been variously appropriated by African leaders, as manifested in actions that indirectly express the threat of the

nearness of death as an electoral strategy – thus 'vote for me or I will kill you'. Elections have sometimes become war. Still in recent memory, the unprecedented 2008 electoral violence in Kenya claimed approximately 600 lives (Ajuobi 2008).

So, to surmise, the strengthening of African agency requires the mobilisation of citizens to be part of the critical masses to enable what Beck and Fernandez 2021: 10) refer to as the 'road map toward decoloniality through the prism of resistance, innovation and determination'. However, one can hardly imagine a subdued citizenry being enthusiastic about decolonisation and decoloniality, yet they perpetually suffer the internal colonialism of the erstwhile liberators. So, to me, the ever-widening gorge between the interests of the governors and those of the governed is a major problem of African agency. This underlines the need for a philosophical approach to guide internal reflection on African agency. For that matter, I propose the theory of introspection of African agency. It is mapped out as follows:

Stretching the critical theory of introspection

Critical to the proposed theory of introspection of African agency is the question: Why are we the way we are and have been? The preferred answer to this question, as gleaned from the earlier articulated stretches of colonialism and coloniality, has been that: We have been marginalised. To recast, the story of marginalisation has been sustained by painting Africa and Africans in three historical sheds: 1) the slave trade, the transformation of human life into disposable material; 2) colonialism, the domination of the psychical space, and 3) contemporary forms of imperialism, interventionism of the Euro–Atlantic actors (Mignolo 2011: 59). Mbata (2006) suggests apartheid as the fourth shade of intrusion in Africa.

Marginalisation elicits feelings of disrespect, disenfranchisement, disillusionment and dismemberment of the African Self. These feelings are legitimate and an attestation not just to the death but to the continued existence of the African Self, as dramatised by the anti-apartheid activist Dennis Brutus, that:

"Somehow, we survive
and tenderness, frustrated, does not wither
investigating searchlights rake
our naked, unprotected contours;
over our heads the monolithic Decalogue
of fascist prohibition glowers
and teeters for a castrophic fall;
boots club the peeling door
But Somehow, we survive
Severance, deprivation, loss.
Patrols uncoil along the asphalt dark
hissing their menace to our lives
most cruel, all our land is scarred with terror …
but somehow tenderness survives" (Brutus 1964).

The African Self thus suffered multiple fractures inflicted by the external. Despite the intrusion, African agency endures.

The episodes of intrusion were amplified as legitimate forms of engagement. Colonialism was justified as a civilising mission, *la mission civilisatrice* (by France and England). The contemporary liberal-saviour tendencies of the Euro-Atlantic normative order of control are also presented as part of the civilising mission (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009: 135). The pejorative justification of intrusion was that Africa is 'the White Man's burden' (Cox 2000: 218). Hence, the question of African agency is a matter of perception. The protests against intrusion are a result of the perception that Africans have about the interference of external actors. It is generally perceived as subjugation or an attempt at it. But also, the perception that the intruder has about the subjugated or those they intend to subjugate guides the matrix of domination. To the external intruder, subjugation is an intentional undertaking, particularly because it is guided by the question: How will they react? The answer to this question has much to do with the nature and capacity of the target vis-à-vis that of the intruder. If the target is formidable, the intruder will be cautious. If the target is weak, only with the capacity to complain, rant

and wail, the intruder will reign over the target for complete subjugation.

The subjugation of the weak has been the order of international relations. Weaker civilisations surrender to those that are stronger. The Pharaonic Egyptian Civilisation lost its identity to foreign rule. Across different historical moments, it was remodelled to incorporate the identity of the Persian Empire, the Roman Empire, and the Arab Caliphate. The Russian Empire was also twice by force Westernised, first by Peter the Great and later by Lenin (Toynbee 1971: 250). In a way, the history of civilisations is entwined with the history of conquests, which can also be described as earlier forms of colonialism. The struggle for African agency ought to be guided by the system of things.

