AFROCENTRICITY & WESTERNITY

A CRITICAL DIALOGUE IN SEARCH OFTHE DEMISE OF THE INHUMAN

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE BOARD

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ANA MONTEIRO-FERREIRA

AUGUST 2010

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

DR. MOLEFI K. ASANTE, PH.D. MAJOR ADVISOR, DAAS

DR. AMA MAZAMA, PH.D., DAAS

DR. LAURA PIRES, PH.D., DCH, UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA, LISBOA (PORTUGAL)

DR. GERARDO AUGUSTO LORENZINO, PH.D., DSP

DR. CHRISTEL TEMPLE, DAS, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY

ABSTRACT

AFROCENTRICITY & WESTERNITY: A CRITICAL DIALOGUE IN SEARCH OF

THE DEMISE OF THE INHUMAN

Candidate's name: Ana Monteiro-Ferreira

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Temple University, 2010

Doctoral Advisory Committee Chair: Dr. Molefi Kete Asante

This dissertation is a fundamental critique of the Western discourse using an Afrocentric critical reading of major Western constructions of knowledge. As such the study examines both the origins and dehumanizing consequences of the European project of Modernity.

The study departs from the thesis that Afrocentricity, a philosophical paradigm conceptually rooted in African cultures and values, brings renewed ethical and social significance to a sustained project of human agency, liberation, and equality. Thus the dissertation explores how each major Western idea is understood within the context of the revolutionary philosophical paradigm and epistemological theory of social change.

Concepts like individualism, domination, colonialism, race and ethnicity, universalism, progress and supremacy that Molefi Kete Asante calls the "infrastructures of dominance and

privilege" are reviewed against the backdrop of agency, community, commonality, cultural centeredness, and *ma'at*. Indeed, employing critical ideas from the works of Afrocentrists this study highlights the inadequacy of Westernity in overcoming the various forms of oppression.

Modernism, Marxism, Existentialism, Feminism, Post-modernism, and Post-colonialism, are addressed in dialogue with Afrocentricity as an exploratory part of a two-way relationship between theoretical understanding and practice which challenges established and hegemonic approaches to knowledge. In fact, the study argues for a rational approach to conceptual "rupture" that would allow the scholar to navigate the shattered ideologies of Western thought, and to contribute to the exposure of the imperialistic ambitions that worked at the backstage of the political and economic philosophies of Europe since the early fifteen century.

In effect, the dissertation can be viewed as an intellectual journey moving from an epistemological location in Western epistemology towards an Afrocentric paradigm and theory of knowledge in the quest to defeat the *inhuman*. Ultimately, the aim is the search for a more humanistic and ideologically less polluted mind and for a more human humanity.

DEDICATION

This Dissertation is dedicated to

João

Till death do us part

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

encouragement as well; and to my graduate colleagues who accepted my presence and shared their friendship with me;

But I am particularly reverent and humble in acknowledging those without whom I would not be the person I am today:

- My longing parents from whom I learned the deep lessons of humanity, freedom, and justice; lessons of resistance and struggle for a more human world "without which it's not worthwhile to live";

- To our 'building block': João and our children, Sofia and Pedro are the reason of my achievements and the meaning of my life.

- To all family, the living and the departed, and friends whose support and example have always been source of inspiration and comfort, especially my beloved sister, an unconditional anchor in all the walks of my life;

And last but not least this dissertation is dedicated to João, my husband and my unconditional friend, one of a kind because it takes an extraordinary man to endure all the difficulties that separation for such a long time entails, and still keep on covering up for me. Out of his love this project turned into reality. He has supported me unconditionally all along: from inciting me, encouraging, hearing, and sharing my frustration and joys, into pushing me and sustaining me in every possible way.

Thank you all. My life has meaning because of you.

May 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5. FIFTH CHAPTER

AFROCENTRICITY AND POST-MODERNISM

6. Sixth Chapter

Conclusion

AFROCENTRICITY & WESTERNITY:

A CRITICAL DIALOGUE IN SEARCH OF

THE DEMISE OF THE INHUMAN

INTRODUCTION

The title of this dissertation reflects its author's concerns with the annihilating effects of the contemporary globalization and technologization of science and society and draws on Jean-François Lyotard's (2007) double concept of *inhuman*[1] and Molefi K. Asante's (2009) fundamental critique of the Western discourse[2] because this study is a critical reading of the Western constructions of knowledge both on its origins and dehumanizing consequences.

The failure of an unending faith in the progress of humanity as delineated by the Western rationalistic project as well as the collapse of the modern capitalist societies has long been predicted by many thinkers during the twentieth century. Anchored in the hegemonic and totalizing views of the Western individual as superior and of the Western thought as universal, new theories have surfaced, one after the other, as Western intellectuals and thinkers have tried

---

[1] Published in France in 1988 *L'inhuman: Causeries sur le temps* discusses the need to question the ideological mechanisms through which humans become individuals, i.e., acquire a 'second' nature which makes them fit into the established social and cultural institutions.
[2] In "Resisting Westernity and Refusing Development" published in 2009 Asante declares that "(T)here can be no privileged discourses that protect the status quo where the status quo is anti-human".

to answer the anxieties of the Western individual mind and to close the breach on the Western paradigm caused by the atomization and itemization of people in society.

The possibility that African cultures and values bring renewed ethical and social significance to a sustained project of human agency, liberation, and equality is explored in this project along some avenues of thinking about this process, by discussing some of the most representative contemporary Western theories against the revolutionary paradigm that is Afrocentricity.

This study seeks to re-affirm the strengths and vitality of this radical counter-hegemonic theory in the preservation of the collective and diverse human values and knowledges; and use its epistemological theory and praxis to confront imperialistic power and epistemological colonialism, and false universalisms. This project that ultimately questions Western civilization's hegemonic drive for progress with which human beings are being transformed into co-modifiable objects by both hard science and social science and technology, draws on the Afrocentric paradigm for two main reasons: first, because it offers a process of analysis and a methodology of research centered on the relocation of the cultural and historic subject; and second, because being its philosophical matrix born out of the experiences of enslavement, oppression, distortion, disorientation, and annihilation of the culture and history of a whole continent and its people, Afrocentricity is a theory of liberation against every form of domination, hegemony, and control: a "more operable paradigm (…) to move in this new direction [multiculturalism] with a more human commitment to communality" (Asante, 1999: 26)

Every day we witness how contemporary societies and nations, heirs to the modern project, succumb to the wild practices of neoliberal philosophies, while scholars and thinkers

entrenched in the Western oriented academy, opinion makers, social and political analysts, and philosophers seem generally unable, often times unwilling, to confront the Western roots of the neo-capitalist, neo-colonialist globalizing thought. Mindless of the urgent need for the elimination of social, cultural and economic marginality and deprivation of agency, and the preservation of a balanced human and environmental ethics, those still confused by white racial supremacy caused by the triumphalism of Western thought, will hopefully find in this work a consistent applicability of the Afrocentric paradigm in an anti-hegemonic discourse and the use of its epistemological framework to accommodate diversity without hierarchy.

Concepts like individualism, domination, colonialism, race and ethnicity, universalism, progress and supremacy that Asante (2009) identifies as the " infrastructures of dominance and privilege" along with agency, community, commonality, cultural centeredness, as well as concepts of holism, *ma'at* will be dealt with along with other forms of socio-political-economic, cultural and historical forms of oppression and liberation as the discussion progresses under the thematic sections of this dissertation.

The aim of this project is therefore multiple. It seeks to establish epistemological bridges but also ruptures between Afrocentricity and Westernity[3] that would ultimately consolidate an epistemological comprehensive structure for a multicultural society respectful of diversity and equanimity under a revitalized form of democracy; a society that accommodates pluralism and a sense of individual accountability for an integral and holistic ontological project of human beings and nature.

---

[3] These concepts will be defined ahead under "Theoretical Conceptualizations".

This critical re-appraisal of paradigms that also seems to embrace the fields of cultural studies and critical theory, where the vast movement of analysis and deconstruction of thought takes place, has another final aim: inherent to the true liberating thinking process that opens up avenues for different but not unequal modes of thought, it seeks to provide a useful epistemological discussion and a fresh orientation to knowledge, eventually a truly universal conceptual framework, as guidelines for African, African-American, European, and for that matter every non-Western thinker and scholar who praises critical confrontation of ideas.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

> The concepts of liberty and democracy are absolutely central to modern political thought and practice, and they are also at the storm-center of much rethinking that has taken place over recent years. (Browning *et al.,* 2000: 11)

The dialogue that will follow between Westernity and Afrocentricity can be summarized as a confrontation between the primacy of rational individualistic values and the holistic values towards life and the world, community and nature.

To my knowledge, this is an enterprise that has rarely been attempted before, notwithstanding much criticism that every theory discussed here has endured *per se*; it is a rethinking of our contemporary human condition as much as of the discourses through which societies have moved towards an affluent first world of resources and abundance or pushed back as the so-called 'Other' into physical and intellectual starvation labeled as third world.

This is not an empirical study although its targeted population is the American society, the American intellectual environment, and the American political and economic experience because the United States of America is the place of a *praxis* of confrontation between European and African worldviews without parallel. In no other place in the world can we find such a tremendous human devastation for such a long period of time at whose expenses another share of the human race could prosper and build a wealthy powerful nation. In no other place in the world can the two paradigms – Afrocentricity and Westernity – find a more accommodated milieu to operate and be understood. Moreover, it is in the United States and in the particular experience of African intellectuals and activists in America that Afrocentric theory has its roots, as well as in a deregulated American democracy that the neo-liberal pattern of strong individualism and social inequalities is most blatant. It must not be forgotten that at the turn of the twentieth century W.E.B. Du Bois had already identified that the problem for American democracy was the problem of the color line, and unless it was confronted head-on and resolved by white America, America could never be considered a democratic country (DuBois, 1903). To this day, this is an unresolved problem that the election of an African American president does not simply overcome.

Therefore, a dynamics of comparative analysis will be sought in order to highlight the most prominent problems that pose grave humanitarian challenges to a balanced survival of both human beings and the environment as well as the failures and successes of Western epistemological theories in order to address them in the light of the proposed responses offered by the Afrocentric paradigm on every form of inequality and oppression be it race, gender, class, sexual orientation, or religious belief.

The emergence of European Modernism as a rejection of the Victorian authority and the romantic tradition placed a strong emphasis on the autonomous 'enlightened' individual and on his/her reasoning capabilities by whose exercise a linear progress of the so-called 'real' world and the essence of Truth would be achieved (Pires, 2004). It was the expression or crystallization of modernity at the turn of the century and the response of the white supremacist intelligentsia to rescue the conceptual *satus quo* that legitimized white privilege, intellectual, political, social, and economic based on hegemonic ideologies of racial superiority, scientific determinism, and rationality.

With the uncertainty brought about by the post-modern society which carried a sense of fluidity of boundaries and a certain sense of pervasiveness that has impacted even in the area of theory, it seems as if we could just opt out theory and still be able to make sense of the 'real world' as we live it. Yet, however shaken on its rationalistic foundational grounds theories of the Enlightenment have been, everyday experiences are not abstract and so new paradigms emerged as approaches to understanding the world, an understanding which had been "undermined by empirical developments as well as intellectual critique" (Browning *et al.,* 2000: 4-5).

Modernism, Marxism, Existentialism, Feminism, Post-modernism, and Post-colonialism, will be addressed in dialogue with Afrocentricity as part of the two-way relationship between theoretical understanding and practice which challenges established and hegemonic approaches to knowledge in the attempt to make sense of the world while navigating the shattered ideologies of the Western thought, and to contribute to expose the imperialistic ambition that worked at the back stage of the political and economic philosophies of Europe since the early fifteen century.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Though the decision about which were the dominant and most representative theoretical traditions embraced by Westernity during these past one hundred years is matter for much controversy, this project does not seek to put forward either any answers or definitive statements to it, neither does it presume to offer a finished task which is impossible in view of the vast scope of areas and fields of study involved. Therefore, this study will address a selection of theories whose choice is entirely based on its author criteria and responsibility, and is open to critique and discussion of different opinions. This selection, however, is not an arbitrary one. These theories are consistently present and dominate much of the contemporary literature as interpretative paradigms that cross every field of study in Western epistemology as even a casual perusal of the literature can testify, and they have been also theme of great debates within the African and African America intellectual community.

1. FIRST CHAPTER

THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

1. AFROCENTRICITY

1.1 DEFINITION

Afrocentricity materialized as a theory of knowledge in 1980 under Molefi Kete Asante´s philosophical thinking whilst a systematic challenge to Western epistemology. It emerged in the African-American cultural panorama as a set of premises that would account for the understanding of an African sense of totality and wholeness in a network of multiple and particular manifestations of different fields of knowledge to address the life and experience of people of African descent in America, in the African continent, and in other diasporas.

Departing from the recognition that Eurocentricity as a particular world view is "a normal expression of culture but could be abnormal if it imposed its cultural particularity as universal while denying and degrading other cultural (…) views" (Asante, 2003: 61), Asante's theory of social change was primarily addressed to a detailed investigation and questioning of the Eurocentric nature of knowledge; to avoid personal and collective destruction of people of African descent; to reclaiming an African cultural system as the coherent meeting point of every African cultural and historical past. By historicizing concepts, perspectives and common cultural traits among people of African descent; by identifying the symbols which as a whole will become a transformative agent for the empowerment of African people, Asante (1980) has set the basis of this revolutionary approach to history and culture that he named Afrocentricity.

By stepping outside of the historical constraints of the fixed European historicism to generate new interpretations, new criticisms, ultimately the acquisition of new knowledge Afrocentricity challenges the orientation to history foreign to the history of the African subject;

demands an epistemological location which places the critic/scholar inside the African experience and African ideals and values at the center of inquiry framed by African codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths, which give meaning to the history of the African subject and a sense of place in the world arena.

Although some critics, following an Althusserian concept (Althusser, Lettre à D., July 18, 1966) may see theories as being really nothing more than organized epistemological orientations derived from daily praxis "intended to explain universal phenomena across space and time" (Miike, 2006, 20) Afrocentricity transcends mere re-organization of ideas to become a transformative project. Theoretically rooted in the pursuit of human knowledge from a culturally and historically located perspective of the subject it questions moral, political, and intellectual justifications of taken-for-universal values in clear epistemological rupture against what in this work is addressed as Westernity. By agencying the African subject in the voicing of his/her own history contrary to being the object of study or the mere subject matter in the framework of Eurocentric disciplines (Asante, 1987) Afrocentric theory informs a clear epistemological rupture with the Eurocentric paradigm.

While it poses a severe criticism over the preponderant Eurocentric myths of universalism and challenges the colonizing concepts and racist theories that preside over the triumph of the Western thought, it also offers the possibility of a non-hegemonic alternative perspective in the understanding of human expressions in our diverse multicultural society. Most importantly however, unlike Eurocentric theories Afrocentricity does not bear a totalitarian spirit because it does not seek to replace "white knowledge" with "black knowledge" (Asante, 1998: xi). On the contrary, being a frontal critique to every sort of prejudice and racist theory, Afrocentricity is a

theory of wholeness that seeks ways of unity based on mutual respect for the cultural agency of all people, as this study intends to demonstrate.

> (T)he Afrocentric idea is projected as a model for intercultural agency in which pluralism exists without hierarchy and respect for cultural origins, achievements, and prospects is freely granted. (Asante, 1998: xii)

Actually, Afrocentric theory seeks neither a totalizing nor a universal scope, and certainly not an essentialized perspective on knowledge. It is does not set itself up as a universal standard and does not criticize Eurocentrism in its particularity. Of course, what the Afrocentric perspective on knowledge requires is "location": African "location" as the methodological approach to African traditions and cultures while refusing the subaltern place that has always been conferred to black expressions, artistic and cultural, by Eurocentric scholars. As Asante emphasizes there is nothing wrong in addressing European culture, history, philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics from a Eurocentric perspective as the Eurocentric paradigm is indeed the European epistemological locus.

However, Asante contends:

> By regaining our own platforms, standing on our own cultural spaces, and believing that our way of viewing the universe is just as valid as any, we will achieve the kind of transformation that we need to participate fully in a multicultural society. However, without this kind of centeredness, we bring almost nothing to the multicultural table but a darker version of whiteness. (1998:8)

As a cultural theory Afrocentricity is committed to the reconstruction of ancient African classical civilizations as the place for interpreting and understanding the history of African

peoples, narratives, myths, spirituality and cosmogonies. Since the ancient African civilizations did not separate religion and philosophy, and their contributions to art, literature, and science were directly connected to the principles of ancient wisdom, African world-sense, cosmogonies, institutions, concepts, symbols, and voices can only be fully perceived and appreciated through a holistic paradigm like Afrocentricity. Embracing all these aspects in a systemic network of meanings Afrocentricity conveys African peoples' sense of the world and of their existence, and provides an epistemological tool to deal with social and cultural manifestations either from a cultural/aesthetic perspective, social/behavioral or even a political/functional one, in search for the foundations of African identity. It must not be forgotten that African aesthetic creative forces are never dissociated from real life and from an African axiological pattern, where the highest ethical value is the human responsibility to prevent chaos. Therefore, an in-depth analytical (deconstructive) approach to every African artistic expression when located in the anteriority of classical Africa will provide a more consistent understanding of the African pathos and of the aesthetic and philosophical dimensions that underlie the interplay of different African rhythms and subject matters.

Being a philosophical, social and cultural theory committed to the construction of a holistic epistemological paradigm centered on African cosmological, ontological, ethical, and philosophical anteriority of classical African civilizations, the theoretical approach is supported by a rigorous methodology that calls for a constant awareness of location and agency of African people.

However, Afrocentricity is not an essentialist theory as some critics claim, because it does not reject other perspectives to account for the experiences of African people inside and

outside the continent. What is imperative for Afrocentricity is the whole notion of an African *Weltanschauung*[4] distinct as much from the European *Weltanschauung* as from the Asian conceptualization of the world; a cosmological edifice common to African cultures before it has been impacted even distorted by the European and Asian worldviews; a sense of cultural, historical, and philosophical heritage rooted in the anteriority of major African civilizations like Kemet, Nubia, and Ethiopia in order to understand the modern African in Africa, in America or anywhere else (Diop; James, Bernal, Du Bois, Asante, Karenga).

This is where the concept of location in Asante's terms – epistemological, cosmological, ontological, ethical, and aesthetical – denotes a conceptual organization of the world that is not compliant with the European conceptualization and radically rejects that Africans should exist on "borrowed terms".

Therefore, in Afrocentric terminology the conceptual category of *Weltanschauung* will have, of necessity, to be replaced by an African concept like the Kiswahili term of *Utamawazo* as used by Marimba Ani (1994), which denotes "the culturally structured thought (...) the way in which cognition is determined by a cultural *asili*" or the cultural seeds of a people or their cultural logos (Gaffin, 2006: 299).

---

[4] *Weltanschauung* (worldview/worldsense/ideology/perspective).
The use of the German word is preferential here because it entails the cognitive philosophical dimension that its English translations do not contain. In cognitive philosophy, a people's *Weltanshauung* is the sum total of their common experiences, ranging from their geographical/environmental conditions to economic resources available, socio-cultural systems and linguistic families. It emerges as the representation of the way in which a people perceives and conceives the world, and is organized around an ontological dimension or model of the world, a cosmological one or explanation of the world, ethical values and moral behaviors, a methodology for action, an epistemology or theory of knowledge, and the etiology of its origins and construction.

1.2 HISTORICAL GROUNDS

> You control the human lives
> in Rome and Timbuktu.
> Lonely nomads wandering
> owe Telstar to you.
> Seas shift at your bidding,
> your mushrooms fill the sky.
> Why are you unhappy?
> Why do your children cry? (Maya Angelou, 1990)[5]

The experience of enslavement and racism in American society has most certainly created the conditions for the emergence of the Afrocentric theory in the same sense that Marxist theory is a response to the economic constraints and oppression imposed on Russian peasants' working forces still kept under a feudal system by the Czars that went well into the early twentieth century; and that Feminist theories resulted from the inevitable questioning of a Western male dominated society and the need to establish legitimate epistemological grounds for women's voices and claim for equal social and political status in an oppressive patriarchal society.

Like every other theory Afrocentricity has a history. It is the philosophical and methodological corollary of five hundred years of works and struggles of many of its author's African and African-American predecessors, scholars, activist scholars, writers, poets, and intellectuals like W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Cheikh Anta Diop, Langston Hughes, Harold Cruse, Malcolm X, Ida B. Wells Barnett, George James, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Carter G.

---

[5] Excerpt from Maya Angelou's poem "These Yet To Be United States" in *I Shall Not Be Moved,* p. 21.

Woodson, Anna Julia Cooper among many others. It emerged hand in hand with the cultural and spiritual revitalization of Black people through the works and activism of Maulana Karenga, Rosa Parks' and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s civil disobedience, Marcus Garvey's Pan-Africanism, Booker T. Washington's theory of economic independence, W.E.B. DuBois's reclamation of African civilization as the cradle of humanity, Malcolm X' cultural nationalism, and Nat Turner's revolt (Asante, 1988).The major influence, however comes from Cheikh Anta Diop. Indeed his work and research has consistently been given credit by Asante as one of earliest pioneers to Afrocentricity "because he reconstructed African cultural theory with Africa as subject (Asante, 1988: x). The reconnection of Egypt and ancient Kemetic civilization to Africa was in Diop's, as well as in DuBois, Asante, Karenga, Ama Mazama, Théofile Obenga, Marimba Ani, Tsehloane Keto, Jochannan and other African men and women thinkers, the one and only way African writers could write their own history and confront the distortions and falsifications with which European "tunnel history" (Blaut, 2000) supported and legitimized racial superiority and the colonial enterprise.