Being formidable is critical for the intruder to subjugate others. Also, for people to keep the intruder at bay, being formidable is a prerequisite to survival. It is not drawn from without (the wish that others will be other-regarding, with pure intentions). It is rather an outcome of the realisation that, regardless of the intentions of the would-be intruder, we can contend with their machinations. In a sense, formidability is a matter of sincere self-examination of one's potentialities. Thenceforth, the intentional examination of the self-organisation of the African Self is what is missing in the matrix of empowerment of African agency. I use the word 'intentional' to amplify 'examination' for the simple reason that there have been attempts aimed at the self-organisation of the African Self, except that the commitment to the realisation of its empowerment is not pursued with sincerity. A. Mazrui (1967: 128) had called for a long period of social and cultural reforms to overcome organisational incompetence in Africa.

Many African leaders have not been intentional in undertaking reforms, including democratic political reforms. Being intentional means being sincere to the African Self and its agency. This elicits the question: what are we doing to ourselves as Africans? And to re-echo Olufemi Taiwo: why have the postcolonial African states failed to deliver the 'promise of modernity'? (Olufemi 2022: 181). Much as I subscribe to the view that progress is a series of innovations, as precisely put by Doxtater (2004: 622–623), I also think fundamentals have to be streamlined. To begin with, Africa must build the capacity for self-organisation. This points to the imperative of actions that matter for the remodelling of the

self-organisation of African agency, which I consider to be the central tenet of the critical theory of introspection of African agency, as briefly sustained in the following stretch.

Central tenet: remodelling the self-organisation of African Agency

The quest for self-organisation of Africans is plagued by several problems, including corruption, failed political transitions, ethnic violence, lack of commitment to industrialisation, limited bureaucratic effectiveness, highhandedness of security agencies, inadequate provision of critical social services, and lack of proper planning for the youth. In most cases, those in leadership have either been overwhelmed or lack the commitment to address the problems that afflict the self-organisation of the African Self. The challenge of self-organisation is historical. In his essay *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1983), Achebe decries the problem of self-organisation in Nigeria, which he attributes to the failure of leadership. He further outlines the issues that bedevil self-organisation. He suggests that, through competent leadership, corruption, tribalism, social injustice, the cult of mediocrity and a lack of patriotism can be addressed (Achebe 1960). Many African leaders, to disguise incompetence, have continued to blame the colonial past that divided people along ethnic lines, the interventionism of the West that fuels activism, the citizenry that is unappreciative, the youth that are rowdy, the opposition that is unpatriotic, and a bureaucracy that lacks a sense of direction (Mapuva and Freeman 2010; Nasir 2014).

The theory of the introspection of African agency is therefore a beckoning of scholars to revisit the crisis of leadership in Africa by reflecting on the question: What are our leaders/rulers doing? Are they sincere – true to the amelioration of the African Self as a collective – or just concerned with 'their selves'? It is no longer of functional necessity for African leaders to continue blaming colonialism for the current problems of the African Self. The end of territorial control of African space by colonisers meant that political leadership was bequeathed to Africans. African leaders had the opportunity to reorganise and think anew on how to ameliorate Africans from the wretchedness which colonialism

had inflicted on them. Albeit with visitations of external intrusion, the organisation of Africa largely became 'an endogenous affair' (Fosu 2025: 71). Yet the obsession of African leaders with 'their selves' rather than with the African Self as a collective is glaring. This problem is historical.

The dialogic relationships between precolonial leaders and external actors during the slave trade have been variously recounted. The instructive example is how the Bakongo, Songhai, Zerma, Baluba, Bapembe and Bassa used the colonial system to maintain influence within their respective neighbourhoods (Bayart and Ellis 2000: 222). In contemporary times, many African leaders' obsession with self-aggrandisement and their desire to protect themselves in power has been discussed. Ingram (2007) wonders, 'Why can't African leaders let go [of power]?' Their fraternal rhetoric of commitment to the liberation of the African Self as a collective has been hypocritical. Dramatised by the Ugandan poet Okot p'Bitek, postcolonial African leaders *qua* liberators, perceived their rise as an opportunity to be served – to enjoy their moment in the sun, thus:

"And those who have
Fallen into things
Throw themselves into soft beds
But the hip bones of the voters
Grow Painful
Sleeping on the same earth
They slept
Before Uhuru! [independence/liberation]
And they cover the ulcers
On their legs
With animal skins [….]" (Okot 1967: 110).