   While Asante recognizes in Diop "one of the first historians to articulate a decidedly Afrocentric point of view" (Asante, 2007: 81) he is also aware that other movements and ideas to which Afrocentricity is indebted like Négritude and Kawaida (Asante, 2007: 116) offer but partial responses to the crucial taking of action towards the acquisition of an assertive cultural, historical, and psychological self-identity. The much deeper Diopian influence on Afrocentricity goes beyond the different tactics used by Asante's intellectual predecessors to elevate the status of Africans and attain the common goals of cultural reconstruction and liberation of African people. For Asante, Diop "remains the most penetrating figure in (our) African intellectual tradition because he went directly to the core of the racist reasoning and defeated it in its lair"

(2007: 29). Booker T. Washington's economic independence would only have meant freedom if it were to be achieved within the framework of an ideology of liberation through the political and cultural deconstruction of a rhetoric of oppression, which never happened. On the other hand Du Boisian and Karenga's *leit motive* towards mass education for African Americans and consciousness raising of an African rich cultural heritage; the need for the unity of all Africans to assert race power and a cultural nationalist and Pan-Africanist philosophy as proclaimed by Garvey and Malcolm X; or the non-violent strategy of M.L.King, Jr. to confront the unabated racism that kept denying African Americans equal treatment in matters of rights and citizenship, most of them became trapped in a similar *cul-de-sac* resulting from an appreciation of oppression through the ideological lens with which the oppressor determines his rule. All shared the same paradigm which made it impossible for them to truly liberate the articulation of their projects from the stigma of a Du Boisian double-consciousness. Although precious in many ways in their contributions to the liberation of the African people from the colonial disruptive impact over African cultures, and from racist ideologies and practices by countries whose economic growth and consolidation depended on systems of enslavement and oppression, Afrocentric predecessors' work has almost invariably choked in the obfuscating nets of Westernity. As Asante recognizes "Du Bois prepared the world for Afrocentricity" (1988: 16) and Karenga's philosophical reclamations were foundational influence in liberating cultural symbols to be used as cultural artefacts to regain African centeredness and free enslaved Africans from an enslaved mentality. An overturning philosophical structure and a paradigmatic rupture with Westernity was however to come with Afrocentricity and the publication in 1980 of *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* which was primarily concerned with the agency of African people as subjects instead of objects of history, and with their cultural centeredness. For this simple reason

is Afrocentricity a confrontational and radical theory designed to confer people of African descent a sense of existing on their own terms (Asante,1998**).** Notwithstanding the fact that the American experience of African people has produced a unique understanding of the genesis of every system of oppression, the Afrocentric philosophical reach goes beyond African people's assertiveness of their Africanity or mere modes of expressing their social bonds; it applies to a consciousness-raising of the centeredness of everything African that calls for agency.

2. WESTERNITY

2.1 DEFINITION

The term Westernity used in this work denotes Asantean European "particularism as a universal value" (Asante, 2009) and the "Eurocentric Model of the World" (J. M. Blaut, 1993) that has migrated with European colonization to the Americas to become the mainstream white American ideology, the extended image of the USA, and the model that America has been and still is committed to impose on the world. Therefore Westernity is equated with Eurocentricity as the European model of the world that has been imported, embraced, and adopted by WASP[6] America to become the single and only legitimate, lawful, and valid model and perspective from where to assess humanity, and adopted worldwide. Asante defines Westernity as "a paradigmatic insistence that portrays values of the Euro-American culture as culturally dominant and naturally conquering" a European form of particularism that has "the characteristics of the most invasive aspects of contemporary European and American cultural and social behaviors [for the purpose

---

[6] Acronym for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, which in American sociological and political arena has become to denote the general white powerful elite, synonymous with privilege, the "Establishment", and a conservative ideology.

of] the promotion of European, meaning white, dominance in all sectors of society". (Asante, 2009: 67)**.**

Modern Western philosophy and cultural paradigms based on individualism and on the autonomous individual as center of the universe, have been shaped by the systematic attempt to control the natural order in a *quasi* supra-natural understanding, and ultimately, replication of an almost *divine* power, as the secular human being became the locus and center of rationality with the reasonable doubt of René Descartes (1596-1650) and the power of the reasoning mind of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), maybe the two most influential philosophers of the Modern epoch.

Since Plato, the quest of the human kind for the limits of human nature, the definition of what is to be a human being and of his or her possibilities, the desire for a stabilized sense of identity and embodiment of a universal subject, all have invested Western revisioning and speculative discourses, metaphorical explanations, scientific knowledge, idealistic and materialistic reasoning. With the European Renaissance the 'man' of reason has subsumed the overpowering role of the divine in recovering the platonic concept of "hero", where the human, separated from God, is the closest to Him according to the Greek Classical thought, and by inaugurating an anthropocentric philosophy has become the ideal model of Westernity or the Western Canon.

However, over five hundred years of building a project that presumed to revolve around human rationality and for that matter emancipation and progress, the credibility of modern ideals of social wellbeing and equanimity is being profoundly questioned *au fur et à mesure* that individual and collective greed, secular and religious powers alike, have plunged Europe and the world into consecutive humanitarian disasters since European modernity has emerged.

2.2 HISTORICAL GROUNDS

Historically, the religious and political interplay of Christianity in Western Europe has set the tone for its political and economic development since the Middle Ages.

Actually, as information was being collected and organized for this project, two premises, two grand narratives, emerged as central to this discussion: the construction of the Western thought around religious and economic grounds, *i. e*., Christianity under the Roman Catholic Church; and Capitalism, the economic system born with modernity.

However, it is neither a religious nor an economic discussion that will be pursued here but the foundational impact of these two mainstay principles in the development of the Western European history, philosophy, culture, and the prevailing paradigm of Modernity.

I believe that in order to understand the eventual collapse of the capitalist model of society, the challenges that neo-liberalism and globalization are bringing on the so-called peripherical regions of the world which obviously includes Africa, and the objectification of the human beings which means reducing them to the role of *commodifiables* of the powerful western international corporations, we have to critically discuss the foundational ideas of the Western European concept of the world.

The Roman Catholic Church, whose dogma concentrates on the Sacred Family on the one hand, and on the salvation of the individual soul into eternity for those who worship Christ on the other hand, has been the major spiritual leading force in Western Europe, at least from 1417 after the Great Schism while the dogmas of the New Testament have been/are the gluon that produced

and sustains the catholic[7] mentality prevalent in the Western world. These are, in my opinion, the two aspects of the Catholic branch of Christianity that helped in the establishment of the concepts of the centrality of the nuclear family and that of individuality. In fact, it is ultimately between God and the individual that responsibility for personal human acts is to be litigated.

Beyond matters of human belief, the consolidation of religious credos is also a matter of power relations in society, and Europe has also been the stage where, historically, religious wars took place hand in hand with secular struggles for the definition of the political boundaries of its nations throughout the early Middle Ages. Secular and spiritual power often shared the same interests and the success of the spiritual influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe was based on the enormous secular influence that it engendered and the wealth it accumulated during the first half of the first millennium.

Various religious institutions namely the Roman Catholic Church[8] became both extremely rich and powerful with its own laws and lands, with the authority to collecting taxes, and as its power grew with its wealth the Catholic Church became the designer of the European politics owing to its enormous influence over kings and rulers of Europe until a newly emergent urban, extremely wealthy, and intellectualized bourgeoisie slowly came to politically, economically, and artistically dominate European society. Several factors must be taken into account to understand the sense of unprecedented accomplishment according to the European standards that emerged with the European Renaissance. As a reaction to the theocentric scholastic logic imposed by the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages the emergence of an

---

[7] Catholic actually means universal or whole as derived from the Latin word 'catholicus'
[8] Official denomination since 1417 forty years after the establishment of the papal court in Rome by an Italian pope, Urban IV.

autonomous human reasoning brought about an anthropocentric optimism and a strong belief in the almost unlimited power of the human beings (Pires, 2004). This profound transformation in the European history of ideas has inaugurated a new historical epoch: Modernity.

The concept of Modernity, vast and ambiguous, at least in the definition of its emergence and boundaries, has been addressed by historians, philosophers, cultural analysts, sociologists, anthropologists, and is far from being consensual.

For the purpose of this study the historical definition seems to be the most appropriate. In the historical context Modernity is seen as a long period characterized by deep historical transformations, a new economic, social, and political order marked by the rise of commercial activity, a movement towards urbanization, economic affluence, a new powerful economic social class, and the inherent intellectual and artistic development concentrated around the Italian city-states of Rome, Genoa, and Florence and that may be traced back to the fourteenth century. Historians and thinkers (Karl Marx, Max Weber, J.M. Blaut) report Modernity to the expansion of the commercial routes opened by Portugal during the mid fifteenth century, and to the consolidation of the capitalist economic mode with the powerful bourgeois Italian families like the Medici and the Condottieri.

As far as the cultural paradigm is concerned, Modernity does not necessarily overlap with the historical boundaries of the period, but equates with the Cartesian discourse and the project of the Enlightenment where the modern democratic political and social thought has its roots. In a cultural framework Enlightenment and the historical period during which this intellectual movement developed can be characterized by three key concepts of power: power of reason over

obscurantism; power of a rationally organized world over a chaotic one; power of science over superstition (Pires, 2004: 64).

These are also, according to Blaut (1993), the foundational arguments that sustain Eurocentric historians' and philosophers' conceptual structure of Westernity that will be subject to scrutiny and discussion along this work.

2. SECOND CHAPTER

REVIEW OF MOST RELEVANT LITERATURE

REVIEW OF MOST RELEVANT LITERATURE

Much of what constitutes the matrix of Westernity has its roots in the conceptual framework of the philosophical thought of René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Frederich Hegel, and Max Weber exactly in the same sense that the roots of the Afrocentric philosophical thought can be found in the historiographical research of Cheikh Anta Diop, in the historical and sociological studies of W. E. B. Du Bois, in the cultural re-birth worked by Maulana Karenga, and in Molefi K. Asante's Afrocentric philosophical and theoretical body of works. This is not to ignore other influences that will be discussed as the importance of their work surfaces in the following chapters, rather the need to focus on a clear outline of the conceptual strengths of both paradigms for the sake of the dialogue between Westernity and Afrocentricity.

Since *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* was first published in 1980 three other key works expanding the theory have been published by the creator of Afrocentricity: *The Afrocentric Idea* in 1987; *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* in 1990; and *An Afrocentric Manifesto* in 2007.

Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change does not merely provide alternative theoretical and philosophical grounds from where to approach knowledge. It delineates a complete epistemological structure. Grounded in cultural and historical reclamations, a first draft of a disciplinary framework (Afrology) is offered along with a method of analysis (pp. 58-65) as well as its functional applications (p.85).

With the publication of *The Afrocentric Idea* (1987 1st edition) Asante clearly establishes an Afrocentric method that will <u>systematically</u> analyze the African and African American

discourse. In part I (The Situation) and part II (The Resistance) he reaffirms the parameters of the African sense of the world, and reclaims this culturally rooted African worldview to confront and resist white racism, to regain African cultural and historical centeredness, to critically build a metatheory based on the study of the rhetorics of African people. In part III (The Liberation) he identifies the three fundamental themes in the African and African American discourse that will have to be systematically addresses by the Afrocentric scholarship (1) human relations; (2) human's relations to the supernatural; and (3) humans' relationship to their own being (p. 168), as well as the need for an epistemological paradigm which would be definitely established in his next major work *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* (1990).

This is a seminal work both in its critique of hegemony and domination as well as in its search for a methodology that will establish the basis for a humanizing and inclusive theory of knowledge. Grounded in the cultural and ideological centeredness of every human being, the Afrocentric theory of knowledge embraces a conception of a shared world of plural perspectives without hegemony.

This is also a seminal work in the sense that it goes deep into the African roots of human civilization while in the footsteps of Cheikh Anta Diop it reclaims the Kemetic anteriority both to African and the world culture. Expanding the Afrocentric theory *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* is also a conceptualization of the theoretical and methodological questions raised by taking the Afrocentric theory into praxis.

Therefore, the volume explores the Kemetic legacy and establishes the systems of knowledge found in Ancient Egypt as the foundational basis of African religious, aesthetics, ethics, and moral customs. From Linguistics to Geography, from Cosmology to Cosmogony, to

the ideographic system of conceptual and philosophical representations to rhetoric, the second chapter of this volume, called Anteriors, provides understanding of the Kemetic influence in African cultures as well as clear examples and debates. The first and last chapters, entitled Interiors and Exteriors respectively, provide detailed philosophical, theoretical and methodological articulation between Nile Valley civilizations and the Afrocentric project for inquiry into the processes and practices of human culture while investigating African phenomena from an African standpoint, as opposed to the Eurocentric hegemonic universalism prevalent in the academy.

The worldwide dimension achieved by the Afrocentric paradigm and theory of knowledge is now condensed in this last volume of Asante's quartet, *An Afrocentric Manifesto* (2007), where the paradigm itself transcends any parochial or essentialistic assumption and becomes the place of human consciousness, a non-hegemonic and non-hierarchical location from where to assess the world, the possibility of a perspective on data that definitely demises European hegemony (p.3).

Here Afrocentricity and the power of the paradigm is reaffirmed by Asante: "Afrocentricity, if anything, is a shout out for rationality in the midst of confusion, order in the presence of chaos, and respect for cultures in a world that tramples on both the rights and the definitions of the rights of humans" (p. 7) which is, in a universal appraisal, eventually one of the most powerful and beautiful definitions of Afrocentricity that brings a whole new meaning to the concept of rationality[9].

---

[9] Without denying that one of the most distinguishing features of human beings is their ability to reason, the rationality Asante is crying out for is one that confronts the positivist assumption of individualistic progress and claims for a humanist project of society endowed with the democratic values of equality, liberty, and respect.

Acknowledged by Asante to have been one of the earliest precursors of Afrocentricity

Diop can be considered the greatest African intellectual of the twentieth century. A Senegalese

educated under the arrogant French colonialism in Senegal, and a brilliant mind trained in oral

history and culture according the strong educational tradition of the Senegalese noble families,

Diop entered La Sorbonne, the most prestigious French university where he got his doctoral

degree with a thesis on the Blackness of the ancient Egyptians (Asante, 2007). He was the first

historian to scientifically challenge the white orientation of Egyptology and to provide scientific

evidence of the true African origins of classical Egyptian civilization as well as of its

foundational and unifying orientation of African cultural, historical, aesthetic, ontological,

cosmological, and moral values. Being an eclectic scholar he drew on linguistics, cultural and

physical anthropology, history, chemistry, and physics to collect and present evidence of the

manipulation that Eurocentric scholarship used to claim that Egypt/Kemet was a European nation

in order to confer legitimacy to the Western/European imperial project.

In *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality?* and in *Civilization or Barbarism*

Diop offers a redefinition of the place of Egypt in African history in particular and in world

history in general. The book presents a scrupulous research of ancient writers namely Herodotus

and the French Count Volney as well as extensive scientific examinations of mummies of

ancient Kemet kings; precise osteological measurements and meticulous studies in the various

relevant areas like chemistry and the 14 carbon analysis, anatomy and physical anthropology;

comparisons of modern Upper Egyptian and West African blood-types; detailed linguistic

studies that proved the common cultural, physical, and metaphysical origin of African

characteristics in ancient Kemet; Biblical testimonies and references that address the ancient

Egyptian's ethnicity to give evidence of the Southern African origins of the people later known

as Egyptians. His lifetime intellectual project that goes much beyond the two works referred here was committed to (1) correct historical distortions used as cultural, mental, and civilizational destructions to pave the way for the European colonial enterprise; (2) assert scientific evidence that Egypt was an African civilization drawing on the heart of Ethiopia; (3) establish this historical evidence as an operational scientific concept to provide epistemological foundation to the *sine qua non* understanding of Africa.

In the United States of America only W. E. B. Du Bois has a comparable intellectual stature to Diop and Asante. One of the greatest American thinkers of the twentieth century, his American and European education in the highest reputed universities of Harvard and the University of Berlin gave him a vision of the world that transcended White American parochial dimension while his lifetime work was devoted to a quite distinct focus – the life and experience of the 'Negro race'.

Malgré his Western scholarship, with a strong German influence, Du Bois was not complacent with the distortions and falsifications of history and his philosophical and pragmatic approach to the history, the society, the economy of America founded in the plantation system supported by an enslaved labor force, and its cultural and historical impact of the African people, made us heirs to an ethnographic study of the social realities of Africans in America with a phenomenological orientation to data and to history, and to the transformative possibilities of the social sciences (Monteiro, 2000).

In his major autobiographical and essayistic writings that include, but are not limited to, *The Souls of Black Folk*, *Dusk of Dawn*, *The Philadelphia Negro*, and *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* the race question is always central whether he approaches it from an

28

historic-political and economic perspective like in *Black Reconstruction* or under sociological scrutiny like in *The Philadelphia Negro;* or in *The Souls of Black Folk* and especially in *Dusk of Dawn,* which Du Bois himself considered an "Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept".

In *Dusk of Dawn,* written thirty seven years after *The Souls of Black Folk,* Du Bois provides the philosophical and pragmatic foundations of the enterprise to which he devoted his whole life: "a way of elucidating the inner meaning and significance of that race problem by explaining it in terms of the one human life that I know best" in order to confront, "by means of intelligent reason" what he saw as "the central problem of the greatest of the world's democracies and so the Problem of the future world" (Huggins, 1986: 551).

The Problem, as Du Bois conceived it, relied on the assumptions of basic racial differences: differences in appearance, in thoughts and customs that, though "as old as human life" in Du Bois's words, fossilized in static constructions of inferiority attached to skin color. Constructions that were brought about by the European need to legitimize enslavement and colonization of the African continent and the African people, based upon the rationalization of European power equated with whiteness and superiority and Africa with blackness and inferiority.

This new orientation of the philosophical, social, political, and economic thought of the nineteenth century was seen by Du Bois as the cause for the intellectual, social, and psychological damages in human relations – actually race relations in America – and the psychological permanent distress of African people in America: the "double-consciousness" syndrome that he describes in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

29

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Huggins, 1986: 364-5)

Armed with a firm passion for science and its methodological triumphs he decided to approach the sociological study of the conditions and problems of the Black people in America from a scientific perspective: "I was determined" he stated in *Dusk of Dawn,* "to make a scientific conquest of my environment, which would render the emancipation of the Negro race easier and quicker" (Huggins, 1986: 577) and has undoubtedly established the foundations of sociology as a discipline, developed and given solidity to methodologies, tools, and extended the scope of the conceptual framework into race, something that had never been attempted before, much less theorized and applied around a subject matter that, within the operative concept itself had been so far unaccounted for: the African subject in America.

Some authors consider Du Bois's work an epistemological shift in the sociological paradigm (Monteiro, 2000; Winters, 2002) and Clyde Winters goes as far as classifying Bu Bois among the Afrocentric scholars (Winters, 2002: 129). Certainly Du Bois's was a pioneering work for Afrocentricity, however to consider his work Afrocentric fails to acknowledge the epistemological rupture with the entire Western paradigm that Afrocentric theory entails. Du Bois's epistemological development was a critique to the European Enlightenment assumptions of progress; to white hegemony; to the Darwinian and Hegelian evolutionist concepts and biological determinism of racial differences.

However, the concept he was acknowledging was not that of race – the human race biologically different in the realm of the animal world – but the plural notion of several and different human races differentiated by biological but also cultural and historical constructs which is ultimately grounded in the Western philosophical thought of the nineteenth century. There is a philosophical ideology of hegemony contained in this assumption of racial differences that harbors hierarchies, and this is the deep structure of the Western epistemological framework that Du Bois's scholarship failed to address.

Race, in this plural conceptualization, was a new epistemological sociological structure that represented a shift in European sociology. By collecting every manifestation of African modes of cultural and spiritual expressions, traditions and customs of Black people to interpret the sociological findings, Du Bois did construct a new and "distinctive methodological approach to the problems of race [and] built a distinct epistemology, a new way of knowing and of course changing race relations" (Monteiro, 2000: 227).

However, in advocating the existence of races that he defined like "large groups of people united on the basis of civilization, culture, language, and recognizable phenotypic characteristics" (Monteiro, 2000: 227) Du Bois was leaving the ground open to concepts of hierarchy implied in the more or less "civilized" aspects of the cultural history of peoples, which relocated his theory again in the Western philosophical paradigm of his time.

Since the white world, determined and defined by the Western worldview, does not acknowledge the African experience and sense of the world in equal non-hegemonic terms; since the intellectual and academic orientation to knowledge as well as the paradigmatic lines under which scientific investigation is validated; and the Western/European framework of the

American academy is incompatible with non-hegemonic standards and practices of knowing and interpreting the world, Du Bois epistemological transformative approach to knowledge within the Western disciplinary framework though a profound shift was never a paradigmatic rupture.

Trapped in Western race theories, Du Bois pragmatic and phenomenological approach to the lives and experiences of Black people did not permit transcending color line.

However Du Bois is an undisputed Afrocentric precursor. On reading extensively Du Bois the two basic Afrocentric assumptions – orientation and location – seem to permeate every aspect of his studies. Actually Du Bois's work is consistently oriented to and located in the African experience, and truly focused on its meaning for the African in America and the Diaspora. However Afrocentric orientation and location entail an epistemological and methodological concept that Du Boisian epistemology, unlike Afrocentric theory, did not contemplate as an operative concept: *Weltanschauung* (worldview/worldsense/ideology/ perspective).