The leaders live in opulence, but the provision of critical public services such as education and health remain low due to systemic corruption. The rhetoric of commitment to African agency in this way becomes what Tlostanova and Mignolo (2009: 137) refer to as 'a caricature halfway decolonisation'. As corruption and other political ills persist, liberation becomes a hoax. As a result, at the January 2018 African Union Summit

in Addis Ababa, Muhammadu Buhari, the then President of Nigeria, declared corruption 'one of the greatest evils of our time' (Fagbadebo and Dorasamy 2021: 28). It is no wonder, therefore, that many once-praised heroes of African liberation turned villains in their own spaces of control.

Most of the heroes of the agency of the African Self as a collective have subjugated their people, dismembered their societies along ethnic lines, disenfranchised their people, and are presiding over the affairs of disillusioned citizens. The colonial matrix of power entailed a struggle for economic control, a struggle for control of authority, control of the public sphere, and control of knowledge and subjectivity. As stated earlier the African elite matrix of power, to the chagrin of other Africans, has largely mirrored the colonial matrix. High levels of corruption, violence against political opponents, conscription of political discursive zones in the name of public order management, and the censorship of research attest to the extent to which exploitation can wear a Black face (Fanon 1963: 116). The disenchantment that many Africans feel towards their leaders is reminiscent of the anger they had about colonial administrations, yet the post-independence promise was '… to make freedom matter in ways that are different from life under colonial rule' (Fosu 2025: 71). It is because of the excesses of many African leaders that the 'second struggle for freedom' is justified (Olufemi 2022). And now, with the benefit of hindsight, though riddled with racism, the observation by Milverton (1956: 183–184) that nationalism is 'just a craving for power' held a grain of truth. Political organisation has been the failure of African agency. Many Africans are yet to be led by their leaders to what Nkrumah referred to as the 'new Jerusalem, the golden city of our heart's desire'; that is, the liberation of African agency (Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe 1993: 7).

The question of self-organisation of the African Self, therefore, projects a future and a present that is topsy-turvy as a result of the question of leadership. This is more vivid if Africa is compared in terms of progress with the rest of the formerly colonised. Thus the question: why is Asia rising? Why is Latin America rising? Why does Africa remain the symbol of delayed civilisation? The rise of Asia draws much on the extent to which leaders embarked on critical introspection. Sometimes they tapped into other civilisations to draw models to guide internal organisation. Through

a scheme of cross-fertilisation, which has been explained as 'reactive modernisation', polities in Asia have adopted modern state institutions from abroad and grafted them 'on to indigenous rule and a moulded indigenous society' (Therborn 2021: 229).

So, leaders in those spaces have pursued the journey of becoming formidable without necessarily disenfranchising their people or driving them into an unpredictable future of failed political transitions, as the case of Sudan illustrates. Indeed, some of those spaces suffered more protracted forms of external intrusions. Indonesia was colonised for more than 300 years. African leaders' obsession with concentrating on rhetoric against the external is counter to the logic of survival. Vusi Mavimbela, Mbeki's political adviser, while making a case for the AR, suggested that the most important factor behind the Asian miracle was the ability to resist 'cultural westernisation' (Nabudere 2001: 20). I suggest that even the ability to resist cultural domination occurs as a result of having a proper system of self-organisation. This amplifies the imperative of the introspection of African agency. But how do we proceed?

To Kroeber (1953), the meaning of internal organisation draws from the necessity of a distinct language, codified religion, political and military development, economic surplus, technological development, style in terms of fashion and high quality, and originality in arts and scientific progress. The internal strength of European powers enabled them to dominate the world. America's rise to global superiority, China's steady rise to hegemonic standing in the world, the recovery of Japan, the growth of Korea and the Pacific Rim were a result of commitment to political modernity – related to building the institutions of the state, industrialisation, economic and technological advancement, and investment in educational scientific advancement (Stearns et al. 2011).