While Du Bois' scholarship, by operationalizing race as a social and cultural concept, de-centered the subject matter of the Western epistemology, Afrocentric theory and epistemology overturn the Western paradigm by offering an African *Weltanschauung* framework for the study of the African experience "of the person and of the people, as African" (Modupe, 2003, 59). The Afrocentric reclamation of an African worldview, an African ontology, cosmology, cosmogony, aesthetics and moral values, and philosophy provides a theory of knowledge that discontinues the racial subject matter from the study of the African subject as subject of history, without alienating the impact of race and its effects. This is where Du Boisian and Asantean philosophical perspectives part.

An equally foundational tribute to Afrocentricity has to be paid to Karenga's Kawaida theory, a philosophy of ethical social behavior and human responsibility for a good life in a sustainable world (Karenga, 2005: 290) based on African values that Kawaida seeks to bring to the fore in human and social relations by recovering and reconstructing African culture.

Developed as part and parcel of the activist practices of the 1960s during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, and the militant theoretical discussions in organizations like the US founded by Maulana Karenga in 1965 in Los Angeles, Kawaida's central concept is the idea that a cultural revolution is a *sine qua non* condition for Black liberation. Karenga believes that cultural domination is at the root of every form of oppression, political, social, and economic. Culture and community, cultural rebirth and an educated and conscious vanguard of African intellectuals are at the basis of Kawaida project of cultural liberation as essential to the struggle for freedom, specially the central role and relevance of culture in the life and struggle of African people. Kawaida theory is in Karenga's words an "ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange in the world" (p. 290) whose project aims at creating a new social paradigm for "national or communal liberation" of African people and of what it means being African and human in the world. Another central concern in Kawaida theory is the relationship between culture, community, and the struggle for liberation which can only be achieved by African self-understanding and self-assertion that "are to be found in the best of African thought and practice" (p.291). As a direct consequence of the physical, spiritual, cultural, and linguistic destruction of African people in the American white nation, Kawaida theory was conceived as the path to the reconstruction of a Black identity, a way of reconnecting the scattered African cultural and spiritual expressions, a practice of resistance and struggle for the assertiveness of African history and culture as an active contribution to the world through the

revival of the legacy of ancient Egyptian civilizations as the foundational philosophical, spiritual, and cultural traditions of Africa.

Kawaida theory is a humanistic manifesto, a set of moral and practical prescriptions for the betterment of human and social relationships, a programmatic project, and the reaffirmation of culture conceptualized as the totality of the symbolic practices and expressions of a people, "a uniquely human way of being in the world where each culture is equal in value" (p. 292). Unfortunately the colonial enterprise and the holocaust of enslavement do not share the same vision and Kawaida does not offer an epistemological rupture with the ideologies of hegemony and oppression of the colonizer's model of the world[10].

Notwithstanding, Kawaida's recovery and reconstruction of African culture found its roots in the reconnection of the Africans to the ancient Egyptian/Kemet ethical and spiritual legacy of *ma'at* and the idea of *serudj ta* or the moral obligation to constantly repair, heal, and restore the world in the Kemetic tradition of governance as an ongoing quest to create a *maatian* society in a sustainable environment (p. 292). The experience of enslavement, the reconnection to Nile Valley civilizations, and the yearnings of the Black movements of the 1960s are undissociated in Kawaida's philosophical quest for the reaffirmation of Africanness.

This same basic idea of reconnecting Africa and African culture to its Kemetic historical, spiritual, and cultural legacy; the same sense of agency; the same activist drive; the same deep humanistic project, all these are indeed foundational in Afrocentricity as well, and constitute the programmatic bases of these revolutionary enterprises.

---

[10] Title of J. M. Blaut's critique on Eurocentric historiography published in 1993.

The Afrocentric paradigm however de-passes ideology[11] and offers an overturning epistemological conceptualization, analytical instruments, and methodological framework that constitutes in itself new disciplinary grounds where Africa is the paramount agent of its own liberation and African people can exist in their own terms.

This epistemological rupture with Westernity is better understood if we reverse our present day status of ideological subjects to find out the epistemological moment where our Western perception of the world as we conceive it today has gained its shape.

Cogito, ergo sum used by René Descartes in his *Meditations* published in French for the first time in 1647 has become a foundational element of Western philosophy.

He developed his positive interpretation of the world as a consequence of what Richard Bernstein and Susan Bordo call his "Cartesian anxiety"[12] over the separation from the amorphous irrelevance of human beings during the Middle Ages into the affirmation of the human possibilities of the individual mind. This movement from a theocentric conceptualization of the world into anthropocentrism carried an insecurity that Descartes sought to overcome epistemologically by a process of systematic doubt and proof.

His method is that of forming skeptical hypothesis – methodic doubt that he develops and methodologically answers in *Meditations I: Concerning Those Things That Can Be Called into Doubt,* as a way of reassuring the existence of a Almighty God as a measure of certainty that ultimately bridges the gap between his inner reality, things that you cannot understand, explain,

---

[11] The term is used here not in the modern political sense of the word but in its original meaning of a philosopher's theoretical production or philosophical thought.
[12] Richard Bernstein, "Philosophy in the Conversation of Mankind", *Review of Metaphysics 32*, nº 4 (1980): 762; Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought", *Signs,* vol. 11, nº 3, Spring 1986: 439-456.

and conceive, and the outer world. The recognition and assessment of a inward mental life is developed in *Meditations II: Concerning the Nature of the Human Mind: That It Is Better Known Than the Body* where he 'proves' that human beings exist because they can think –*Cogito, ergo sum* - and that their thinking ability is disconnected from the outer world.

In *Meditation VI: Concerning the Existence of Material Things, and the Real Distinction between Mind and Body,* Descartes addresses the potential existence of material outside the self and God. Confronted with the existence of the material world and believing in God as the ultimate explanation of everything that exists, he syllogistically proves that because God can create a thinking thing independently of a body and a body independent of a mind, he as an individual can clearly and distinctly understand his existence as a thinking thing which does not require the existence of a body. His assumptions that the human mind is endowed with innate ideas; that nothing which cannot be recognized by reason can be classified as knowledge; that truth can only be attained by reason alone; and that since innate ideas are common to all minds and the ability to reasoning is a necessity of the philosophical knowledge he set the foundations for positivism, rationality, and universality of the Western thought while his conceptual body/mind separation left it with an irreducible dichotomy.

Like Descartes, Immanuel Kant also conceives rationalism as a type of analytic judgment but refutes the idea that analytical reasoning will be the answer to construct a system of knowledge endowed with universality and necessity. This is the philosophical problem that he critically addresses in the three Critiques that are Kant's most important work. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), he argues that pure reason is unable to know those things that go beyond the realm of all possible experience like the existence of God, free will, and the immortality of

the human soul which Kant refers to as "Ding-an-sich". This is Kant's basic rationalistic concept according to which all that man must know, do, and believe finds its justification in the theoretical, practical, and aesthetic faculties of the human being; in the Critique of Practical Reason he deals with the moral problem according to the principles of transcendental criticism; and in the Critique of Judgment he examines the aesthetic question, and the objective and ethical value of our knowledge.

In the first Critique, which is the most relevant for the development of this project, Kant defines time and space as *a priori* required conditions for human knowledge, *i. e*., time and space are not signifiers, rather they are the organizational co-ordinates for our intuitive perception of everything that exists (sense knowledge) through the intellectual activity of the human mind whose function is the unification of knowledge. Having placed the activity of the human mind as central to all knowledge, Kant sets himself into the task of demonstrating that it is by the activity of the human intellect that a permanent unification of sensible data is possible only on the condition that the unifying intellect is stable in order to confer permanence and necessity – universality, objectivity, and laws – to the understanding of nature and our knowledge of it that he organizes into four categories: quantity, quality, relations, and modes.

Kant postulates that true and proper knowledge can only be obtained through the intellectual activity of organizing sensible data under these categories but human beings cannot attain the supersensible because the contents of these forms of knowledge are phenomenological, *i. e*., the result of experience. Ideal reality, God, immanence and transcendence, are not objects of sensible intuition, therefore they are not objects of that knowledge which is proper to the intellect. However, the existence of God and the supersensible are undeniable for Kant; what is

impossible is its conceptual determination. For this reason Kant was forced to demonstrate their existence as postulates as an exigency of the faculties of moral judgment and in the spheres of finality and aesthetics: the primacy of the free will over the intellect; the belief in the immortality of the soul; the belief in the existence of God.

By elevating the human mind to an almost divine sphere of possibilities, and by conceiving the primacy of free will over the intellect, Kantian philosophical thought expanded the Cartesian model and they both constitute the ideological edifice of Western rationality, universalism, and individualism.

Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) heir to Enlightenment and Kantian Critiques is considered the greatest philosopher of German Idealism and the modern thought, eventually the mastermind behind institutionalized European imperialistic practices, whose philosophical thought is condensed in his three most representative works: *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807); *The Science of Logic* (1812-16); and *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* (1817).

His conceptual framework draws on Kant's concept of transcendentalism and as he blends it with the Darwinian notion of "survival of the fittest" Hegel defines history as a rational process genetically interpreted, while the basis of culture lies in the creative power of the mind.

For Kant, whose philosophical system was founded in the priority of mind over nature, knowledge was produced by the activity of consciousness and could only be obtained through the organizational categories of space and time, subjective and therefore ideal, in order to give shape to our impressions of the transcendent reality. Taking on Kant's transcendental deduction, Hegel sought to overcome the split between the Absolute and the rationalistic mind by

conceiving of a permanent actualization of the mere possibility to the conscious level where the finite consciousness that separates natural from actual, empirical from spiritual achieves a unity of opposites as the means to human progress. Hegel conceptualized the permanent drive for progress under a system of 'coincidence of opposites' in perpetual actualization of the human being that he describes as a process of building and perpetual rebuilding in three stages: a primordial Being (thesis) confronting a Non-being (antithesis) to reach a status of Becoming (synthesis) a highly rationalistic individual human being. In a never-ending process of pure speculation, dialects, and confrontation with its opposite this Become entity rebuilds itself *ad infinitum*, always revaluating the previous stage in a sustained ever-higher development and growth of a more conscious and even more stable ego. In the footsteps of the Cartesian separation of material and spiritual spheres, Hegel's theory of coincidence of opposites as a process generative of progress (synthesis) also brings legitimacy to the Western dichotomic organization of the world. Actually for Hegel the notion of progress and perfection can only be conceived in the presence of opposed concepts where the existence of finite implies the notion of infinite like thesis and antithesis, the two *sine qua non* axis for the emergence of a synthesis. However, for a synthesis to be reached and this divorce of the finite from the infinite to be overcome a unity in and through the self-expression of the Absolute has to be achieved in and through the finite, in its spirituality, perfect beauty, and freedom.

What has become highly problematic in Hegel's theory is his articulation of individual freedom and individual right with the will of the State where the State stands for the protector and preserver of individual freedom as it becomes a universal concept and an abstraction; and his concept of history as a product of reason and the necessary development of the past where past,

present, and even future must be created. The making of history, seen as "the juxtaposition of a spirit that is abstract universal and the finite that is concrete and particular" (Felicilda, 2001) is not simply a product induced, directed or determined from the outside; 'man' too participates in its making which is inevitably subject to the Hegelian dialectics of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Given the fact that the antithesis of order is chaos, war is not only justifiable but a necessary element in history in order to achieve progress as Felicilda (2001) argues. Historical progress therefore justifies war, repression, and destruction as necessary means to civilization; war becomes an affirmation of the vitality of the State and legitimizes cleansing politics to move from a barbarous status into a politically civilized nation by virtue of Christianity that for Hegel represents the ultimate unity of the finite and infinite. For Hegel, history which is necessary, rational, and progressive, is the enterprise of conquerors and of racially superior 'chosen people' whose warfare disposition, no matter how barbarous and destructive of other human beings, is hence justified and legitimized by his 'ideal' creation of a linear progress towards civilization.

This concept of making history has had a deep and lasting influence in European philosophical thought, especially in Max Weber, that in Blaut's opinion has helped shape "tunnel" interpretations of history and contributed to the "diffusionist" enterprise of Eurocentric historians whose origins "go back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Western Europe, where a belief system was being constructed to give some coherence to the new reality of change within Europe and colonial expansion outside Europe" (Blaut, 1993: 18).

The central idea in Blaut's works *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (1993) and *Eight Eurocentric Historians* (2000) is what he calls diffusionist theory" or "diffusionism" that he claims to be the backbone of the

Eurocentric hegemonic model of the world whose premises are grounded in a European tunnel-vision of history.

The grounding premises of Blaut's theory radiate from the "systematic cultural-historical (…) [self] attribution of historical superiority or priority to Europeans over all other peoples" (Blaut, 2000: **?).** This means that unlike the influence, cultural borrowings, and interchange of cultures that happen historically when different groups come into contact, Blaut's diffusionist theory is invested with a hegemonic and totalizing stance that is direct function of the European imperialistic enterprise towards the cultural colonization of the world. Blaut supports his conclusions with an extended and deep analysis of the most influential Eurocentric thinkers and theories behind the diffusionist model, to wit: (a) religious reasons by claiming that the Christian God is the true God; (b) racial reasons which assume the white race as superior; (c) environmental reasons purporting that Europe's geographical location in a temperate zone produces more favorable conditions to human development; and (d) cultural reasons owing to the fact that Europe has allegedly produced a uniquely progressive and innovative culture unlike any other region in the world.

However very much unaware of the enormous cultural and historical contributions of the African continent to the world, J.M. Blaut's work has nonetheless an extraordinary importance in demythologizing the assumed superiority of Europeans over everyone else and demystifying arguments and theories propagated by European thinkers according to which progress, and innovation are natural European endeavors; hence the disseminated beliefs in European superiority of mind, culture, and environment and the priority of European civilization over every other.

In the fourth and fifth chapters each tradition will be discussed and confronted as the comparative analysis and dialogue between Afrocentricity and Westernity progresses. As outlined Marxist theory, Existentialism, Feminism, and Postcolonialism will be dealt with in the framework of two major Western paradigms: Modernism and Postmodernism, while in the sixth chapter the conclusions will highlight the functional dimension of Afrocentricity.

3. THIRD CHAPTER

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

> Narratives – stories, if you will – are seen as particularly attractive, given disillusionment with a good deal of contemporary theory which is excessively abstract. (Browning *et al*., 2000: 10-11)

The particular mode of research designed for this study falls into a methodology that, in Asante's words, is a reflection of how human beings make decisions about the external world, how their attitudes and behaviors translate their cultural and psychological space, what is their cultural/ideological location (Asante, 2003: 57; 1989: 12). Location is, in the Afrocentric functional paradigm, a tool of research that will be used as the critical point from where a cultural, philosophical, and historical analysis will be conducted over the symbolic and identitarian components of human expression generally referred to as culture.

The dialogue between Western and Afrocentric paradigms will be framed by the Afrocentric theory because an Afrocentric methodology offers an integrated, systemic, and holistic approach to knowledge that Western paradigms in their atomized and separated epistemological fields have failed to contemplate. The fact that the point of departure for Afrocentric theory is the cultural and historical centeredness of the subject of history is a second and equally major reason to apply Afrocentric methodology to a project that is committed to critically discuss theories of knowledge and culture in its broadest sense, which refers to all of the symbolic components of human expression such as language, religion, daily activities, and institutions: a combination of elements or motifs that constitute the ethos or the collective personality of a people (Asante, 1988: 21).

In fact, in its epistemological dimensions, Afrocentric theory contemplates three basic categories (Asante, 1990; Mazama, 2003; Modupe, 2003):

- The functional paradigm, which regards the need for action – political or social;

- The categorical paradigm that includes a range of analytical concepts and categories like race, ethnicity, gender, and class;

- The etymological paradigm concerning language structures, concepts behind words and families of words as the expression of a common cultural heritage

and provides a metatheoretical orientation for research. Designed for the study of the African and African American life and experience, the Afrocentric philosophical framework stands as a disciplinary matrix, offers a grand theory, process of analysis, and methodology of research (Mazama, 2003). Not only is Afrocentricity a cultural theory of social change it is a theory of knowledge and a paradigm that provides a cutting edge methodology of research based on its philosophical matrix, clearly identifying the disciplinary boundaries of Africology. Endowed with a potential for liberation from every form of oppression, Afrocentricity challenges the contemporary social thought as designed by the West and affords as many multifarious approaches as experiences that shape the lives and cultures of African people rooted in the African values.

In the pursuit for re-creation and reconstruction of human values based on true democratic ethics that is one of the aims of this research, it is not only the recognition of the Afrocentric paradigm and its methodology of research that will draw the lines of investigation but rather the whole of the Asantean philosophical thought. In fact, if "Afrocentricity is the

centerpiece of human regeneration" (Asante, 1988: 1) it is in the worldwide possibility of

Asantean philosophical thought (Modupe, 2003: 67) that a true revolutionary universalism

abides; not the particular framework of Westernity imposed as universal, but a theory of

knowledge and paradigm constructed not upon "*white* values but *human* values, rooted in our

own orientation to environment and place" Asante, 2003: 98).

Afrocentric philosophical and cultural methodology offers center, location, cultural ethos,

and agency as the methodological variables of analysis that, taken together, are extensive to any

human society who responds to the same cosmological, cultural, and historical symbols; it is a

theory of knowledge that defeats *ab origine* hegemonic, hierarchical, and totalizing modes of

defining the world, and where every human expression is equally valuable.

In view of the theoretical dimension of the present study, content analysis of *primary sources*,

understood here as the direct work of philosophers, cultural scholars, and historians, as well as of

secondary sources, meaning critical reviews of primary sources, will be conducted after a methodological

structure that follows the Afrocentric operational research concepts of *Utamawazo* or cultural

centeredness which includes the Asantean concept of location (place, time, and stance); *Ukweli* or truth

which has to be grounded in the experiences of the community members who are the ultimate authority in

defining what is valid for them; *Utulivu* or justice that demands rightful judgment and the commitment of

the researcher to respectful and harmonious relationships with the community; and *Uhaki* or fairness and

a mindful attitude towards the wellbeing of humanity in the spirit of *Ma'at*[13].

The Africological methodological exercise proposed in this study by a European researcher will

also help address some still major criticisms to Afrocentric theory, to wit: (1) Afrocentricity is a reversed

---

[13] The concepts used here were proposed by Marimba Ani (1994) and Ruth Rivière (2006). A more detailed description of these operational concepts can be found in Gaffin (2006) and Rivière (2006) in Asante and Karenga (eds.). *Handbook of Black Studies.*

Eurocentrism; (2) Afrocentricity is a divisive theory; (3) Afrocentricity is a reductionist theory that applies exclusively to people of African descent; (4) Afrocentricity is not a paradigm.

In fact, applying an Afrocentric methodology to the textual analysis of the contents of primary as well as secondary sources of Afrocentric as well as European scholarship will prove an advantageous procedure in its deconstructive ability to provide critical analytical tools with which to divest the European researcher from the bias of the traditionally hegemonic interpretations of European culture and history. It will also clarify that there is no methodological incompatibility as far as research of African, Asian, Native American, Eskimos, Aboriginal Australian peoples, or Europeans is concerned. Undoubtedly assessed from its Eurocentric location, according to an Afrocentric methodology that does not deny the African cultural location of African people or the Asian cultural location of Asians rather asserts the non-hegemonic and non-hierarchical stance of the Afrocentric theory, the textual analysis of the principal documents of the various European and African traditions will be critically addressed. Only one among other world cultures, the European particularism will be put in perspective by applying the critical lens of Afrocentricity to a thorough and in-depth reading of the outlined literature in all the disciplinary fields required to isolate and engage the central ideas of the legacy of each tradition in an epistemological discussion.

4. FOURTH CHAPTER

AFROCENTRICITY AND MODERNISM

1. AFROCENTRIC CRITIQUE ON MODERNITY & MODERNISM

1.1 THE OBSCURE HISTORY OF EUROPEAN MODERNITY

Oh, Ruling glory! Oh, Vile insanity

in the vain pursuit of Fame!

How deluded they are by petty greeds

Which they call honorary motives!

….

Source of misfortunes, exhausted kingdoms, and perfidy,

Of quenched fortunes and tyranny!

They call you Illustrious and Sublime

But insult and vituperation alone are your peers;

Fame, Honors, Glory Supreme, these names are thine

With which they trump foolish crowds' fears![14]

(Camões, 1955: 237-238)

At the dawn of the twentieth century Africa's struggle for independence and self-

determination was the embodiment of a vaster African aspiration for liberation from oppressive

---

[14] *Os Lusíadas*, Canto IV. My free translation of an excerpt of the Portuguese epic poem *Os Lusíadas* written around 1556 by the most famous Portuguese poet of the sixteenth century, Luís Vaz de Camões and published in 1572. *Os Lusíadas* are often regarded as Portugal's national epic which is considered to be, in the Roman and Greek traditions, the epic narrative of the history of the Portuguese people and their Transatlantic enterprise during the 15th and 16th centuries. This excerpt is taken from the chapter entitled "O Velho do Restelo" (The Oldman from Restelo) which is a humanistic severe criticism of the Portuguese maritime enterprise, its motives, and consequences.

colonial domination. Indeed the quest was more than political and included economic, cultural, and social agency because European modernity was the face of the oppression.

Modern European thought and practice was devastating for Africa and the Americas native lands and peoples. Where the European economic expansionist model, means of knowledge and ideologies, religion, technologies, and artifacts, were acritically embraced or forcefully imposed, they created a deep and crucial philosophical problem for native peoples' identity and cosmology, and economic sustainability.

As far as the African continent is concerned the colonial enterprise dispossessed Africa from its own modernity; deprived Africans from the possibility of developing their own intellectual and material potential; amputated Africa's ability to freely create its own modern institutions; dislocated societies physically from their balanced environments, as well as from cosmological equilibrium (Rodney, 1974). Furthermore, the experience ravaged the minds of Africans under the prison box of a colonial condition (Memmi, 1967; Douglass, 1845; Du Bois, 1986; Césaire, 2001; Fanon, 1963; Asante, 2003, 2007c; Mazama, 2003; Feagin, 2006; Gordon, 2008) that created in African people a sort of dependence for the illusory appeasement of European validation and recognition that consistently failed them.

The rise of Europe into the Modern age, often done at the expenses of the oppression of native populations of the American continent and of the exploitation of African human, natural, and intellectual resources, inaugurated an age of Chaos for the African and the American continents; a plague for peoples uprooted and decimated, and in the case of the Africans shattered through Europe and the Americas, from which recovery is far from being accomplished.

Under this same reasoning of exploitation, rooted in the displacement of native economies and native peoples by European *slavocracies,* human beings and nature alike suffered from the same depletion of means and property with which "sugarocracies" (Galeano, 1997: 67) exhausted soils and local productions under overwhelming extensive, intensive, and exclusive monocultures, leaving peoples and lands bare of means of natural sustenance. Today's mass consumption in Africa and Southern and Central American countries is a sign of the insidious incorporation and espousal of an alien Western system of values by the colonial as well as neo-colonial dependent ruling classes unable or unwilling to discard an enforced socio-economic-cultural order that does not meet indigenous unique and particular cultural values and surviving needs.

It must be made clear, however, that the imposition of this modern capitalist consumerist model has other objectives and consequences: the a-critical and alienating condition in which human beings are placed is a fundamental tool for submission and objectification of the oppressed peoples on whose work force and survival needs the system nourishes itself (Memmi, 1967).

None of these acts of rape in the colonial and neo-colonial model have ever been passively accepted by African or Amerindian populations unlike what the celebratory tone of European history of modernity tends to make believe. Resistance of Africans to enslavement and the unspeakable conditions of their transatlantic ordeals is one common note of captains' reports about human losses during these trips owing to refusal to eat, rebellion, and suicide generally by jumping overboard. In the African continent, although the treacherous and divisive tactics of the slave traders managed to take advantage of internal dissensions and greedy kings, mostly acts of

war and pillage characterized the capture of Africans. Throughout the American continent rebellion, resistance, and strategies of survival all accounted for the lifelong struggle of the oppressed populations, some of which have made history, became source of inspiration and hope. From the individual to the collective levels we may recall the persistent attempts to run-away from the plantations, the passive resistance to working conditions, or the sabotage of the means of production as witnessed by innumerous slave narratives; the organization of active warfare like the Haitian revolution; or the establishment of Quilombos or free African republics in Brazil that survived for almost a century, between 1580 and 1677[15].

European renaissance and its break away from the Medieval incarceration in what the Encyclopedists of the 18th century considered a repressive religiosity that enchained the European human being in a web of gloomy relationships with an all-governing God, of intense fear, superstition, and ignorance, created a status of exalted optimism and belief in the almost unlimited power of the human reason.

There was no place for the European thinker, philosopher, scientist or politician of the 17th and 18th centuries to conceive, not even as an academic exercise of possibilities[16], that eventually a tragedy for humankind would ensue out of a failed march into an ever developing state of progress and perfection for humanity and civilization propelled by the white European enlightened man in which they ardently believed.

---

[15] The most important one, Quilombo dos Palmares, resisted until 1677. For a more detailed history see Abdias do Nascimento (1980). *O Quilombismo: Documentos de uma Militancia Pan-Africanista*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
[16] Only in 1944 a discussion on the negative aspects of Enlightenment was produced by the philosophers of the Frankfurt School Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in their work *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*).

On the contrary, Enlightenment (1687-1789) produced an elite group of influential thinkers, politicians, philosophers, and statesmen. Among many we can refer Descartes, Kant, and Rousseau of course, but also *Encyclopédistes* like Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, other intellectuals and state's men like Condorcet, Hippolyte Taine, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Benjamin Franklin.

Several authors (Karl Marx, 1873; Du Bois, 1986; Davidson, 1961; Falola, 2001; Blaut, 1993; Feagin, 2006; Asante, 2007c; Pires, 2004; Gordon, 2008) concur in the opinion that Modernity came with the 'modernizing' dynamics of the expansionist European countries like Portugal, Spain, Britain, Holland, and France without whose aggressive colonial and imperial mercantilist strategies industrialization, urbanization, scientific development, modern trade systems and the capitalist economy that created a new world order would have never occurred.

However the revolutionary project that swept Europe, based on the apparent unlimited ability of practical reasoning, dominated by scientific and technological development that heralded an emancipating route for a liberated humanity, was the exact same project that raped entire continents, created havoc, destruction of means of development in Africa and the Americas, degradation of human beings, and racial theories for the sustenance of *an undefined but conceived as universal* modern world. The catastrophic results of which are branded on the *European-labeled* 'Third World Countries' extreme impoverishment and cultural shackles. While producing a euphoric sense of aggrandizement among the European intellectual elite, Modernity has paradoxically created discourses of oppression, systems of exclusion, institutions and practices of control over the disempowered 'others', the army of those on whom their enlightened civilization was fed. It was a process through which reason was transformed in

unreason and promises of liberation concealed practices of domination and oppression (Pires, 2004: 71).

Several factors seem to have contributed to the internally praised and spread general argument of European superiority or civilizational priority over non-Europe. In a quickly changing environment of scientific and technological development, transformation of modes of production and subsistence; of social and spiritual reorganization brought about by the transformation of a feudal system of serfdom into a commercially oriented society to flow of capital and land ownership; the transformation of the deep religiosity into a general secularization of the European thought; all conferred European thinkers and policy makers a sense of uncountable possibilities of control over nature attributed to the European individual that would lead to the inevitability of human progress.

This economic, political, social, and intellectual evolution that some European historians tend to attribute to some sort of "European Miracle", an extremely influential theory condensed by Eric L. Jones in his 1981 work under this very title, developed into a movement of ideas that placed a strong emphasis on scientific evidence, or the scientific method, as proof and the true explanation of the world. Extending roughly between the 17th through the 19th century (although I would say well into the 20th century), it consisted of a rationally organized chain of: purportedly scientific evidence (proof) → explanation (theoretical framework) → and finality /applicability (praxis) upon which the Western Grand Narratives[17] were constructed (Lyotard, 1979).

---

[17] The concept of Grand Narrative in the Western scholarship will be discussed in a later chapter in the context of post-modernism.

However, myths rather than factual evidence worked as the premises upon which the History of Ideas in Western Europe constructed an ideology of hegemony and supremacy under whose inherent definition a whole cohort of human beings were placed in a subordinate position and classified as inferior; where a concept of center and its periphery, of a superior Inside with a civilizational mission over an inferior Outside, found its roots.

Instead of departing from the scientific evidence or proof, European history of ideas shows a kind of 'reversed' scientific methodology where empirical and explanatory attempts have been coined as 'factual evidence'. This is what Todorov has called *scientificism* or the opposite process to scientific evidence (Todorov, 2001). It departs from some sort of explanation/interpretation about phenomena to claim that it is the 'factual evidence' which has served as the basis of a theory to legitimize the imposition of certain actions for the survival of this same theory – turned into ideology - based on judgments of *conformality* (Blaut, 1993: 35).

Ideology as such is the belief in the explanations that follow from this fake chain of deductive reasoning, the so-called inherent and superior attribute of the Western mind, its diffusion and imposition.

I believe that it is the awareness of this process of fabrication that invigorates some critics of Afrocentricity, Mary Lefkowitz and followers, when they charge Afrocentric theory with transforming myth into history and consider *Afrocentrism* as a divisive theory and a reversed Eurocentrism. Indeed they seem to understand very well their own ways.

Finality and purpose materialize in the legitimate praxis that emerge from interpretations of evidence or explanations that "are not cognitively or culturally dissonant" (Blaut, 1993: 35)

from 'factual evidence'. Therefore, emerging theory based on explanatory assumptions becomes ideology based on the set of theoretical constructions whose aim is the development of a praxis self-justified by the theory that was produced to that very same end. The entire roll of expansionist, colonialist, and imperialist theories supported by racist ideologies, religious justifications, and economic ambitions is one such example.

This is particularly disturbing and needs particular discussion because as the experience has shown us "the subordination of *inferior races* or even their elimination can be justified by the *knowledge* generated on the subject of race" (Todorov, 2001).

On the other hand, as Blaut explains (1993), two sorts of arguments have been used to explain the superiority of a European 'Master Race'[18]: internal and external factors, i.e., some controllable and other unmanageable elements by individuals, as these fell under the categories of culture/religion and biology/environment respectively.

The biological factor attributes to Europeans, members of the white race, an inherent greater ability, intelligence, inventiveness than to non-Europeans. This was also implicit in the polygenesis theory supported by both Biblical beliefs and 'scientific' evidence or *scientifism*, and was largely used during the 18th well into the 19th centuries to claim the legitimacy of organizing human beings in a hierarchical scale where Africans and other non-Europeans were not truly human. The white European male individual would rank at the top of this human scale in terms of biologically inherited abilities, philosophical/cultural underpinnings, social and economic

---

[18] *Cf.* Blaut, 1993: 61-66. Distinctions have also been made as far as the 'so-called' white race is concerned. Europeans themselves are divided into superior and inferior sub-races: the Northern and Northwestern are brighter, better, and bolder than the Southwestern and Southeastern ones.

development, all synonymous to *Civilization* with capital letter to confer it uniqueness and singularity.

In close alliance with these 'inherently superior' attributes to the white Europeans, environmentalist theory also contributed to carry on the idea of a more developed Europe owing to its better ambiental conditions *vis à vis* the 'nasty' environment of other continents like Africa which, of course, explained their assumed underdevelopment (Blaut, 1993: 69).

Therefore, the purported 'scientific' evidence of differences biologically inherited together with European environmental favorable conditions that accounted for the superiority of Europeans and a highly developed civilization have conflated in the undisputable 'scientific' truth that supported racist ideologies and behaviors while providing the necessary European rationale for colonial enterprises, slave trade, and enslavement of Africans throughout Europe and mainly the Americas. In short, a rationale with which the colonizer succeeds in justifying himself for the 'double illegitimacy' (Memmi, 1967: 9) of his usurper's position as the beneficiary of the privileges he has created for himself at the expenses of the privileges he takes away from the natural inhabitants. Such is the central philosophy of the colonial enterprise symbolized by the falsification of history, creation of myths, and its sustaining ideology and praxis: racism (Asante, 1980, 1999, 2003, 2009; Bernal, 1987; James, 1954; Memmi, 1967; Blaut, 1993, 28; Rodney, 1974). In order to protect his profit motive it is in the colonizer's best interest the creation, establishment, and reproduction of a system in the sphere of ideology and social beliefs that will secure their ownership of the means of production and the reproduction of human relationships of exploitation.

1.2. THE PROFIT MOTIVE

Following the Crusaders' help, the *Reconquest* or the 'holy' war conducted by the Catholic Southern European countries like Portugal and Spain against the Moors, actually North African peoples, until 1492[19] preceded the overzealous mission of Christianity behind the colonial project as well as its expansionist thrust.

However, like Memmi pointed out "the colonialist never seriously promoted the religious conversion of the colonized [because] the colonialist could not favor an undertaking which would have contributed to the disappearance of colonial relationships. [The colonized] would not be permitted to rise above his social status to join the colonizer's group." (1976: 72-73).

The purpose of the colonizer's endeavor, assisted by the blessings of both the Catholic or Protestant church in easing the colonizer's consciousness, even contributing to the acceptance of the colonial oppression by the colonized, is evident in the words of a colonizer during the Mexican conquest: "To serve God and His Majesty, and also get the riches" (Galeano, 1997: 13) or even the ones attributed to Francis Drake, the most famous captain of Queen Elizabeth's pirate ships made sir by royal decree on referring to the indigenous populations: "Their gain shall be the knowledge of our faith (a)nd ours such riches as the[ir] country hath" (Chinweizu, 1975:1).

Economic reasons have always been at the core of every expansionist enterprise, and although dissimilar in their immediate motivations Portuguese and Spanish expansionism beginning in the fifteenth century were driven by the prospects of profitable trade with and wealthy resources of 'unknown' countries and continents of the East. While the Portuguese sailed down south exploring the African coasts in search for the establishment of a commercial

---

[19] The last Moorish kingdom of Granada (Spain) capitulated in January 2, 1492.

route of spices and silks, and were primarily concerned with establishing trading posts along the African coast for the commerce of ivory and slaves, the Spanish explorers, also in the pursuit of the sumptuous and remote Eastern kingdoms and palaces paved with gold and silver, abounding in gems and pearls learned from Marco Polo's adventurous narratives sought to travel west convinced that it would be a much shortest journey with which they would be able to advance in such commerce ahead of the Portuguese attempts.

The independent kingdom of Portugal (1143) whose Reconquest had already been achieved by 1253 when King Afonso III pushed the Moors down south and expelled them from the Algarve by conquering the last Muslim town of Silves, has ventured with the help of the Crusaders in persecuting the Moors into the North African continent invading and winning some important fortified towns like Algiers, Tangier, and Ceuta. This is estimated to have been the true beginning of the Portuguese maritime enterprise that placed the Portuguese in a two century clear double advantage over their Spanish neighbors: only after the last Moorish kingdom of Granada was conquered in 1492 has Spain become a unified and centralized political entity; but by that time the Portuguese maritime enterprise was already fully *en route.*

This age of modern exploration, which began in the fifteenth century and ended by the late eighteenth century with the intention to reach India, that in medieval times was regarded by Mediterranean peoples as the center of the world, created a rapidly changing center with the realization that there were actually continents to the west that were not Asian and led to a literally new 'orientation' of those peoples' perspective: Europe, a new geopolitical and political alignment and a new 'center' was born (Gordon, 2008: 3).

Sponsored by the Crown and the Church, financed by the nobility, traders and merchants, and equipped mostly by adventurers and rogues, the heterogeneity of the expansionist crews could only find the necessary cohesion to perform such an adventurous and perilous task in the extraordinary compensations promised, envisaged, and amassed either through ownership of lands, profitable trade, or mineral exploitation (Pinto, 1978).

Portugal and Spain wholly embraced Christianity and even attributed to their maritime enterprises a civilizational mission supported by and conducted as military affairs. As Gordon points out "[t]he making of this new 'center' was not, then, solely a commercial affair but also a military one and, subsequently, a racial-religious one, for the darker populations were pushed more southward with Christianity dominating the Islam throughout the modern world" (2008: 4).

This much is the genealogy of a new racialized social and economic order that saw the development of its most pernicious consequences with European expansionism, the Atlantic trade routes and slave trade: a blend of factors, simultaneously religious, economic, political, and cultural.

When Christopher Columbus' navy, sailing west, reached Hispaniola island in October of 1492 (present day Dominican Republic and Haiti) he was sure he had arrived in the Indies and their native inhabitants became known as Indians.

The routes opened by Christopher Columbus into the Caribbean Central America and the Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral's arrival in Brazil proved to be as big a disaster for the original inhabitants of the American continent as the routes opened by the Portuguese,

culminating with Vasco da Gama's expeditions along the African coast, have been for African people and the African continent.

Three major factors have generally been pointed out by historians to have decisively contributed to the tragic destiny reserved to the native populations of Africa and the Americas as the immediate result of Europeans' ruthless warfare: (1) Europeans' possession of guns; (2) a fanatical belief in the absolute need to pursue with the 'holy' war for the Christianization of the world; (3) the spread of germs and contagious illnesses for which native populations, mainly in the American continent, had no resistance.

However, one other major factor was of great relevance in dictating the fate of the encounter of the Europeans with native peoples of Africa and America: the European ignorance and disrespect toward different cosmological and ethic perspectives, diverse social and cultural practices that Europeans' religious arrogance and racist tendencies labeled as savage and infra-human.

It must not be forgotten that the narratives about the new found societies were produced according to the reports and wonders encountered by the crews of ignorant sailors and adventurers for whom acts of pillage were the normal procedure (Pinto, 1994). Reported through the eyes of traders, merchants, eventually missionaries, whose motives and guilty consciousnesses readily embraced popular explanations that reinforced the mythic 'savagery' of native peoples where "no activity of the soul" could be observed, they helped put in place "a whole system of rationalization" with which colonial cruelty would be totally justified (Galeano, 1997: 41). The circulation of ideas about the lack of soul and inhuman nature of the native populations that rested on the rude judgment of the adventurers who constituted the crew of the

61

ships during the Portuguese and Spanish maritime exploration of Africa and America, as well as on the reports of the pirates on the British ships with which Queen Elizabeth sustained her fleet and her crown, all constituted a very welcome saga for Crowns' and Church's most influential representatives in the legitimacy of their rapacious colonial and imperial enterprises.

The creation of these myths and their dissemination served the purpose of the colonial empires of the 16th through the 19th centuries in the same way that political propaganda has been used in the 20th century international arena to abort and abhor every attempt made by the colonized countries to abandon tyrannical capitalist economic orders and promote their independence.

The gun, the Bible, and disease were but instrumental, the *avant garde* in the accomplishment of the central colonial motivation that we call civilization: free trade, exploitation, and capital accumulation.

> The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation. (Marx, vol.3 *Capital* in Galeano, 1997: 28)

1.3. THE GEOPOLITICAL TRIANGULAR ATLANTIC PLATFORM

Unlike the primary commercial goal of Portuguese expeditions, the Spanish colonial enterprise was directed mainly to extracting the mineral wealth from their American colonies with which to support the idle ostentation of the Spanish nobility who aspired but to a luxurious

and extravagant life in Europe. While these regions were extremely populated, and wealthy and prosperous civilizations like the Maya, the Inca, and the Azteca revealed the bountiful natural riches of their soil, Brazil – Portugal's American colony - appeared by contrast as vast and virgin rich mass of land prone to the establishment of huge productive units of sugar cane to replace the limited sugar industry previously tried by the Portuguese in Madeira Islands, a product in great demand in Europe but of scarce supply.

Brazil became the first major plantation zone, with roughly 300 sugar plantations by 1630 organized in the agricultural system of *latifúndio*[20] to produce a tropical crop whose transformed product would give birth to a colonial mercantile aristocracy centered on port cities along the coast like Salvador e Rio de Janeiro from where the precious sugar was being exported to Europe at the same pace that slave ships were arriving from Africa with a no less precious cargo: enslaved Africans to meet the increasing demand in labor force required by the expansion of the *latifúndio*[21] (Gordon, 2008; Galeano, 1997).

As for Britain, greed and piracy were the initial contours of its involvement in the greatest lucrative event that was slave trade which was soon shared in partnership with the British crown as the following episode attests: when captain John Hawkins confronted and appeased Queen Elizabeth's fury against his looting of 300 blacks out of the Portuguese Guinea by telling her "that in exchange for the slaves he had a cargo of sugar, hides, pearls, and ginger (…) she forgave the pirate and became his business partner" (Galeano, 1967: 80).

---

[20] In the agriculture- based European economy *latifúndio* represents the most similar structure of a feudal system of land exploitation in its transition to a form of land ownership. For the worker the feudal conditions of exploitation have barely changed.

[21] By 1600 the Brazilian colony had about 100,000 inhabitants: 30,000 Europeans, 15,000 black slaves, and the rest Indians and people of mixed origin. (Gordon, 2008)

The fulcrum of this flourishing economy was the traffic in enslaved Africans for the plantations and mining extraction in the Americas, a traffic in which the British finally championed in direct profit from the many treaties established with Portugal. These ruinous agreements opened the Portuguese colonies to the British industrialized capitalism with its commercial agents controlling the whole Portuguese trade of gold and sugar, mainly from Brazil (Martins, 1978; Medina, 1993).

On the other hand, the Europeans arriving in North America fleeing the European continent for reasons that were mostly related to the religious persecutions of Inquisition following the European religious processes of Reformation and Counter Reformation - the French, the British, and the Dutch - were primarily interested in settling and, unlike the Spanish, wanted to develop their American colonies as their own home. Their interest for land directly clashed with those of the native hunter-gatherer population that was either killed enslaved or pushed into reservations: actually almost entirely annihilated.

Attracted by the success of the establishment of extremely profitable sugar plantations in Brazil, heirs to the British feudal exploitation of peasants, North American settlers soon took hold of the profitable slave trade, and extended to North America an economic system of white-on-black oppression (European American oppression on African Americans) foundational to the American nation and society.

Though colonizers in Africa, South and Central America, and North America have set off on different roads the touchstone for the success of their voracious endeavors was the slave trade and the profits from slave labor, the enormous accumulation of capital that propelled the development, commercial, industrial, and technological, of Europe at the expenses of the

underdevelopment of the colonized peoples and regions: it created "a favorable climate for investment in Europe, stimulated the 'spirit of enterprise', and directly financed the establishment of manufactures which in turn gave a strong thrust to the Industrial Revolution"(Mandel, 1968: 443-44).

The circle was now complete: from the 16th century into the 19th century the Atlantic occupied a strategic economic and geopolitical position in the world, a triangular platform through which raw materials, mineral resources, transformed goods and enslaved free labor circulated, creating a global racist and capitalist order, giving form to a wealth generating racialized economic system of capital accumulation based on a process of economic exploitation of slave trade, racialized chattel enslavement of the Africans, and slave produced or extracted goods.