The story of nuclear Pakistan reveals how internal self-organisation enables agency. Pakistan had long endured the threat of India over the so-called Kashmir question. Pakistan's path to acquiring a nuclear bomb began when India acquired one. The leadership of Pakistan, aware of the imperative of internal strength and the truism that the external (India) does not owe them a living, against all historical odds which cannot be delineated here, ensured that Pakistan became a nuclear-armed state. The then Prime

Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was determined to make Pakistan formidable so that its enemies would shudder (Khalilzad 1976). He was resolute in the quest for nuclear weapons, even if it meant having his people 'eat grass to ensure nuclear parity with India' (Shaikh 2002: 43).

Agency, therefore, begins with internal organisation to build and strengthen it. So, the critical theory of introspection is mobilised around the hypothesis that agency – the strength to act – is internally generated. Once strength is sufficient, the net gain is reflected in the capacity to moderate the excesses of the external environment so as not to undermine one's agency. Agency, in this case, becomes internal strength expressed externally. With internal strength, the actors can easily manipulate the external to accumulate more internal strength. The journey of the world has been punctuated with quests to dominate others as a means of facilitating the continued growth of the powerful. When entities become powerful as a result of the gains made in their internal setting, they start thinking of how best to conquer others (Stearns et al. 2011). Conquest may not necessarily be territorial alienation, as the experience of European colonialism was. It may be economic control, as the dollarisation of the world has played out. So, to make African agency formidable enough to keep at bay all forms of unfavourable intrusions requires the essentialisation of internal organisation and strength, as opposed to decrying the machinations of the external. This invites the question: on what pillars should the theory of introspection of African agency be further anchored to guide the remodelling of internal organisation in Africa? The proposed pillars are discussed as the specific tenet of the theory of introspection below.

The specific tenets of the critical theory of introspection of African agency: a conclusion

I do not intend to exhaustively circumscribe what such a theory should entail as its specific tenets. I can only map out the critical questions that need to be asked in advancing the theory of introspection of African agency thus: what kind of leadership does Africa need? How can African states build functional economies? What education system do we need

in Africa? What system(s) of political organisation do we need to adopt? How can Africa forge a cultural and scientific revolution? How can a nationalistic African population be manufactured?

With regard to the question 'What kind of leadership do we need in Africa?': Within the context of Africa, in most states, the leadership concentrates on identifying problems and blaming them on external actors. Avoiding responsibility and painting an image of vulnerability is characteristic of most African leaders. To them, it is either colonialism or the modern forms of imperialism – the interventionist tendencies of the West – that present a problem to the progress of African agency. Agudiegwu and Amulu (2020) transmits it as the 'blame game syndrome' within the context of Nigeria. The major preoccupation of most African political elites is how to build the capacity to gain and control their power. Trapped by their obsession with dominating others, attaining and keeping power thus becomes the mission, and all things are subservient to it. The national economies mobilised to bolster the leader. The educational system is directed to amplify the ideology of the leader. The bureaucracy is effective to the extent that it executes the plans that support the leaders. Success is measured by the extent to which one wields power, not to serve but to cling to it. The state, as such, becomes the estate of the leader (Wyk 2007). To deepen the estate of the leader, the military has often been misappropriated to serve the interests of the leaders. This has defined the military experience of many African states. And for fear of repression, the criticism of the militarisation of leadership has been mostly dramatised in what is referred to as protest literature – as transmitted, among others, in Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants*, Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*, Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, Niyi Osundare's *The State Visit*, Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*, Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English* (Onanuga 2018: 101).

To further reflect on the institution of a leader, what Africa needs is intentional leadership, which is democratic. One of the most enduring challenges of African agency has been the question of democracy. It has been lately suggested that democracy is in a decline as a result of electoral violence, third-termism and constitutional coups – stretching beyond

the mandatory constitutional limits of a stay in power by tinkering with the Constitutional provisions on term limits, military coups and digital authoritarianism – constraining debate on digital platforms and digital surveillance. Between 2001 and 2020, 15 Heads of State had eliminated term limits: Conté's Guinea in 2001, Eyadema's Togo in 2002, Bongo's Gabon in 2003, Museveni's Uganda in 2005, Déby's Chad in 2005, Biya's Cameroon in 2008, Bouteflika's Algeria in 2008, Guelleh's Djibouti in 2010, Nkurunziza's Burundi in 2015, Kagame's Rwanda in 2015, Nguesso's Republic of Congo in 2015, Kabila's Democratic Republic of Congo in 2016, Azali's Comoros in 2018, Sisi's Egypt in 2019 and Ouattara's Côte d'Ivoire in 2020 (Akinyetun 2022: 104). And because some of Africa's leaders emerged as freedom fighters, they have routinely resisted democracy. Given the cost of their attainment of political power, the perceived sense of entitlement has been overwhelming.

One may argue that democracy is not error-proof and it has its risks. But its beauty ought not to be ignored. Democracy makes politicians accountable. The subjects become powerful members in the selection of leaders and in guiding their mandate, making the public sphere more open and the economy more transparent. Democracy promotes social equity and justice, leading to an open society (Bassey and Udoudon 2018: 2). Political organisation, of course, can also go wrong in a democratic setting, as much as it can in other systems of political organisation. Democracy guarantees and provides safeguards for the political order that other alternatives, such as authoritarianism, may not offer. Because of its democratic deficits, Sudan's fragile political transition has collapsed; the revolution which overthrew Omar al-Bashir turned into war (Kurtz 2024). Libya is in shambles after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi. Ethiopia's scientific revolution is being torn apart by enduring ethnic violence. Within the Great Lakes region of Africa, projective narratives of a bleak future with probable failing political transitions are being sustained (Chrétien and Richard 2011). African agency cannot be amplified when we are still grappling with the basics of political order. But amid a grim outlook, where democracy has been embraced, a future of peace and progress has also been projected. The democratic electoral gains in Ghana, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia point to the right civilisational

trajectory in political governance (Thuynsma 2020). Democracy, if embraced, helps to overcome political contradictions through a system of rules. This translates into peace – a predictable future favourable for development. My exposition of the theory of introspection, though not exhaustively pursued in the chapter, should be construed as a reminder that if the question of political governance is not sorted out, efforts aimed at amplifying African agency are likely to go to waste as a result of failed political transitions. A research agenda on political governance and order should be essentialised in the understanding of African agency.

So, the imperative of democracy in streamlining governance is urgent, and it begins with the leader. This is because in instances where leaders have been externally pressurised to pursue democracy, the outcome has been fake democracy. Intentional leadership ought to appreciate that democracy, though dismissed as a Western idea, has its organisational merits. Democracy facilitates the rise of talented leadership to address problems afflicting communities, and the democratic process enables the substitution of the lesser talent (concerning the demands of a particular moment) with little encumbrance. However, for this process to work out, it requires the socialisation of the citizenship to be positioned to decipher the talents that they need in a leader at a particular historical moment. Democracy requires the organisational capacity of the state to socialise citizens to understand the workings of democracy.

Besides democracy, which is critical to the political organisation of states, one of the engines of any civilisation is a functional industrial revolution. Industrialisation enables economic progress, for it powers the export base, which invites the critical financial resources needed to support investment in education, scientific research, infrastructure development and the building of state institutions – including the army and public service. Industrialisation is the anchor of independence, and as a result of a lack of significant progress in industrialisation, the majority of Africa's countries are dependent on financial assistance from the developed world. It is therefore odd that African leaders who decry Western interventionism beg for financial intervention from the West. The excuse has been that Africa is financially dependent on the West, a situation to which most countries are condemned as a result of the unfair

economic policies that the West imposes on the rest of the world. This fits into Achebe's logic that, 'For reasons which can certainly use close psychological inquiry, the West seems to suffer deep anxieties about the precariousness of its civilisation and to have a need for constant reassurance by comparison with Africa' (Achebe 1978: 13).

So, the thinking is that, by denying goods produced in Africa access to their lucrative Euro–American markets, the West maintains its self-understanding as the most prosperous part of the world, with Africa as the wretched of the earth. This, however, sustains the contradiction expressed in the questions:

1. Who opened the world markets for the Chinese, the Koreans, the Japanese, the Malays, the Indians, among others?
2. How best can African states organise their industrial processes to produce competitive products in terms of quality?
3. How many indigenous, home-grown investors do African states have?
4. What policies do African states have in place to guide investments?
5. What is the extent of the resources that African States have earmarked for scientific industrial research?