EUROPE
(Industrial Revolution)

EUROPEAN SLAVE TRADE

NORTH / CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA
Raw materials
Mineral resources
Slave-produced goods

AFRICA
Raw materials
Mineral resources
Slave-produced goods
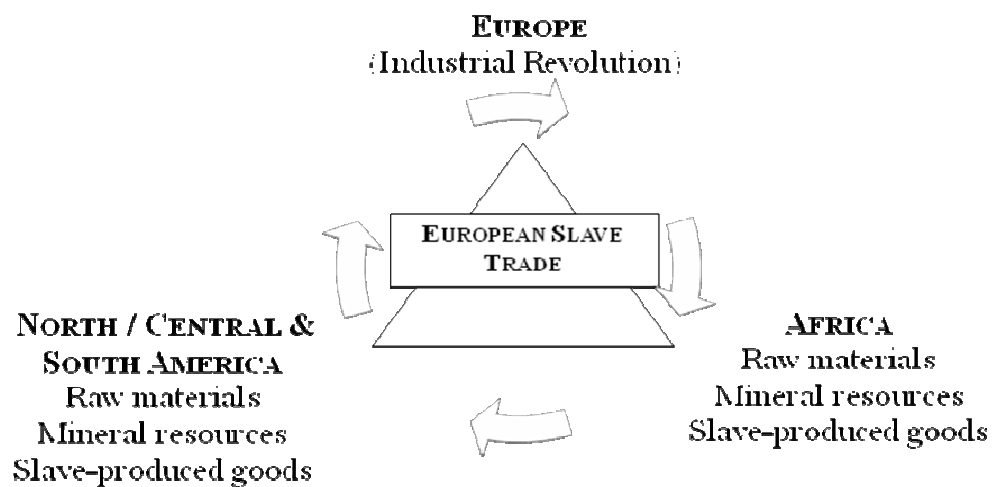
While Portugal and Spain deeply indebted to European crowns and the Catholic Church received but one fifth of the values made in their colonies with which nobility bought titles and

privileges, an emerging bourgeois class of merchants, plantation owners and mining exploiters, bankers and their system of loans, mortgages, and compensatory interests fattened in the colonies and in European countries.

Modernity emerged out of this global system of wealth generation of capital circulation and capital accumulation that began with early colonialism and slave trade, involving major commercial firms, shippers, shipbuilders, insurance companies, banks, plantation owners, and industrial corporations. They became more and more aggressive with imperialism by late 1800s, flourished in an ever growing disproportionate ratio to the impoverished and oppressed masses of the populations in the colonized regions and the enslaved and segregated black population of North America that still determines much of the today's aggressive predatory relations of the so-called civilized and developed countries toward the underdeveloped ones[22].

Brazil's gold, diamonds, sugar, rubber, and coffee for Europe and the United States; Cuban sugar for France, Germany but especially the United States; Peru's, Mexico's and Bolivia's gold and silver for Spain; Venezuela's cocoa and oil, Colombia's coffee, Southern United States' cotton, Angolan oil and diamonds, enslaved Africans from Ghana, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Angola, Congo; are some of the slave produced goods whose circulation of surplus value demanded the reproduction of the white colonial ideology, a political, and economic organization in order to secure white control, power, and privilege (Asante, 2007c; Falola, 2001; Davidson, 1961; Boahen, 1990; Galeano, 1971).

---

[22] In her biography written by Medea Benjamin and Maisa Mendonça in 1997, the Brazilian congress woman of the Workers Party, Benedita da Silva, declared that gold, timber, and rubber are still today among the interests of modern predator countries of the Amazonia forest like the United States (Benjamin and Mendonça, 1997).

In Africa like in the Americas the surviving native peoples, the enslaved, segregated, and the finally liberated but not freed African Americans have been incorporated into the system of production and free market consumerism but have remained in their role of the most exploited, and most impoverished. Victimized by the transgenerational transmission of power and privilege emerging from the system of capitalist economy whose organization and division of labor specializes some few in winning and the exploited masses in losing, Africans in America suffered a global racist order that was also a global capitalist order and the extension of the market networks involving Europe, Africa, and the Americas (Asante, 2003, 2007c, 2009; Feagin, 2006; Galeano, 1971).

2. THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE AND THE MARXIST MODEL

2.1 ROOTS OF WESTERN CAPITALISM AND THE MARXIST PARADIGM

(…)capitalism has intensified its own political contradictions in trying to subjugate nations and continents outside of Europe, so that workers and peasants in every part of the globe have become self-conscious and are determined to take their destiny into their own hands. (Rodney, 1974: 10)

Nothing is more significant in the accounts of enslaved and enslavers than the ongoing interpersonal and intergroup struggle over oppression. The enslaved group seeks to flee or overthrow the system and attain liberty (…) resistance is doubtless greatly liberating, not just for bodies but also for minds. The old African American spirituals captured this deep feeling for liberty. (Feagin, 2006: 83)

Actually there are two grounding philosophies of political, economic, and social organization as well as two modes of perceiving human relationships: one is an ethics of sustainability the other an ethics of deprecation (Galeano, 1971). They represent (1) the respect for the good of the community organized in systems of freedom and equality, simple reflection of one's respectful orientation towards human beings and nature, while (2) an individualistic profit motive organized under oppression and exploitation have been crystallized by the Western dichotomic organization of thought in political concepts of right and left, capitalism and socialism.

It was not a coincidence that the first colony Britain established in North America would follow the pattern designed to prosper on the cycle of slave trade with massive cargoes of human beings, raw materials, slave produced and transformed goods crossing the Atlantic platform to be sold back into Africa in exchange for more Africans. It is not surprising then that the plantation system, following the capitalist philosophy of the *latifúndio,* transmuted the feudal ideology of peasants' oppression into a system of racialized chattel slavery because from the capitalist perspective of the American economy only a totally free labor force, as the one provided by the American system of enslavement, would answer the accumulation of wealth needed to render viable the American nation.

Colonial imperialism divided the world arbitrarily and usurped land and natural resources; outdid local languages; subjugated colonized peoples' economic resources, identities, and cultures; established a racialized social order based on assumptions of superiority of white Europeans as a race, their civilization, and the religion they embraced - Christianity (Blaut, 1993; Asante, 2007c, 2009; Feagin, 2006; Galeano, 1971). The ruthless repression aimed solely at

keeping the colonial 'rights' of the occupying powers and prevent colonized peoples from building their own nation-states or develop their already flourishing ones anterior to the European colonial enterprise like Ghana Empire of the 11th century, the Mali Empire of the 14th century, the Songhay and the Kanem-Bornu Empires of the 16th century (Chinweizu, 1975; Okafor, 2010; Asante, 2007c).

Colonialism in North America, however, has a distinct face. Unlike the traditional colonial model followed by the settlers who established themselves in Africa and South America as extensions of European nations for the purpose of running exploitative enterprises of the natural resources, in North America the goal of the European colonizers, mainly Anglo-Saxon and French, was to turn American soil into their homeland, eventually, to build their own independent nation although their establishment has meant the almost complete annihilation of the indigenous population.

Soon the Founding Fathers gave birth to the American nation, a nation rooted in a social organization supported by a racist ideology and determined by an economic system of racial oppression – racialized chattel slavery[23] - as the *sine qua non* condition for the development of a capitalist economy.

The social construction of a material reality involving hierarchical and fixed social relationships as the ones designed by this American particular system of slavery, with an exploiting and an exploited class, slave owners and enslaved Africans, created what sociological analysis has demonstrated to be the foundational white-on-black oppression and a systemic

---

[23] Unlike any other previous form of slavery, American slavery system was unique in the sense that it placed white Europeans and black Africans into two different racial categories. While a white human being could never be the subject of American enslavement, the African 'less than human' was 'transformed' by the slave owner into a piece of property for his/her entire life.

racialized material reality – or fixed social hierarchy – integral to American society and visible up to this day (Feagin, 2006; Asante, 2003; West, 1993).

This fixed social stratification, where whiteness stands for privilege and superior status *versus* blackness which is defined as inferiority, biological, cultural, and historical, is transgenerationally transmitted, reproduced and supported by corporate institutions and governmental organizations. This racial factor is what renders the traditional class struggle of the European capitalist paradigm obsolete, inoperative, and inappropriate to theoretically articulate the dynamics of colonial oppression and provide a functional and operative response to strategies for freedom of colonized societies.

While Marxist theory considers colonialism a strategy of the European bourgeois class acting in a double front: dispossession of the weakest nations that creates the conditions for the economic monopoly to produce maximum profit; and control of the working population inside the colonial nation itself, the pervasive and disruptive effect of racism, foundational as we have already demonstrated, to the North American society and colonialism gives evidence of the inadequacy of the Marxist theory to outdo systems of colonial oppression whose motor is the race factor.

Although the economic empowerment of the colonial nations may mean that the internal proletariat will find itself somewhat better-off as a result of the enrichment of the colonial country, this has only been made possible through the advantages acquired by seizing colonial work force; when workers seem to be gaining privilege as a result of their struggle for a more equitable share of the wealth generated by their labor, the small benefits acquired have already been largely compensated by the revenues from the colonial exploitation. By this double

70

mechanism of exploitation, the oppression of the outside workforce consolidates and balances the oppression of the proletariat at home while implicating the European proletariat into the same colonial rationale that makes them also beneficiaries of someone other's workforce exploitation: that of the colonized. In their interest, in the interest of their country, in the interest of "civilization" colonial workforces also become the oppressors of their colonized brothers reinforcing the advantages of the bourgeois class while weakening the strength of international unity.

Following the Marxist rationale, the international unity of the proletariat would be the necessary and sufficient condition for the solution of colonial oppression[24]. However, Marxist theory has missed the most important point as far as Africa is concerned. The basic European tenets that sustain the European oppressor/oppressed or explorer/exploited relationships, those of land ownership and capital accumulation for individual promotion and affluence were not part of the African cosmogony and experience, or of the African social and economic organization, or their way of thinking.

Land as a marketable commodity was an alien concept for the African *modus vivendi:* African's right to land was simply the right to use it.

While Marx developed his economic and social theory out of the particular experiences of the European Agrarian Revolution and the subsequent Industrial Revolution, the African tradition of communal use of land and the fair share or equalitarian distribution of production by its members is not capitalistic oriented; it does not establish antagonistic relationships between

---

[24] Key to Marxist theory is the central concept that history of humanity is nothing but the history of class struggle; of the confrontational relationships between exploiters and exploited, between oppressors and oppressed always within an economic perspective of who holds the means of production.

those who produce and those who benefit from the production; it does not polarize interests between landed and landless, and it does not create an idle class of wealth accumulators.

In a similar dynamics, and unlike the Marxist orientation to the role of the colonized workforce with the European proletariat in the abolition of the colonial exploitation, the reality is that the colonized workforce has never partaken the interests of the colonial one. Although the agent of exploitation may be the same[25] and for that reason has Marxism considered the colonial struggle for independence as the last and definitive step towards the collapse of the capitalist system and the success of the socialist revolution, the consistent ideology of the colonial system, dialectically used during and after decolonization, kept the colonized peoples under colonial tutelage. According to John Stuart Mill (Hobsbawm, 1989), the social and inevitable biological phenomenon of colonialism required from colonial domination the preservation of a European responsibility in the transition of the African societies to a superior civilizational stage. Therefore, the racist ideology that encircled colonial and imperial agendas has never been really broken although worked out and legitimized by the Organization of the United Nations some cosmetic changes occurred. Disguised as economic help supported by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for the reconstruction of Africa, a new face of colonialism was put in place (neo-colonialism) to save the economic interests of the two most powerful imperialist forces that emerged from World War II: the United States in America and Great Britain and France in Europe (Falola, 2001; Davidson, 1961; Boahen, 1990; Asante, 2007c).

---

[25] In both instances there is the same objectification of the individual: the transformation of the productive subject into an object of the productive forces; like the products of labor, commodification included him in the market exchange value. In the particular instance of colonialism the alienation produced by the system of production adds to the dehumanization and consequent objectification of the colonized who, less than human in the racist framework of colonialism, was merely regarded as an object of production, and only 'natural' to use Africans as slaves.

On the other hand, even if defiant of the purported benefits with which the oppressor leads the colonial proletariat to envisage colonialism in its own interest, and by an act of critical consciousness of the general oppressive role of the bourgeois class, the European worker recognizes and vindicates the right of the colonized country to its total independence, the motives of the European proletariat are different from the reasons of the colonized to struggle for independence. While the former is moved by the ideological condition that places him in a dichotomic and irreconciliatory position *vis a vis* his oppressor in a dialectic system of class struggle that defines his existence and condition; the latter did not define himself as oppressed in and exploited by his own society in the first place.

The condition of the colonized is one of oppression and inequality, of subordination but also of human degradation because the ingredient that completes this portrait is that the colonial order resorts on racism: in Memmi's words "racism sums up and symbolizes the fundamental relation which unites colonialist and colonized" (Memmi, 1967: 69-70).

The failure to understand that the genealogy of colonialism surpasses the mere dichotomy of classes and their struggle in the dialectics that creates them is central in the critique of Marxism as the answer to decolonization. In fact, the intrinsic racial condition of colonial subjugation serves the determinant immutability of the colonized *class*. The goal of the Marxist theory is ultimately the erasure of class stratification. Even within the framework of capitalist societies upward social mobility is possible; it has in fact produced one intermediary term: middle class. As for the colonized, the racist ingredient makes sure that s/he will never be moved to full citizenship: "the colonized enjoys none of the attributes of citizenship; neither his own, which is dependent, contested, and smothered, nor that of the colonizer" (Memmi, 1967: 96).

2.2 MARXIST MODEL IN AFRICAN REALITIES

Considerable attention has been and is still being given to Marxism by African and African American scholars and politicians like BuBois, Garvey, Nkrumah, Lumumba, Amílcar Cabral, Fanon, Sékou Touré, Nyérère, Rodney and many others, while socialist theories and practices have been adopted as the most revolutionary attempt to bring justice and equality, economic and social, to the colonized, once enslaved, and still oppressed peoples in Africa or of African descent.

However, exactly in the same vein as every other European born theory, the vantage point from which Marxism and socialism perceive and address systems of oppression cannot escape the very grounding theories and ideologies of the European philosophical thought: the assumption of their universal model; the failure to acknowledge the existence and validity of other cultural, social, and economic experiences; the lack of including the parameters of the colonized experience in the discussion and assessment of causes and consequences of oppression; want of recognition that economic oppression is tainted and reinforced by other equality subjugation factors like gender and race. In a word, Marxism and the socialist agendas have traced their routes from the same hegemonic conceptualization pervasive in the Western paradigm that has removed the colonized from history while usurping the role of the decision maker of the destiny of the world (Memmi, 1975: 91).

The apparent retreat of the European powers from Africa in the aftermath of the disastrous economic consequences of the so-called World War II was the inevitable result of the movements for liberation of oppressed peoples, political and armed struggles for self-determination. However, the tentacles of imperialism were not eliminated. Following the anterior

pattern, European control over prices and its decision as to what kind of goods would be made available to African countries, a new discourse and practice was designed by the West. As the British, French, Belgian, and Dutch realized how the power of domination was moving from Western Europe to the United States they turned their waning hegemony over the world into a calculated protectionist strategy under o discourse of 'aid' for the development of the newly independent countries. Acting in several fronts from the international capital's control of the world market and the establishment of the prices of commodities bought and sold to the African countries in such a way that the volume of cash flow from exports to Africa permanently outdid the volume of imports; to the technique of high rates of interests (Nkrumah, 1965).

One other flaw that can be pinpointed today to Marx's rendition of the inevitable collapse of capitalism by the crisis that this same very system would bring about because of the widening gap that it created between the 'haves' and the 'have nots', is the fact that Marxist theory as well as its revised versions fell short in understanding that the true source of capitalism was not *intra-national* exploitation of workforce and resources but the *inter-national* one – meaning – colonialism. Therefore, the crisis foreseen by Marx lost impact and impromptu when it was transferred from the national to the international level. The crisis did widen but with neo-colonialism it did not run in the direction of the defeat of capitalism; on the contrary it reinstated a new form of imperialism under the banner of globalization.

Unlike most of the African American political scientists and scholars of Marxist inspiration and orientation, political leaders of independent African countries, the most charismatic and influential having been Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana, Patrice Lumumba from Congo, Sékou Touré from Guinea, Julius Nyérère from Tanzania, Agostinho Neto from Angola,

Amílcar Cabral from Guinea-Bissau, faced the real challenge to their Marxist foundations: the functionality of the theory as far as the African reality was concerned. They were confronted with questions such as: how to develop their own socialist political agendas following their Marxist political inspiration? Would the theory answer to the African conditions in the same way as it worked for the oppressed societies in Europe? Applied to the colonial struggle in the newly independent African countries would it be the last and definitive step towards the collapse of the capitalist system and the success of the socialist revolution as Marxism envisioned?

In his first theoretical work *Thesen Über Feuerbach,* (written around 1845 but only published in 1888), Marx sets the grounding lines for an economic and social theory of capitalism; advances the philosophical concept of historical materialism to explain the socio-economic foundations of capitalism, and he offers communism as the politico-social system that would answer and transform the conditions of alienation and oppression of human beings under the capitalist rule, the path to human liberation and to a society free from the hierarchical structure of classes.

Later, in the *Manifest of the Communist Party* (1848) he clearly establishes the three grounding premises of communism: (1) abolition of private property; (2) historical perspective from the point of view of social relations and class struggle; (3) overthrow of capitalism by means of the revolution of the proletariat.

2.3 AFRICAN CRITIQUES TO MARXISM

In Africa, however, the applicability of Marxist, and for that matter, communist tenets could only follow if the condition of colonialism would prevail. Actually, notions of private property, class stratification based on means of production, the emergence of proletariat, all were alien to African political, economic, and social cultures prior to colonization.

On the other hand, the aspiration of the African countries to self-determination was, maybe, a concern much more powerful than that of gaining independence. In fact, not every so-called independent African country became really independent. Several examples could be advanced here to illustrate how imperial powers worked new colonial politics through the most devious strategies including spread corruption among African leaders such as Joseph-Désiré Mobutu (1930-1997).

Those who conceived of independence on the condition that a politics of self-determination be put in place like Nkrumah, Lumumba, Sékou Touré, Nyérère, Amílcar Cabral, and Agostinho Neto, devoid of a theoretical framework built on the African tradition and located in the African experience and agency, had to develop their own political theory out of their Marxist background in order to meet the challenges of creating a true socialist agenda for African countries. In some aspects it might be claimed that these leaders, although not yet fully Afrocentric, were on the road to complete agency.

As we will see ahead this African oriented political and social re-alignment proves that Marxism could not answer African realities. Although the socialist experience in Cuba initiated in 1959 with Fidel Castro was one of success as far as the socialist revolution is concerned, I

believe that its survival depended as much on the political vision and strength of its leader as on its geographical location as well as on the cohesive factor that the experience of enslavement represented for African people in Cuba.

On the continent of Africa colonial and imperial powers have always worked in tandem and the colonial praxis permeated borders all across Africa. British, Portuguese, French, Germans, Belgians, they all concurred in building webs of domination that rendered escape almost impossible. When it eventually succeeded, resistance was systematically ruined and promptly undermined. Amílcar Cabral from Guinea-Bissau knew that from his experience under Portuguese colonialism, which prompted him to claim, eventually inspired by Franz Fanon (1963), that "the best or worst shout against imperialism, whatever its form, is to take up arms and fight" (Cabral, 1966). Maybe because oppression under Portuguese colonial rule was more visible and therefore easier to realize owing to the particular physical abuse and repression exerted by PIDE, the Portuguese State Police[26] Cabral also reclaimed as urgent an African centered struggle:

> One form of struggle we consider fundamental has not been explicitly mentioned in this programme. (…) we refer here to *the struggle against our own weaknesses.* (…) This battle is the expression of internal contradictions in the economic, social, cultural (and therefore historical) reality of each of our countries. We are convinced that any national or social revolution which is not based on knowledge of this fundamental reality runs grave risk of being condemned to failure[27].

---

[26] PIDE-**P**olícia **I**nternacional e de **D**efesa do **E**stado/Direcção Geral de Segurança: International and State Defense Police/General Security Directorate. Designed after the German-Nazi Gestapo, PIDE was its Portuguese equivalent in structure, methods, and functionality with extended influence in Portugal as well as all over the Portuguese run African countries, especially targeting the movements for the independence of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau where repression was particularly brutal.
[27] Excerpt of Cabral's speech delivered to the first Tricontinental Conference of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America held in Havana (Cuba) in January, 1966.

In 1959, in his address at the Congress of Black African Writers Franz Fanon called attention to the fact that, in African colonized countries, "while the mass of the people maintain intact traditions (…) the intellectual throws himself in the frenzied fashion into the frantic acquisition of the culture of the occupying power and takes every opportunity of unfavourably criticizing his own traditional culture" (Fanon, 1959)[28]. A native culture under colonization is condemned to extinction, and its manifestations, taken as demonstrations of liberation, have to be immediately crushed. In the African continent as well as in the Americas, the negation that Africans have a culture and a history, and the contempt for any manifestation of that culture under enslavement and segregation or under oppression and poverty, produced massive though varied reactions. Resistance in any form or manner showed a common trace: a heartbeat grounded in the cultural renaissance of Africa in the continent and the Diaspora through which people of African descent sought to break the shackles of colonial domination. Furthermore, they sought to confront the humanistic void in which an a-historical and a-cultured people were left. In a word, cultural and historical memory were the tools with which Africans, refusing to live with the Eurocentric arguments about African backwardness and a-historicism, fuelled upsurges of liberation struggle in Angola, Algiers, the Congo, Kenya, Mozambique, Nyasaland and Rhodesia soon after the first Conference of the Peoples of Africa took place in Accra in December 1958 (Lumumba, 1960)[29].