Through introspection, answers should be given to these questions. They should be debated to ensure that industrialisation in Africa is well aligned with the promotion of African agency. Indigenously powered industrialisation is the standard mark of self-determination, which cannot be anchored on the industrial fortunes of others.

For that matter, Chinese, Indian, European or Latino investments in Africa ought not to be celebrated but rather taken as springboards to African industrial self-determination. The experience of South-East Asia is useful. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) enabled technological transfer, but industrial capacity has been enabled by indigenous capital. This has been realised through the adoption of the theory of Big Push industrialisation, where governments offer subsidies and build infrastructure such as roads, railway lines, airports and seaports, and offer capital to reduce the exit

of domestic firms from production (Gui-Diby and Benard 2015). The concern is that FDI breeds dependency, exploitation and interference.

Where one's capital flows, cultural and political influence naturally follows. And for the sake of simplicity, one may ask: who is the largest African industrialist in China, India and Brazil for one to argue for foreign investment as an anchor of agency? Industrial indigeneity matters. China's post-1978 industrialisation was anchored in Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs). As a result, rural industries flourished throughout the 1980s. Manufacturing flourished as farmers engaged in small-scale industrial production to supplement their subsistence income from farming. This saw the growth of China's rural industrialisation. It is the indigenous base of manufacturing that saw China at the 'doorstep of detonating an industrial revolution' that has come of age to dominate the world. It took only 10 years, from 1978 to 1988, for China's industrial production to experience monumental growth. We are told that:

> "[T]he number of village firms in China increased more than 12-fold, from 1.5 million to 18.9 million; village industrial gross output increased more than 13.5-fold, from 51.5 billion yuan (14 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP)) to 702 billion yuan (46 per cent of GDP); village employment increased more than 3-fold, from 28 million to 95 million; farmers' aggregate wage income increased 12-fold, from 8.7 billion yuan to 96.3 billion yuan; and village firms' total capital stock increased more than 9-fold, from 23 billion yuan to 210 billion yuan" (Wen 2021: 5).

The lesson to be drawn from China, which is arguably still part of the Global South, is this: industrial independence is critical to a people's pride and voice in international relations. The Chinese can now be listened to, their voice matters because of the industrial base on which their global overreach is anchored. The Africa-wide overreach of South Africa has been enabled by its industrial base, unrivalled on the African continent (Alden and Soko 2005). To thwart Africa's industrial dependency, the strategy should be to support the growth of indigenous industrialists. By strengthening indigenous industrialists, the excesses of foreign

industrialists, which include capital flight, will be moderated. This should not, however, be construed as an argument against foreign investment, but rather a call for indigenous-powered industrialisation as the anchor of Africa's self-determination.

Reflecting on the kind of education system that Africa needs, I would like to submit that one of the things that much of Sub-Saharan Africa is grappling with is how to forge a functional education system. The question of which direction to take in the education sector has not been answered, except that decolonisation of universities has been overemphasised. Education is key, and we were cautioned by Heinrich Veringa, the Dutch Minister of Education during the latter years of the twentieth century, that, 'Every form of one-sided pressure for reform would do damage to the essence of the University' (Meijer 2015: 68). The pedagogical system should be oriented towards Africa's own realities in its concepts and subject matter. Calls for a decolonised pedagogical structure are legitimate, but they should not be pushed into parochialism. Emphasising African realities and drawing illustrations from them should not be construed as an attempt to delink African education systems from other civilisations.

The domestication of concepts and innovations has enabled societies to progress. The university system in the US was derived from the Europeanisation of America, which entailed the importation of the university as a graduate school from Europe. Thus, for the proper domestication of the Europe-dominant Humboldt University model, with teaching and research as the model of university education, the American model added the element of community outreach – a university networked with its communities (Backhaus 2015).

So, no society has progressed because of being inward-looking. Education is about reviewing experiences. Progressive experiences are not restricted to Africa. Africa needs to tap into the experiences of others to grow its civilisation. The charge of colonialism does not mean that all the educational experiences which were bequeathed to us by the coloniser are wrong. Two issues should be distinguished: colonialism as a violent and psychologically disorienting experience and colonialism as a civilisational experience. Considering the violence of colonialism as the basis to dismiss

its civilisational benefits is to be out of touch with the history of modern civilisations. The '… awareness of the Other may be a catalyst for arousing a self-consciousness of one's own civilizational identity' (Cox 2000: 22). Some civilisations have had multiple origins in terms of influence. Western civilisation draws from the Hellenic civilisation of Greece and the Levantine civilisation of West Asia. The Russian civilisation is derived from the Byzantine civilisation of the Romans and Western civilisations. The Carthaginian civilisation of North Africa derives much from the Phoenician and the Greek (Wescott 1970: 73). Of course, some scholars have legitimately suggested that colonialism nipped Africa's civilisation in the bud, and that perhaps Africa would have prospered to compete with the modern civilisations. This is understandable, but not a helpful argument. Colonialism eventually happened. The nascent African civilisation was supplanted. We can only reminisce about that. It is not productive to dwell on it for long. The promotion of African agency lies in harnessing the intelligence and hard work of Africans. Thus, by pointing at the imperative of an organised education system as a facet of the theory of introspection of African agency, I am inviting scholarship to revisit the question of the kind of education system(s) that can enable Africa to forge a cultural and scientific revolution.

Thinking about what kind of education system Africa needs inevitably raises the question of citizenship. It is very hard to imagine a consolidated African Self and its agency when in some states citizenship is still a contested issue. Where colonial boundaries are essentialised, identities at the margins of the boundaries have been excluded from the direct enjoyment of the right to citizenship. The question of Rwandan identity in the Great Lakes Region is instructive, particularly the Banyamulenge question in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and whether they belong to Rwanda or the DRC (Umutoni 2017). Also, the question of building a single multi-ethnic alliance still eludes many states in Africa. In Nigeria, hegemonic struggles over who should be at the helm of the political and economic systems continue to define the relationship between the three dominant ethnic groups: the Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani and Igbo – the 'tripodal ethnic structure' of Nigeria. This has led to

ethnic conflicts attributed to 'unending [ethnic] political manipulation, manoeuvrings, calculations and permutations' (Adegbami and Uche 2015: 61). Very few African states enjoy a single nationalism, and on account of competing nationalisms within a single polity/state, the outcome has been violence and the essentialisation of the formula of ethnic arithmetic that undermines meritocracy as the basis of modern statehood. The most instructive case of postcolonial crafted nationalism is that of Tanzania, where socialism via the Ujamaa policy and Kiswahili as an egalitarian language of Tanzanians enabled the forging of a national identity (Blommaert 1996). In other African states, the move towards a single nationalism has been, to say the least, a patchwork. However, the extent to which constitutionalism has been tweaked to create harmony in ethnic diversity, as in the case of Kenya, does not indicate a permanent solution, but rather a way for those in leadership to bypass their responsibility to fix the problem of failed nationalism (Fitzgerald 2010).

In proposing the critical theory of introspection of African agency, I am beckoning scholars to revisit the question of citizenship to incubate more viable solutions than the shortcut proposals of the political elites in the name of constitutionalism. The questions which should orient scholars in this direction are: what did the states in Asia (where there is ethnic diversity within single states) do to forge a single nationalism? How can we diffuse ethnicity? This will require a comparative study to understand and leverage the experiences of others to grow African agency. The rest are details, and I would like to invite other scholars to contribute to the African journey of introspection.

And finally, for the sake of critical introspection, we need to remind ourselves and our leaders that, 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves'! We need to interrogate ourselves, our actions, our thoughts and sometimes our hypocrisy – manifested in corruption that undermines the provision of critical public services to African citizens and amplifies the extent of the abuse of their rights. We need to proactively pursue an indigenous industrial revolution by investing in human empowerment and industrial scientific research. We should be intentional, remembering that too much talk without action will continue

to render the struggle for African agency an exercise in futility.

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