Two years later, a movement towards African unity was being run by Heads of free African States like Sékou Touré, Nkrumah, and Lumumba among others because they were very

---

[28] This speech was later included in *The Wretched of the Earth* whose English translation was published in the U.S.A in 1963.
[29] Speech addressed by Patrice Lumumba at the opening of the All-African Conference in Leopoldville in August 25, 1960.

much aware of the fact that the juridical independence obtained was only a first step and further efforts would be required to achieve freedom and self-determination; to conduct African affairs according to an African agenda without the insult and humiliation that the system of tutelage that former colonial powers sought to impose would mean.

These leaders, committed to overcome the imperialist politics of creating antagonistic blocks and division in Africa by means of political intrigue and economic corruption (the motto being 'divide and rule'), unanimously attuned with Lumumba's declaration: "we had to create a new system adapted to the requirements of purely African evolution, change the methods forced on us and, in particular, find ourselves and free ourselves from the mental attitudes and various complexes in which colonization kept us for centuries" (Lumumba, 1960).

This seems to be the same direction Cabral was taking as he asserted that the fundamental struggle in Africa was "the struggle against our own weaknesses" while Fanon claimed that only by killing the colonizer within would African people finally be able to free their colonized minds (Fanon, 1963).

A product of his historical conditions and a Marxist, Amílcar Cabral strongly believed in the role of a theoretical framework to give consistency to revolutionary action, a framework that would provide the national liberation movements with programmatic lines of thought and action: "the foundations and objectives of national liberation in relation to the social structure" (Cabral, 1966). The experience of living colonial oppression, however, made him soon realize that, in fact, Marxism could not be applied to the African reality without, at least a deep critical revision. He recognized that following historical materialism would place African societies outside history

so long as the motive force of their development would not be class struggle[30]; and definitely not class but the racial framework of colonial oppression was the problem in Africa. The second key factor in the Marxist theory that would need attention concerns the ownership of the means of production in Africa. Where private appropriation of means of production and private property were not part of the African socio-economic and political experience prior to colonialism, class oppression and class struggle were also alien concepts therefore never played a determinant role in the struggle for liberation.

2.4 TOWARDS THE RECLAMATION OF AFRICAN SOCIALISM

The creation of socialist African States that in Marxist terms would mean a "qualitative jump" in the socio-economic structure of African societies provided that they would keep the colonial structure intact (in a neo-colonialist fashion), meant for the African leaders a total refusal of the neo-colonialist agendas if they would care for the self-determination of the African people, spiritual and material decolonization. According to Cabral (1966) the path to the creation of African socialist states has to contemplate several steps: (1) examine the influences and effects of imperialist action on the social structures and historical processes of development of African peoples in order to assess how imperialist domination has produced a paralysis, a stagnation and in some cases even the repression of the natural process of development in African countries; (2) redefine the role of the classes in a class structure created by the colonial and imperial forces like an African pseudo-bourgeoisie, an urban working class, and an agricultural proletariat; (3) regain

---

[30] According to this paradigm all the various human groups in Africa, Asia, and Latin America subjected to colonialism and imperialism would be placed outside history. This is ironic and a paradoxical definition of history as far as the most important aspiration of a communism is concerned: a classless society.

the historical agency of African peoples by rejecting both colonial and neo-colonial tutelage by destructing the mechanisms of imperialist and racist domination to which Africa has been subjected. In Cabral's words "national liberation exists only when the natural productive forces have been completely freed from every kind of foreign domination" (1966).

The state of affairs in which imperialist policies left African countries and neo-colonialism perpetuates, especially the emergence of a bourgeois class, proved to be one of the major problems to be solved by African leaders in the struggle for liberation and into the path to socialism. Cabral (1966) advocated its conversion into a revolutionary role; that "the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie must be capable of committing suicide as a class in order to be (…) completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which they belong" so that revolution would really occur.

Kwame Nkrumah, the charismatic and popular hero of the independent movements and of African socialism, strongly advocated that the solution to African problems could only be found in a strong political union of the African countries against the divisive politics of neo-colonialism. A political unity, based on their common past history and their common interest in the independence of Africa that, despite the various differences in culture and language, would be the greatest contribution to the effective development of African natural resources for the benefit of African people under the framework of scientific socialism (Nkrumah, 1961).

By scientific socialism Nkrumah seems to understand the establishment of a socio-economic framework supported by and "anchored to a steadying ideology" like Marxism. The particular form of African socialism or Nkrumaism recognized a connection between communalism and socialism but considered the former unsuitable to technically answer the

mechanisms of appropriation of the means of production and distribution needed to ensure capital accumulation and its egalitarian partition. The programmatic lines developed by Nkrumah as well as his political agenda reflected a much more a-critical application of Marxism to the African reality than Lumumba's or Amílcar Cabral's. In fact, he stood to the Marxist tenets and premises that, dependent on the European historic conditions that created them, meant the acceptance of the fact that "socialism depends on dialectical and historical materialism, upon the view that there is only one nature, subject in all manifestations to natural laws and that human society is, in this sense, part of nature and subject to its own laws of development" (Nkrumah, 1967). Nkrumah recognized that it was necessary to root the socialist project in an African frame but only as far as the African ethical and moral values, that he called metaphysics, were concerned in order to keep the humanism of traditional African life, while re-asserting the principles of scientific socialism: the socialization of productive and distributive processes.

On the other hand, when Julius Nyérère, the socialist president of the independent state of Tanzania claimed that"(S)ocialism, like democracy, is an attitude of mind (…) not the rigid adherence to a standard political pattern"[31] he was preserving and re-gaining African traditions to build an economic system out of the African moral and ethical values and African cosmological sense. Indeed, communal social and cultural practices are African building blocks that confer the individual a sense of identity, of belonging, and of purpose. They are part o the cosmological and ontological dimensions where life makes sense and institutions function. Nyérère's programmatic document presented to the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in 1967, known as The Arusha Declaration, established the principles of socialism as the president

---

[31] This is the opening declaration of *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism* published in England in 1968.

conceived of them in the African reality, anchored in the African experience, agency, history, and culture.

Nkrumah's and Nyérère's political writings may be two excellent exercises of Afrocentric critique. In fact, while Nkrumah's deep structure of his African socialism - scientific socialism - relies on the Marxist premises of the dialectics of historical materialism and the struggle between the 'have' and 'have not' classes, reconnecting to African traditions pretty much only at the surface level, Nyérère developed and implemented a socialist Constitution that we can call today Afrocentric. Fully aware of the tragic consequences of colonialism and of the dangers of neo-colonialism, Nyérère located and centered the programmatic lines of his socialist agenda on the deep structure of the African sense of the world, while critically addressing the problems brought about by capitalism and its particular forms of colonialism and imperialism. Like every leader of an independent African country, Nyérère had to be concerned with the methods and ways of producing wealth especially when he wanted to avoid depending on external funds that he clearly saw as a means of endangering African independence and self-determination, an open road to neo-colonial practices.

This, of course, needs practical solutions that are far from the scope of this study, but the important issue to bear in mind seems to be the fact that, for Nyérère, the condition to develop a socialist economy must concentrate on the way wealth is distributed rather than on how it is produced. And this is indeed the central socialist principle or "attitude". What is anti-socialist, that he calls anti-social, is accumulation of wealth and acquisitive practices for the purpose of gaining power and prestige, engage in personal competition, live for individualistic profit. This, he emphasizes, has never been a traditional African practice. Society, the community, where

everybody was a worker and no concept of living on anyone else's expenses was even tolerated, would always look after its members and "(B)oth the "rich" and the "poor" individual were completely secure in African society" (Nyérère, 1968). Following and reclaiming the need to re-educate a colonized Africa and to regain African former attitude of mind the second concept discussed by Nyérère is the fact that traditionally African's right to land was simply the right to use it; individual ownership of land, and the concept of land as a marketable commodity central to capitalism, was a foreign concept brought into Africa by colonial powers and interests. A third aspect on which African socialism should be grounded was the relationship between the community and the individual as far as concept of self-reliance leadership and its intrinsic value is concerned in African societies. The respect for age (wisdom) and service to the community leader should be preserved in the same way that the duty of someone in a leadership position is to perform in a reliable manner the responsibilities entrusted to him/her for the benefit of the people.

Brought up in a traditional African society, Nyérère claimed that "the foundation, and the objective, of African socialism is the extended family" and the notion of familyhood that in Swahili translates as *Ujamaa*. Finally, he concludes "[w]e, in Africa, have no more need of being "converted" to socialism than we have of being "taught" democracy. Both are rooted in our own past – in the traditional society which produced us (Nyérère, 1968). The legacy of Nyérère's thought is, in fact, still very much alive in the works and scholarship of Afrocentric scholars. During the late 1960s, the African American scholar/activist Maulana Karenga, for instance, appropriated Nyérère's language and used the word *Ujamaa* as one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa – *Nguzo Saba*.

The arrogance with which colonial cultures approached African societies discredited the deep-rooted wisdom and dignity of traditional societies, and the innate respect for human life that is part of the rich humanistic heritage of African people.

The difficulties faced by African and African American political activists and thinkers and by African political leaders in their common struggle for freedom and independence; the varied and unsuccessful attempts to liberate the colonized and enslaved Africans by assimilating to or adapting foreign and alien paradigms that inherently placed them in a subaltern status and never granted them agency; the reclamation of a liberating theoretical framework that would establish the philosophical foundations and functional patterns where Africans would see themselves fully represented; all contributed and summed up in Afrocentricity, the theoretical framework developed by Molefi Asante and published for the first time in 1980 as *Afrocentricity: A Theory of Social Change,* a theory that in Asante's words was contextual and grew out of African people's cultural heritage (Asante, 1983).

To understand the myth of European superiority is not an irrelevant discussion as we have seen. It played an important role on one of the most influential political-economic-social theories of modern Europe that is Marxism. For the same token, also Marxism is considered to have a universal applicability with no regard for the distinct cosmological vision and experiences of a particular society, as has been the case with African countries like Ghana after independence, and the subsequent neo-colonial policies.

> In order to halt foreign interference in the affairs of developing countries it is
> necessary to study, understand, expose and actively combat neo-colonialism in whatever
> guise it may appear. For the methods of neo-colonialism are subtle and varied. They

operate not only in the economic field, but also in the political, religious, ideological and cultural spheres. (Nkrumah, 1966: cap. 18)y

The discussion around Nkrumaism[32] and Nyérère's socialism also reinforces my opinion that it is important to master the full implications of the Western paradigm, the paralyzing effects of European Modernity over African natural development, of colonialism and imperialism, the system of racialized chattel slavery and segregation suffered by people of African descent in the Diaspora but also in the African continent, in order to apprehend the profound revolutionary dimension of Afrocentricity in correcting Eurocentric history; in the material and psychological decolonization of the African world; in the rehabilitation of African agency.

Simultaneously it is fundamental the full understanding of Afrocentricity's fulcral concept: culture.

Similar to the notion that can be found in Cultural Studies that "everything is culture" (Pires, 2004: 35) in an Afrocentric sense culture is also holistic, systemic, symbolic, and relativist. It is the lifelong process of individual and collective apprehension of the meaning of the world, of human relationships, of the relationship of humanity with the world and its manifestations. In the Afrocentric paradigm culture entails the historical experience of a people, their systems of knowledge, spiritual dimensions, ethical and social values organized in some

---

[32] In his speech at the Conference of Ghana Envoys held in Accra in January 1962 Kofi Baako, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ghana, defined the concept as "socialism adapted to conditions in African and African tradition. [that] as a socialist philosophy, (it) seeks to adapt socialist ideas to the evolution of an African society which has emerged from colonialist domination (..) to realize its socialist aims amid the legacies of colonialism". As a result of this view private capital invested in private firms and businesses by colonial British Government was kept running in independent Ghana and nationalization of these firms was not even an option (Omari, 1979: 194-195)

87

aesthetic support that reflects their particular cosmological standpoint. Culture is therefore history in its broadest sense.

As a theory of knowledge Afrocentricity defies hierarchical classifications. Cultures like human beings differ; but they are not superior or inferior, central or peripheral, more or less civilized. With Afrocentric theory there is no one hegemonic culture with universal value. There is only *one* valid standpoint from where to understand the cultural manifestations and values of a people: their cosmological and ontological realities.

One of the most important dimensions of the Afrocentric paradigm is its ability to respond to and correct a fundamental human crisis: the one that was created by Eurocentric hegemonic approach to culture and identity that, in many cases, produced deep psychological damage as well as consequent behaviors of material warfare between peoples of different cultures, religions, or colors. In a time of resistance, in the struggle for agency and human liberation, Afrocentricity also provides the theoretical framework to deconstruct the structure of the imposed upon racist and oppressive discourses; and tools of analysis to sustain the cultural and therefore identitarian basis of African people in their African center; a relocation that would have helped, for instance, Nkrumah in building theoretical basis for an African socialism grounded in the African communal values and traditions instead of mal-adapting the framework of a European based paradigm like Marxism. What we witness in Nyérère's socialist programmatic lines is, on the other hand, the most perfect example of the functional aspect of Afrocentricity as a metatheory (Asante, 1998:49). In fact, Nyérère departs from an Afrocentric *frame of mind* that gives form to a *structure* of thought grounded in the African historical and cultural *context* whose discourse or *delivery of message* resonates to the common African man

and woman, to their sense of the world and ancestral experience. African centeredness and location are two basic Afrocentric premises to deal with the "political/cultural crisis with all of its attendant parts, economic and social" (Asante, 1998: 173) in a truly decolonized human environment, I mean, materially and mentally liberated people of African descent from the state of oppression and denial perpetrated by the colonial and imperial subjugation.

In fact, Asante's Afrocentricity questions "[h]ow can the oppressed use the same theories as the oppressors" (Asante, 1998: 181). The defiance of an oppressive situation, the criticism to the ruling ideology has to be "based on people's needs and experiences, [therefore] Marxism is likewise not helpful in developing Afrocentric concepts methods because it, too, is a product of a Eurocentric consciousness that excludes the historical and cultural perspectives of Africa" (Asante, 1998: 5).

Therefore, colonial and imperialist powers, European and American, and their extensions on the African continent, dependent on the cooperation of systemic racism, will only be overridden through structural changes whose source has to be identified with the African material but also spiritual and cosmological realities, those who reinstate free agency of African people in their own businesses and pertain to the African traditional values of harmony, justice, equality, patience, and diligence; through a deep humanistic stance and a social common practice where "each person is his brother's keeper" (Omari, 1970: 193); through the applicability of Afrocentricity as the theoretical structural framework.

3. BLACKNESS AND EXISTENTIALISM

The special conditions that prevailed in the United States during the building of the nation, the racialized system that is foundational to its capitalist society, created an economic as well as an existential problem for the African American population. This is one reality of all people impacted by the colonial and imperial *modus operandi* both in the African continent or the Diaspora. However, the existential torture does not apply to any other ethnic group in America in terms of depth and duration of oppression. Although the deprivation of land, confinement to reservations, and decimation of Native Americans showed the viciousness of exploitation and oppression, each type was singular. While the physical and psychological confinement of the native population did not determine or require the destruction of their cultural identity, the conditions of capture as well as those determined by the dispersion of Africans throughout America in the process of being randomly sold into slavery dictated a whole different experience of cultural annihilation and an existential crisis.

Therefore, this racialized order where American colonization is part of a process of European imperialism over North America, Africa, and South America took the form of oppression, genocide, and slavery, which was characterized by brutalization and degradation of numerous peoples. Supported by a religious belief among the Puritan Europeans that Christianity was the sole true religion and Europeans the "chosen people" of that only true God and by the 'fabricated' idea of a superior European culture, religion, society, and political organization, European colonialism and imperialism created a predatory ethics that conferred on them the alleged right to kill, displace, persecute, enslave, and/or exterminate the 'uncivilized', 'savage', non-Christian, 'wild beasts' like the native populations of America and Africa.

90

Notwithstanding the fact that race is not an ontological concept, being a socially constructed category that impacts on identity building and determines racialized identities, it bears the psychological disruptive effect of debasing, acculturating, and annihilating community bonds, language, and family structures of the colonized. Actually, the consciousness of difference, the ontological problem of self-definition, the dramatic reversal of meaning and purpose of life entered African cosmogony with colonization. Therefore, concerns with meaning of existence and identity are now at the core of every African person impaired by colonial theft of self-definition and sense of humanity.

Blackness and attempts to define what is to be Black are two wandering concepts, traveling over borders and continents, growing out of the encounter of Europeans with African peoples who would not have had otherwise to define themselves by the color of their skin. These 'identitarian' nomenclatures have also changed according to the exploitative logic of the colonizers, but have always been backed up by religious and/or 'scientific' explanations about the inferiority of an 'impure race', at the 'primitive and savage' level. Described as uncivilized, morally corrupt, pagan, emotionally and intellectually inferior when compared to the European colonizer, deemed as a defective production of the divine order, African physical features became the factual evidence of evil with which early religious texts justified their divine curse. As early as the fifteenth century Roman Catholic Popes were quick in granting Portuguese and Spanish kings "free hand in among other things, invading, conquering, subjecting pagans and Moors, and other enemies of Christ, mainly negroes. [This entailed] confiscating their land and

wealth, reducing them to slavery all in the name of the conqueror's own profit as well as that of his descendants"[33] in order to 'accomplish the salvation of their pagan souls'.

Africans have examined the connection between colonialist slavery trafficking, the practice of colonialism, and the abstractions created to objectify and dehumanize them since the discriminatory skin color descriptor was introduced. In fact, it is only by the colonial encounter that Africans are infused with a consciousness of difference as far as hierarchical classification of human beings is concerned. In the white European ideology 'being negro' or 'being black' became a metaphor for inferiority. The idea was that there was a deficiency in the emotional, intellectual, and social maturity of Africans for civilization. The simultaneously material and immaterial foundations to these devaluated prejudgments, the religious beliefs and the biological 'natural' explanations to the perceived physical differences are the brass tracks upon which the entire Eurocentric racial architecture has been erected.

The question of being black in an anti-black society has been, in the USA the central question of African Americans living in a nation with a split personality (Asante, 2009; Du Bois, 1986; Douglass, [1845] 1994: Wright, [1940] 2005); it has been the central question for Africans in former colonized African countries (Memmi, 1967; Fanon, 1967; Césaire, 2001; Senghor, 1936); it has been the central question for Africans in Brazil, South and Central America: the history of human condition in a dehumanized existence (Nascimento, 1989). It is a checkered pattern of struggle for liberation, agency, and self-determination in the affirmation of a vital humanity.

---

[33] This is my free translation of the Papal rights granted to the Portuguese King Afonso V according to an excerpt from Pope Nicholaus V's *Romanus Pontifex Bull* dated August 1454 in Ribeiro, D. (1995). *O Povo Brasileiro – A Formação e o Sentido do Brasil*. São Paulo: Editora Loyola.

The distress to which Africans have been subjected through slavery and colonial exploitation as well as subsequent oppression and dehumanization throughout the western hemisphere has created an intellectual if not a spiritual unity in overturning the self-alienation, torture, and humiliation of the colonized subject. Concepts like Blackness and Négritude are therefore central in the discussion about African ontology, about the African's interiorization of exterior definitions, their questioning and confrontation, the search for self-determination and affirmation of an African identity. It leads, according to Gordon (1997) to a form of suffering that is a function of *unfreedom*, where a free being is either repressed through violence or denies his or her freedom; it has led to the double-consciousness complex highlighted by Du Bois (1986) the expression of the single body split into two souls with two correlated worlds; to the colonized mind overdetermined from the outside (Fanon, 1967). All these expressions of dysfunctional identities are found in the dilemma of being materially black while striving to achieve the abstract status of whiteness, that is, to transform the invisibility of the black body into a visible blackness. Such a task required physical and emotional survival strategies, resistance and resilience amidst the institutionalized systems of torture that was slavery, psychological strength and philosophical talent to resist complete annihilation in order to recreate the sense of African humanity and agency in the world. Enslavement and colonization created survival strategies to resist oppression, deep reflectivity and analytical study of the dehumanizing forms that robbed Africans of their sense of humanhood. The aim was to reverse alienation into an enduring pursuit of human liberty and freedom in order to liberate the African person from a vision of him/herself as held by whites, or blacks who saw themselves through white eyes.

The conditions of material as well as psychological survival in a racialized society have determined Black people's concerns with freedom as a condition to humanity. The question

becomes what does it mean to be a human being? At this point the affirmation of the humanity could only be achieved by the accomplishment of freedom.

Existentialism, however, is not a matter of personal reflection or a style of life, but a philosophical approach to human existence that presents a certain number of concepts, like the intentional nature of consciousness (Husserl and Sartre); the function and nature of emotion (Sartre); what anxiety reveals about human existence in general (Sartre and Heidegger); bad faith (Sartre); the structure of intersubjective relations (Sartre and de Beauvoir); the nature of human freedom, responsibility and choice (Sartre and de Beauvoir); the social constitution of the self and of the sense of one's own body (de Beauvoir and Fanon); the critique of humanism and metaphysics (Heidegger);and the significance of this absurdity for the question of suicide (Camus).

During the early/middle decades of the twentieth century (between WWI and WWII period), a 'Lost Generation'[34] of intellectuals dominated the philosophical and literary scene. Their disillusionment with the project of European modernity prompted an existential anxiety to which European Existentialism tried to answer. European theorists such as Jean- Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty put the experience of history, alienation, and the materiality of the body at the center of philosophical and literary life. It should be no surprise, then, that Existentialism appealed to so many African intellectuals studying in France and

---

[34] The 'Lost Generation' is a term attributed to Gertrude Stein (Paris) and defines a sense of moral loss, disillusionment, and aimlessness that intellectuals and writers of the 1920s, living in the United States and Europe, faced after World War I. The war radically changed their perception of the world. Feeling like 'une génération perdue' they rejected the purported virtuousness of the project of European modernity that was not, after all, such a successful story.

African-American thinkers of the same period and after, like Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Léopold Senghor, whose essays paired with those of the European philosophers of the time. In North America, the works by African-American writers such as W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright and the poets and writers of the Harlem Renaissance up to the contemporary writings of Toni Morrison, appropriated by Black existentialists and read in an existentialist framework have a central function in contemporary Africana philosophy as extensively discussed in Gordon's works.

> Examplars of the existential credo of existence preceding essence and its connection to the question of freedom.(…) point to an anthropology of black adulthood as a struggle against despair. (…) Existential insights can be found in the 18th century poetry of Phillis Wheatley and the various early narratives and novels by former slaves and freed blacks in the 19th century, the first explicitly existential set of literary writings are those of Richard Wright from the 1930s to the late 1950s.(…) Wright provides reflections on the relationship between choice and options for the marginalized of the modern world, who find themselves constantly thrown into situations they would prefer to have avoided, and he outlines many of the classic existential problems of freedom and responsibility that follow. (Gordon, 2005: 124).

Gordon is reducing African philosophy to a time line period that relates to the emergence of the concept of being black brought about by European modernity, conquest, and colonization from the sixteenth century onwards (Gordon, 2005: 1). This is problematic because he is identifying two concepts, separated by time and historical foundations, as being overlapping – African and black. He is assuming that there is *a* group identity racially constructed whose origin is colonialism, the Middle Passage, and enslavement in the 16th century where in fact it is a

matter of identification rather than one of identity[35]. Were it so, this would mean that this group

of people, Africans/blacks, only exists as a product of European construction, gravitating in the

fringes of European's hegemonic definition of the world. Even if he discusses the etymological

origins of the word philosophy and criticizes the Western philosophical assumption that reason,

as a philosophical concept, emerged in Greece; even when he highlights that philosophical

thought and reasoning dates back to ancient Kemet, he still insists that what he defines as

Africana philosophy is the intellectual production of a people emerging out of the experiences of

colonialism and enslavement. He textually says that "[t]he Atlantic slave trade signaled the

beginning of the 'modern' black diaspora and philosophical writings born from that historical

development. It is in this sense, then, that Africana philosophy originates from medieval and

modern contexts (Gordon, 2005: 18). Black existentialist philosophy is therefore the discussion

of blackness as identity instead of a trace of group indentification.

Although the place and role of human beings in the world, the meaning of life and the

moral and ethical problems that the inevitability of death contains are, with different emphasis

and in different ways the subject area of every philosophical theory, a sudden call to

Existentialism both at a social as well as philosophical level became the *avant-garde* mode of

claiming a universalist type of humanism. The fundamental philosophical question for Africans

was in fact an existential one: What does it mean to be black, materially and existentially? Or, in

Du Bois's words "how does it feel to be a problem?"(Huggins, 1986: 363) – the Negro problem

in America.

---

[35] The same line of reasoning can be found in Stuart Hall's belief in a special 'caste' of people (Hall, 1995).

Some African scholars (Gordon, 1997, 2005; Jones, 1973; Naomi Zack, 1993) have placed the numerous artistic and philosophical expressions of blackness within the framework of a black existential philosophy defined as the intellectual and existential struggle of African people for significance and affirmation of their humanity. They have therefore adopted the European philosophies of existence, from the German and French schools of thought, especially following Jean-Paul Sartre's and Simone de Beauvoir's interest in the condition of blacks with which they exemplified their philosophical argumentation. Although Gordon argues that existential philosophy is not only existential philosophy produced by black philosophers but "the thought that addresses the intersection of problems of existence in black contexts" (Gordon, 1997: 3) much of the intellectual work dealing with Blackness and Négritude has been read within the context of the European philosophy of Existentialism in relation to concepts of situation, anguish, choice, and responsibility of the individual in social context because they consider the requirements of existentialism to be relevant to racialized experience. Actually Gordon (1997) advocates not only that black existentialism is similar to white existentialism in its moral requirement that agents take responsibility so as to be in good faith; he also considers that the marginal status of existentialism in philosophy is a good match for the marginal status of racial studies, and the marginal presence of black philosophers while the awareness of human difficulty by existentialists, in general, is relevant to the specific difficulties of the American black experience.

To what extent, however, does Existentialism solve the problem of self-definition and self-determination of the African subject subjected to conditions of existence that are not self-inflicted; conditions of existence that turn into interiorized truths? Is Existentialism - in its exploration of typical existential modes like the authenticity of the human being, alienation,

absurdity, and anxiety - 'violent' enough to achieve the decolonization of the mind and prevent the psychological impairment of living in someone else's borrowed terms like Fanon reclaimed?

The absurdity of existing in a society that denies one's human existence renders the experience of existing in black into a Kafkian incongruous syllogism of non-being under the white definition of what it is to be black. The experience of racism therefore, demands a complete existential awareness that requires a from-within consciousness no matter one's position in the oppressive situation; demands the responsibility to overturn the abstract embodiment of Blackness conferred upon the African person by the white gaze, of being 'overdetermined from outside' (Fanon, 1967: 116).

Blackness therefore, carries the symbolic baggage of the colonial definition. The adoption of an exterior identitarian definition that without the racialized gaze of the colonist (Memmi, 1967) would not have even existed means the acceptance of the ideological framework that denies the colonized the right to even the Existential doubt. Actually, Naomi Zack put it very clearly when she realized that blackness, or any racial identity, is not itself an existential structure because it is not universal[36]. However, by embracing Existentialism in the attempt to reclaim a black identity she failed to realize that the problem with applying the Existentialist paradigm as the theoretical framework for black liberation does not stem out of the non-universal structure of blackness but precisely from the tautological particularism of European 'rule' according to which only the universal is valid. In appropriating the European theoretical framework the African is trapped in a centripetal circular and inconsequent race that does not resolve the racial myth.

---

[36] In http://www.wcp.org/Existentialism/The Good Faith of the Invisible Man.htm on 03/02/2010.

It may be argued that every human being shares the same experience of loneliness, anguish, and doubt, and the same profound concern for the fate of the individual person caused by the so-called absence of one's own determination of the conditions of existence one is born with, that Sartre talks about. However, the cosmic dread inflicted by the racialized dehumanization suffered by those whose very existence is denied cannot parallel the mere negation of a theological determinism. The truth is that after colonialism the *African-turned-black* person has to prove to him/herself that s/he is African in order to be able to prove to the world the existence of what does not exist. Blackness has become a complex system of identification and, even more dangerous, of identity building equated with deprivation: of means, opportunities, but far and foremost with absence, true inexistence, or the symbolic and material negation of humanity.

3.1 THE NÉGRITUDE MOVEMENT

Négritude, on the other hand, marks the attempt of the black alienated person in the French intellectual setting to revalorize Africa and a fundamental development in notions of African diasporic identity and culture in the early decades of the twentieth century. Following the evolution of the term Negro to Black in the United States to refer to people of African descent, Négritude took the stigmatized French term *nègre* that in the French colonized countries shared a similar racist functionality with the North American 'nigger'. What followed was a bold transformation of the color concept into an affirming and overwhelming pride in the African heritage and culture of black people, as a reaction against and rejection of French colonial racism. Founded by two university students who had moved to Paris in the early 1930s on

scholarships, Aimé Césaire (1913-2008) from Martinique and Léopold Senghor (1906 – 2001) from Senegal Négritude gave rise to a revolutionary new generation of African and Caribbean writers. Together with Léon Gontran Damas (1912-1978) from Guyana, these three major exponents of the movement believed that the shared black heritage of members of the African Diaspora was the best tool in fighting against French political and intellectual hegemony and domination.

Though Paris was the intellectual heart of Négritude and French Africa, the movement's inspiration came from America and the Harlem Renaissance and in the thought of its predecessor scholars who explored and revindicated the richness of Black culture. The Négritude writers admired black civil rights leaders, novelists, and poets like Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Alain Locke, Martin Delany, William Blyden, W. E. B. Du Bois, and James Weldon Johnson and their energy in the uplifting of "the souls of Black folk" and were strongly influenced by poems like *A Strong Tree* by McKay, or T*he Negro Speaks of Rivers* by L. Hughes or Paul Laurence Dunbar's *Not Playing God.* Considered primarily a poetic and literary movement it is possible to clearly trace its roots in the political conditions of colonial oppression and resistance among which the Haitian revolution is an example, the struggles for liberation and rescue of an African sense of identity and culture from its subordination to the ideological straight jacket of colonialism, against the derisive and annihilating effects of the French Code Noir of 1685.

On the other hand, Négritude would never have been the cultural but also political movement that is was without the influence of the Pan-African and African nationalist movements that vindicated the contribution of African history and culture in world history. In 1919, Blaise Diagne of Senegal and Gratien Candace, for instance, were actively involved in the

Organization of the first Pan-African Congress with W. E. B. Du Bois, immediately after the armistice following World War I, which marked the beginnings of a truly international solidarity among members of the African Diaspora and shows how ideals, concepts, and struggles for freedom "commuted" between Africa, Europe, and America.

In the United States, the quest for a distinct black identity erupted in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s and together with Négritude poets they claimed that black people all over the world share certain cultural and emotional characteristics that constitute the essence of blackness and called on artists to capture this essence in their creations.

By the late 1940s, Négritude had begun to influence French artists and intellectuals who embraced avant-garde movements fundamentally because Négritude challenged European aesthetic orthodoxy. With the backing of this Parisian and colonial intelligentsia, including André Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Aimé Césaire, and many other regular intellectuals around the journal *Présence Africaine* founded in Paris in 1947 by the Senegalese Alioune Diop, Négritude articulated the parameters of African diasporic culture. In an intimate relationship with the European contemporary movements of Marxism, and Existentialism that projected the political and intellectual activism of the group, the journal addressed and influenced a global audience of English, French, and Portuguese speakers in more than a half century of publication.

The goal was to raise the African consciousness, to reverse the psychological sense of inferiority, the discredit in the full humanity of the African, to question the acceptance of a reified condition and an abstract identification with shame and invisibility.

The major difficulty faced by the movement was the definition of what Négritude or Blackness would be, how could it embrace the geographically and politically diverse experiences of Africans; how would the African personality and identity be defined?

The function of Négritude, like that of Blackness, was indeed that of bringing to consciousness level the effects of domination and discrimination carried by the European ideologies over the African's perception of himself and of the meaning of his existence in the world. However, it could not simply be the 'rememory' (Morrison, 1987) of a fossilized past or an essentialist and immutable racial distinctiveness, case in which it would not be but a reversed form of the same fundamental premises inherent to the essentializing concepts of racial determinism. This much is the underlying Sartrean understanding of the concept although he praises it as reclamation of an African humanity: "Négritude is an anti-racist racism (…) which leads to an ultimate synthesis of a common humanity" (Sartre, 1958: 41). In its de-alienating function Négritude pursued the meaning of existence for black people in the world.

The concept of Négritude developed along two lines of interpretation, which is in itself the exponent of its failure as a liberating paradigm and an identitarian trope.

For Césaire, Négritude was functional. It was a cultural and historical developing process that brought to the consciousness level the self-alienation of colonized black subjects through an act of creation; it was a process through which an alienated black identity was forced to confront itself as a reified object (*pierre, taie*, or even *tour*) that demanded an active, creative, and

liberatory action, a weapon which *plonge* and *troue* through the world that had enchained him in subjection[37].

While for Césaire his "Négritude ha[d] a ground. It is a fact that there is a black culture: it is historical, there is nothing biological about it."(Césaire in Arnold, 1981: 37), for Senghor it was the expression of an African essence, genetic or "blood" inheritance that accounted for African characteristics of emotion, intuition, and artistic creativity as opposed to a Western rationality:"Négritude is a certain way of being a man, especially of living as a man" (Senghor, 1936: 248-9).

However, there is no "essential blackness in black people (Asante (2007: 5). Like Césaire also realized Négritude was grounded in the fact that there is a black culture, historically constructed that has nothing biological about it. Blackness is therefore not the meaning of being black, or a black identity but a perspective, a conceptual framework defined negatively and imposed on African people by European racism and cultural imperialism.

3.2 THE IDEA OF INDIVIDUALISM

Departing from a critical position towards the inhumanity of the Western thought, the most important fact to highlight is the absolute need for the refutation of the applicability of any Western philosophical concept and ideology to the experience of the colonized peoples, in the sense that their oppression and human degradation come as the result of the very essence of the Western philosophical perspective. With Existentialism, like with Marxism as already discussed,

---

[37] In Césaire (1939).*Cahier d'un retour au pays natal.*

or other Western paradigms as will be discussed ahead, the acceptance of its rationale by the colonized individual means not merely the recognition of the value and truthfulness of the Western concepts as universal but the acceptance of his/her oppression inherent to this recognition. Furthermore, this acceptance is precisely what validates the oppression that subjects him/her. As such, mastering Western philosophies is necessary for the colonized peoples to understand why and how they find themselves oppressed and subjected but they do not serve the purpose of their liberation.

The second point that must be emphasized is the religious foundation of the Western thought. Western individualistic philosophies represent the constant struggle for the differentiation between the human and the divine. Its highest exponent is the European Enlightenment and the conception of the hero. By the individual exercise of reasoning human beings have the ability to overcome natural difficulties and to control nature, animals, machines, and the world, therefore of elevating the condition of the European white man to that of the hero, next of kin to the divine. The hero is the personification of the modern man. He is made out of the same ideological material and the same logic structure that configures modernity; in his varied manifestations he is the embodiment of the different aspects of the Kantian philosophy and aesthetics, the one with the power to name, to define, to establish the norm. The next step of the European philosophies was the natural correlate towards individuality: the discussion around essence and immanence, reason and free will, determination, choice, and the autonomous biological existence preceding essence as theorized by the European Existentialist and Phenomenologist philosophers like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Husserl, Sartre, and Nietzsche.

Of course none of these ontological questions pertain to the African cosmogony. Although the Western European religious framework, Christianity, has been forced upon Africa as one of the most powerful weapons of colonization, there is undeniable proof that Christianity only overlapped, without truly debasing the spiritual African traditional and original cosmological sense as several studies on the African religion and spiritual world of Brazilian, Haitian, Yoruba, Zulu, Asanti, Igbo, and other African peoples have demonstrated (Opoku, 1978; Ben-Jochannan,1991; Asante, 2000, Asante and Mazama, 2002, 2008; Zauditu-Selassie, 2005).

Unlike the Western dichotomous classifications of spirit *versus* matter and the separation of the human from the divine, the African holistic sense of the world, of spirit and matter, material and immaterial, translates in the aesthetic unity of the oral, visual, sensorial, and performative elements as the expression of both inner and outer aspects of the African philosophical conceptualization of existence. It is therefore necessary to examine the African philosophy to show how it generates the cosmological and ontological center of the African peoples, and how it differs from the Western paradigms.

3.3 CLASSICAL AFRICAN IDEALS

The Kemetic spiritual and philosophical background of African aesthetics have been discussed in many authors' works since Cheikh Anta Diop argued in *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* that we can never understand the African people until we dare to link Africans to their classical past as emphasized and expanded by Molefi Asante (1998: xii).

Authors like Maulana Karenga, Jaheinz Jahn, Marimba Ani, Yoseph Ben-Jochannan, Molefi Kete Asante, Willie Cannon-Brown among others have "well recognized that Kemet was a society that sought the sacred in life" (Cannon-Brown, 2006: 21) and that the standards for the African philosophical ideal are intimately connected to the search for excellence and goodness and a devotion for truth, harmony, and balance. These are the central values and ethical norms of a society inspired in the divine order that, unlike the Greek/European philosophy, follow from the Kemetic notion of the world being organized in a godlike manner.

The way people of Kemet perceived the divine world was intricately interwoven in personal lives, rituals, festivals, celebrations, and daily tasks, all done in accordance with the demands of *ma'at* and the rhythms of nature, as Cannon-Brown explains (2006: 41).

From its Kemetic foundations African worldview is embedded by an intense spiritual dimension. This spiritual dimension has become synonymous to a deep African religious thought permeating every aspect of African everyday life even when it was impacted by Islamic and especially Christian religious practices that have, in more than one way been responsible for many Western interpretations of African spirituality. Like the Muslim scholar Ali Mazrui, who defended the idea of tripartite foundation of African tradition, John Mbiti is one of the many authors who have been unable to completely divest his interpretation of Africa from Christian influences. Their conception of the African sense of the world is therefore hierarchical, based on the Western thought pattern and on a Christian all-governing Almighty God which is, in its essence, inconsistent with African ontology and cosmology, therefore incompatible with the spiritual values and ethical responsibilities of human beings in the African holistic sense of oneness of humankind, nature and the cosmos (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2005).

The path to understand Africa cannot be divorced from its ancient Kemetic heritage, a civilization where a common spiritual foundation and orientation can be found to explain the universe, the origins of the world and human beings, and the mysteries of life like birth and death, based on three common functional principles that can be identified in all African religious expressions (Asante, 1998; Karenga, 1993; 2006): Harmony, a concept that keeps a close spiritual relationship between humans, and between humans and the environment; Ethics or *ma'at* that in African societies is the generative principle of right and righteousness, balance, justice, respect, and dignity understood as the balanced and harmonious order of creation where spirit and matter are inseparable; and Ancestors' veneration that embodies the concept of memory and wisdom, and which is the source of ethical teachings and social harmony as ancestors watch over daily activities, promote social harmony, and create a sense of accountability among the members of the community.

It is the relationship of humankind with nature and the natural phenomena that are the central issues in the African cosmological understanding of life, death, and creation, cycles and rhythms of everything that exists. Like the ancient Africans in Egypt, modern Africans also believe that the fundamental principle of creation was the equilibrium of opposites, a perfectly established energy whose force regulates the universe. The harmony that preexists to chaos is translated into *ma'at* "as the organizing principle of human society, the creative spirit of phenomena, and the eternal order of the universe" (Asante, 1998: 89) which is, after all, the moral bedrock to every human being's responsibility to prevent chaos and actively seek for balance and harmony in the community.

Nothing can be more different from the philosophical European worldview. African philosophy is therefore etiologically different, even opposed to the European individualistic philosophy.

The interconnected structure and origins of all things in the universe, the divine essence of all that exists, both born and unborn, the spiritual unity of natural rhythms with harmonious human principles, the sense of collectiveness and communal responsibility, they all account for the African cosmogony. Traditionally, African peoples for whom universe has been generated by an invisible first cause that begot human beings and nature alike out of a perfectly balanced and harmonious moment, or Tep Sepi in the Kemetic narratives of creation (Asante, 2000), conceptualize the universe as a whole and its creation as an ongoing process perceived by the ever changing and circular rhythms of life (birth and death), nature (spring, summer, autumn, and winter), and the cosmos (the movement of the sun, the moon, and stars); they revere the harmonious order they perceive in the universe and the spirit and essence of all that has been created. Creation is seen as a moment of balance between spiritual and physical forces and this conceptualization of humankind and of the universe is the basis of the African ontology and cosmology, spiritual and religious life, belief in the power of the divine order, the spirit of the ancestors and the search for harmony, balance, and truth in the community (Gyekye, 1996).

This permanent search for harmony or *ma'at* is in fact the generative force of the *Muntu* which, under the general common African concept of *Ntu* or inseparateness that according to Bantu's philosophy is the essence of everything in whatever form it is conceived (Jahn, 1961), is

that which consubstantiates itself in the power of the spoken word or *nommo*, a *djedian* outcome inseparable from oral performance which is a distinctive trait of African culture[38].

Therefore it seems self-evident now that the appropriation of Western paradigms can be but cause of confusion, misorientation, and a deep sense of dislocation to those whose ontological and cosmological perceptions radicate in a holistic dimension of the universe.

As it has been discussed European Existentialist thought concentrates on postulates that derive from previous philosophical frameworks like the paramount importance of the individual and the finality of human life in an individualistic ethics. It builds on the idea that there is no predetermined immanent project for humankind and no divine preordained destiny. Rather, Existentialists assume that meaning is conferred to human existence by human beings themselves; that being inherently free every human being's exercise of freedom is his/her very decision and the meaning of his/her own existence.

This concept of the exercise of freedom to choose one's own way seems problematic as far as the reclamation of black existence is concerned. As conceived by Kierkegaard and Sartre, the responsibility attached to the exercise of freedom that human beings are doomed with, implied the anguish of choice, the duty to overcome the paralysis of this predestination, or condition of humanity. Since the condition of freedom is the fundamental premise of Existentialist philosophy how can the concept and its implications be truly applied to the conditions of Africans who, in first place could not even make use of the assumed freedom that

---

[38] Jahn uses the Bantu language to illustrate the general common African concept of inseparateness that he defines as *Ntu,* the essence of everything in whatever form it is conceived and that is subsumed under one of the following categories, all endowed with its/his/or her own essence: Mu<u>ntu</u>/human being; Ki<u>ntu</u>/thing; Ha<u>ntu</u>/place and time; and Ku<u>ntu</u>/modality.

they were born with when their human condition was denied *ab inito* under the Western paradigms? For the colonized African the cosmological anguish is not that of exercising his/her freedom but precisely the lack of it. For the same token, the choice of doing nothing, eventually the nihilism Cornel West identifies in the African American community (West, 1993) instead of being the resulting force of fearing risk is most likely the consequence of the condition of psychological dislocation in the living conditions of alienation and denial to which the colonized is subjected. The inability to make choices is, for the African American and the colonized subjects, the condition of subjection, not the result of personal freedom of choice. What limits the exercise of their essential human condition is an external phenomenon: the free will of the oppressor. On the other hand, the Existentialist questioning of a divine entity and the valorization of life, of human life in itself, in spite of or maybe because of the concept of eternal return that rendered meaningless and pointless any agency in an ethics of human relations that Nietzsche reclaimed in "On the Vision and the Riddle" (1995: 155-60) is not even consistent with Africans' ethical, spiritual, and cosmological perception.

As discussed above the African holistic cosmology, the sense of interconnectedness of all that exists, and the sense of purpose and responsibility of human beings' existence towards keeping balance and harmony of the community and the world render the European philosophical problem of immanence obsolete for the African sense of existence, if they can center themselves in their African philosophical and spiritual traditions.

Identity crisis for colonized people like Africans in Africa and the Diaspora is always the result of living on the edge of the sword between what is and what is not, between two distinct

perspectives and two cultural universes, their African sense of humanity and the world and the individualistic and dehumanizing worldview of the colonizers.

Camus' existential dilemma was that he never could bring himself to overcome the situation where his love for Africa as an African has never stopped him from feeling like a foreigner in Algeria.

Sartre's existential thought departs from the idea that individuals find themselves to have been placed in the world in situations that they could not have determined. There is a pre-established social, cultural, even historic order that surrounds the individual and establishes who s/he becomes. One's agency however is required because one has to make the choices that confer a person an identity and a path. In the dehumanized Western world one may or may not choose to assert humanity, or find the meaning of one's existence or role in society. The person strives for existential significance. These philosophical crossroads, the need to make choices and assert your value as a human being result from the fact that at some point, as oppressed identities, you need to bring possibilities to the conscious level in order to be able to take a stand. Therefore the idealization of Africa and the myth of a black essence that is naturally inscribed in every African is unfortunately an open door to criticism when it is not clear that this is a process that can only be done out of conscious knowledge. There is nothing immanent, no inborn awareness, no essential consciousness in a human being except the symbolic knowledge that Christianity attributes to the divine breath that they call the human soul. In order to make a choice you have to be informed: the eagle has to be told she is an eagle and for that matter she can fly in order to

be able to decide to open her wings and set free in the open air[39]. There is nothing less essentialist than acquired knowledge, or the result of experience which is what existence is about.

However, the problem of making choices that revitalize one's sense of humanity, that reinstate the human condition's responsibility for debasing the inhuman, is not an Existentialist philosophical exercise for African people, or people of African descent. It is the exercise of their own African centeredness; the recognition of an African cosmology of wholeness, of a balanced and harmonious interplay of human beings and nature, where humans' humanity bears witness to respectful relations between human beings, between human beings with nature, between human beings with the superior order of the universe (Asante, 1990).

The tragedy of contemporary humanity, heir to the growing dehumanization brought about by Modernity, is that instead of striving for harmonious and respectful relations with community and the environment human beings are led into an individualistic struggle in a system of mutual aggression between the individual and the community. The question of what it means to be black is an ongoing debate among African American scholars and African thinkers confronted with racist definitions of who they should be. The problem has been partially solved in America by intellectuals like Asante who clearly articulate a conceptual frontier between identity and citizenship (Asante, 2003, 2007a; 2009). Therefore, the meaning of blackness has moved from identifying skin color, to determining biological differences, establishing a racial hierarchy, granting or denying access to political and/or economic resources, and so on and so forth, even to fabricating an identity. It is all a matter of perspective (Asante, 2007a: 159).

---

[39] Cf. *An Afrocentric Manifesto* (Asante, 2007: 1-2) for the eagle metaphor about possibilities, knowledge, and choice.

Indeed, it may be a way of denoting a common and shared experience that one can identify with; it can be positive or a type of consciousness that one may have arrived at in search for a more human ethics. Or it can be negative and stand for the degraded and stereotypical images of Africa, of enslavement and subordination, even invisibility; but it certainly is not an ontological definition, no one's identity. In fact the acceptance of the concept remains intimately connected to the Du Boisian notion of a problematic being and Gordon's discussion of a philosophy of the oppressed existence of black people. It is as if there was nothing, no beingness before Africans were called black.

Afrocentricity, as a new perspective on existence, an alternative paradigm autonomous from ethnocentric Eurocentrism, is a truly liberating framework for the recognition of the African philosophical and scientific contribution to civilization, a re-centering on an African ethics of human existence that is self-determined and self-defined.

Actually there is no liberation for a materially and mentally colonized people unless they will be able to exist outside the prison box on the European paradigm. Simultaneously a philosophical and a functional paradigm intended to a liberating ethics of action and agency, Afrocentricity recuperates the classical African historical past and the Kemetic philosophical thought as the fundamental sites of African liberation as it offers the methodological and epistemological potential to embrace the ontological, cosmological, and functional aspects of African life and experience. In fact, the epistemological dimension of the Afrocentric theory provides not only a holistic theory of knowledge; it is a metatheoretical orientation for the study of the African and African American life and experience (Mazama, 2003). Liberation from the mental shackles of the modern European thought can only be achieved by a complete overturn of

the foundational parameters of European epistemology, which postmodern paradigms definitely could not accomplish. Van Dyck was right in considering that "(T)he postmodern age is in the throes of shifting from a European universalist paradigm of human knowledge to a cultural pluralist one, with the Afrocentric perspective representing one of many in the new paradigm, each with equal value" (Van Dyck, 1995, 6). The paradigm itself transcends any parochial or essentialist assumption and becomes the place of human consciousness, a non-hegemonic and non-hierarchical location from where to assess the world, the possibility of a perspective on data that definitely demises European hegemony (Asante, 2007); a world where an African is an African, an Asian someone whose cultural roots are in Asia, a European merely the one who originates from Europe; where a native from any place in the world can be just what s/he is: a human being, and be equally appreciated in the richness of cultural and historical diversity.

Grounded in African cosmology, African epistemology, African axiology, and African aesthetics; entailing the metaphysical or organizing principles that determine the perception of reality and a specific conceptual apparatus, the Afrocentric paradigm is the epistemological foundation and the non-hegemonic and non-hierarchical location from where an ethics of humanity of the human existence can be achieved regardless of colonial, imperial, racial or other dehumanizing ideologies and the philosophical support that sustain them.

"Afrocentricity, Asante says "if anything, is a shout out for rationality in the midst of confusion, order in the presence of chaos, and respect for cultures in a world that tramples on both the rights and the definitions of the rights of humans" (2007a: 7).

5. FIFTH CHAPTER

AFROCENTRICITY AND POST-MODERNISM

1. AFROCENTRIC CRITIQUE ON POST-MODERNIST DECONSTRUCTION OF POWER RELATIONS

1.1 THE COLLAPSE OF THE SUPER STRUCTURE

In this section I will explain the nature of the Post-modernist project and then demonstrate how Afrocentricity critiques this project by seeking a more transformative ideal.

The de-sacralization of the hero by the Existentialist philosophy, heir to Jürgen Habermas' criticism on modernity and rationalization represented eventually the strongest and most powerful reaction to the fixed and absolute meanings of modernity. Indeed, the idea is that instead of the fulfillment of the promise of progress and liberation one sees a generator of systems of oppression and domination of humanity.

The Western ideology that sought to establish modernism as a universal norm to which all should aspire and under whose principles and processes the human condition would always improve and progress while local cultures, customs, economies, and ways of life were swept aside has become increasingly difficult to sustain. What has reason, progress, and science brought into the humanization of the world? After all, what the assumed chosen and manifest civilizational mission of Europe brought into the 20th century was a Kafkaian nightmare of rationalized projects of war, destruction, concentration camps, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ethnic cleansings, lynchings, ecological disasters, and the arbitrary atomization of traditional societies. All of this was in the name of the Western sense of science, reason, liberation, freedom, and

progress. The project of the hero of the Enlightenment was then one of destruction in the name of creation.

What follows is an inevitable moment of disenchantment; a sense of void and despair, the consciousness of this nonsensical reasoning; the failure of the totalizing myth of the organized Eurocentric superstructure, and the recognition of the contingency of the criteria of truth and beauty that opens the doors to postmodernity.

The project of post-modernism that was giving its first and still hesitant steps between 1960 and 1970 emerged out of the confrontations and hopes of the 1960s, a period that marks a moment of transition in the Western philosophical and social thought. The product of a new generation of European critical thinkers like Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, and Fredric Jameson among many, resulted from the interrogation of the modernist canon. The conceptual rigidity of a hegemonic European sense of truth and history whose super-ordained structure not even the Marxist revolution could disrupt was in fact shaken by the radically emancipating activism of the feminist agendas, civil rights movement, pro-independent revolutions, and liberating artistic movements like Black Arts Movement and the Harlem Renaissance. As doubts emerged about the efficacy of the means and goals of modernism, there arose in response various philosophical approaches that offered useful and timely tools of critical analysis that came to be recognized as postmodernism. Although the term has been used in a confusing variety of ways and subjected to several interpretations[40], the bulk of the theories that have been organized under

---

[40] Confusion is still very prevalent as to what is movement and theory and what is a historical chapter: what is modernism and modernity; what is postmodernism and postmodernity. Anthony Giddens (1990) in *The Consequences of Modernity* clarifies that modernism and postmodernism are intellectual and aesthetic

the umbrella of postmodernism involve an anti-modern stance: the rejection of Western grand-narratives (Lyotard, 1984) built around the belief in the supremacy of reason, the notion of universal truth, and the idea that both would bring progress and happiness to humanity. Some authors however consider the postmodernist project a follow-up of the totalizing modernity since the epistemological questions remain the same, while for others, metaphorically speaking, postmodernism represents the rupture of the gaze that discredits the ideological fairy tale of Western hegemony and the superstructure that sustains the bourgeois modern subject. The disillusionment that ensues may be the very moment of the transition from a post to an anti-modernism that includes a whole set of epistemological political, social, and cultural re-orientations framed in a poststructuralist methodology of interrogating the meanings and the discourses of the grand narratives and the very production of knowledge that they entail

In fact, uncovered and subjected to analysis, fundamental modernist ideas such as 'liberty' and 'equality' are shown to be not 'true' or 'natural' to human nature but are, in fact, intellectual ideals that have no basis in the reality of the human condition.

Questions are then raised about who constructed these intellectual ideals and what were their motives. When considered in a global context, it should be clear from history that modernism serves Western social and political aspirations. Therefore, the structure of rationality erected by the Enlightenment was a particular type of reasoning, a product of the capitalist society and culture of the 18th century Western European parochial Eurocentrism (Pires, 2004). As an anti–modernist movement, therefore, postmodernism is seen as rejecting those elements that comprise the modernist worldview, including the ideas of truth, self, meaning, and purpose

---

movements while modernity and postmodernity are historical periodizations that account for socio-economic, cultural, ethical, and aesthetical transformations in the society.

by deconstructing its very 'architecton': the ideological superstructure and the role of the Dionysius destructive Superman. (Nietzsche, 1969)

On the one hand there are thinkers like Foucault (1984) and Lyotard (1984) who argue against the hegemonic power of universalistic stance of the European reasoning reclaiming the possibility of different reasoning structures that must be recuperated and brought to light in order to unveil the fragmentary, multifarious, and heterogeneous character of reality.

Drawing on Lacan's theory that the unconscious mind is like a language and a mirror (Lacan, 1977) Lyotard questioned the two-dimensional, flat representation of language and advanced the idea that unconscious is dynamic, alive, three-dimensional, visual and figural like a dream. Like dreams that disrupt the kind of linear awareness that language requires, unconscious also has the possibility to disrupt language and the rational order of language and as such goes beyond and resists mere monolithic representation produced by the scientific discourse and idealized as unquestionable truth. Lyotard's theory establishes a fundamental differentiation between the scientific discourse and the narrative discourse. This notion is a touchstone in Lyotard's thought that has to be clearly understood in order to avoid misconceptions about his famous claim of overturning the Western grand-narratives. For Lyotard the narrative ethos, the myths, popular stories, legends, and tales that constitute the cultural, historical, ethical, and aesthetical gluons of the community do not need exterior legitimization. They are legitimized by themselves in the very performative act that is their genesis, i. e., the myth and the community, the narrative, the narrator, and the audience, they all form a kind of social bond, and define the social group that legitimizes itself through the mythical discourse.

Scientific discourse, on the other hand, cannot legitimize itself but depends on two sets of discursive constructions: the political and the philosophical that validates the political ideology.

Hegel's philosophy of the unity of all knowledge worked out by the Enlightenment intellectual's rational faculties constitute the two metanarratives or grand narratives, Christianity and Enlightenment, whose failed project postmodernists disclose and reject.

However, there are two schools of postmodernism, so to speak. The nihilists, in a sense detractors of the postmodernist project like Fukuyama (2000), anxious about the purported end of history; Baudrillard (1983) for whom the death of the real will throw humanity into a world of simulacra; and Jameson's (1992) sense of the alienated and centerless human being, a mere spectator wrapped up in the dizziness of masses. For the nihilist thinkers the death of the grand narratives means the end of history and the fragmentation of the individual into absurdity and fluidity, into a nothingness that by destructing the project of Modernity, will therefore bring the collapse of a stable and fixed human project.

Entrenched privilege dies hard, and for this reason the revolutionary character of postmodernism has soon found radical practitioners, quick in appropriating the absurd and the popular fear of the loss of a secure heaven, to transform the postmodernist project into pastiche, a void, a parody where the possibility of hearing to the so far silenced voices was a concession to the kitsch of the masses without any aesthetic value. Postmodernism has therefore deliberately become elusive as a concept, due in part to its willingness to accept, in contrast to modernism, uncertainty and ambiguity, but also because it precipitated the collapse of the totalitarian and elitist project of modernism.

A different perspective have postmodenist thinkers that I call 'generatrists' like Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida for whom the deconstructionist method applied to the Western rhetoric[41] is the generative driving force of transformation, the place of the diverse and plurisignificant, of heterogeneity without hierarchy, denial or oppression: the locus of every possibility. The fear of the nihilists seems to be the loss of the subject in the Western and Eurocentric logic of the individual ability to make sense of the world and determine the limits of the normalcy. Foucault, on the contrary, questioned this centralized and hegemonic notion of subject and demonstrated that the subject was after all the human being subjected to social, economic, legal, and ideological rules of the discourse of power. In "Madness the Absence of Work" Foucault declares that humanity does not start from freedom but from limitation. Like Althusser (2001) and Lyotard (1993) he recognizes the limitation of the self, the individual socially constructed by ideology, the same mechanism of oppression that Asante (1989) sees in the function of the Western rhetoric:

> Rhetorical condition is the structure and power pattern a society assumes or imposes during a rhetorical situation. There is a rhetoric of structure, not in the sense of a rhetoric about structure, but rather a rhetoric of form about the rhetoric of words. (Asante, 1989: 28-9)

While Foucault further explains:

> [S]howing how social mechanisms (…) have been able to work, how forms of repression and constraint have acted, and then starting from there … one [leaves]… to the people themselves, knowing all the above, the frontier possibility of self-determination. (Foucault, 1989: 452)

---

[41] For the implications of discourse in the construction of power see Asante (1998) the chapter entitled "Rhetorical Condition as a Conceptual Field".

And Althusser puts it this way:

It is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there. It is this relation, which is at the center of every ideology, i.e., imaginary, representation of the real world. It is this relation that contains the 'cause', which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world. (…) What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live. (Althusser, 2001: 111)

Deconstruction is the method advanced by Derrida to interpelate ideology. Interpelate, however, in the Althusserian sense, implies that mere recognition that we are ideological subjects is not enough: we have to know, i.e., we have to disclose the mechanisms of individual recognition, where the individual acquires consciousness as a distinguishable and irreplaceable subject in the practice of ideological conformity and recognition.

Three points now need to be emphasized: (1) As a critique to modernism Lyotard's' refusal of the grand narratives has to be read as the demise of the Eurocentric project that artificially constructed a structure of power and domination sustained by a purported truth based on scientific reasoning and expanded by the Western diffusionist strategy as hegemonic and universal. Therefore, the Western grand-narratives, both mythological and historical, lost their omniscient truth in favour of the multiplicity of the different perspectives of non-hegemonic voices; (2) the fact that for the generatrist postmodernists discourse, following a poststructuralist method, can be read in the disruptions of the rational order of language, and through its contradictory effects identify the ambiguities and deconstruct the patterns of the ideological

122

structure;. (3) only for the European modernist the end of a linear concept of history and time symbolized by the illusory progress of the European hero represents a frightening end of history, the collapse of the human project. Actually, as Kumar says, "a more generative approach is marked by those who conceive the end of a pre-ordained order as a new beginning, as an acknowledgement, as perhaps never before, of the interconnection and interdependence of the societies that make up the global system (Kumar, 2000: 57-59).

Consequently, Post-modernism is a deep paradigmatic shift in the Western conceptualization of the place and role of the individual within the Western cosmological sense of the world. One may argue that by refusing the idea of dominance, by questioning that the Western narrative can dominate other narratives in an intricate pattern of power and knowledge, postmodernism can be a new beginning; a new hope for a more inclusive humanity within the framework of the Western paradigm against its individualistic, hegemonic, dichotomic, and exclusionary practices whose interpelation anchors in the postmodernist method of analysis *par excellence*: Derrida's deconstruction.

From Jakobson's structuralism to Derrida's deconstruction through theories of the self in a social context all knowledge is regarded as textual.

Following Saussure (1916) and the foundations of linguistics as a science, Jakobson and his followers developed and applied to literature, anthropology, politics, and culture the linguistic notion of structure. This was also applied to the Social Sciences; structuralism conferred social phenomena, regarded like a language system, the same relational value as linguistic. Actually, the set of rules that account for both the achievements and transformations, and the power relationships in the interior of the structure itself, as well as the way they are

organized, can be explained by the disruptions and connections established by the set of oppositions and identifications between their elements (Derrida, 1982). According to Derrida all Western thought is based on the idea of a center. A center that has been central to Western philosophical debates either in the form of an origin, the truth, an essence, god, reason, or other transcendent or pragmatic symbol that confers and guarantees human beings all meaning of themselves and the world. The problem with the Western conceptualization of the world, unlike the Afrocentric one as will be discussed in succeeding pages, is according to Derrida, the fact that by its inherent definition the existence of a center implies the existence of margins, implies a sense of inclusion but also of exclusion, of the I and the other. Losing the center around which everything makes sense, is to lose the structure of binary oppositions in which the entire framework of the Western thought is fixed. This type of perspective on the world is by no means the only perspective. However, the hegemony of the Western perspective in the construction of knowledge has marginalized, ignored, even attempted to destroy what in its conceptualization is the outside, the other. The power relations established by the ideological discourse and crystallized in the interplay of these binary oppositions institute a violent hierarchy in which the centralized member of the pair becomes the real, the truth, god, or the white man.

Language however, while it embodies social relationships, cultural, economic, and political interests, it is also the realm of the symbolic order and for this reason it will never be a neutral instrument for the mere purpose of communication.

The notion that the discourse – the house of the symbolic – is a pattern, or order, or structure which regulates the production of meaning only makes sense when the discourse is conceived as an intermediary between the reader and the structure of rationality under whose

framework the reader recognizes or estranges himself/herself. Discourse, therefore, is regulated

by rules of inclusion and exclusion. For the postmodernists, especially the poststructuralists, the

individuals are culturally and discursively structured, created in interactions as situated and

symbolic beings. As Attridge (1995) explains, all texts are mediated by language, by cultural

systems, including ideologies and symbols; they are mediated by conventions, by the symbolic

home of intertextuality; and they are mediated by the structure of ideas and practices.

Texts/discourses are therefore mediated in their construction, but also in their communicative

function as well as in their reception. In this poststructuralist conception of text there is no 'pure

reading', no one and only tradition for some purposeful intent. Our knowledge is mediated and

worked as a system of signs and it is constructed not by identification but by differences[42]

(*différance* in Derrida, 1982: 14) within and through codes. All knowledge is historically situated

(which denies the nihilist fears of a postmodern end of history) and structured by the interplay of

individual experience and institutional force, through the language, symbols, social and physical

environment, exclusions and oppositions of the moment. Contingency, not universality is the

character of history. It is dynamic and inclusive of diversity, made out of plurisignificants, rather

than out of a fixed monolithic center. Instead of the discovery of the foundational rationality or

---

[42] Patterns of "Difference," he explains, [are] 'produced' - deferred -- by 'différance'" (Derrida, 1982: 14). Shawver, (1996: 371) explained the concept in this extremely clarifying way: "Imagine observing a quilt on the wall with patches of yellow, blue and white. If you notice the yellow and the non-yellow, you see a pattern of concentric boxes. If you notice the blue and the non-blue you see a checkered design. Each pattern is a play of differences, but it is a different set of differences when yellow is differentiated from non-yellow than when blue is differentiated from non-blue, a different set of differences that shows us different patterns. What is interesting about this shift from one pattern to the other is that it not only calls our attention to a new pattern, but that it suppresses our awareness of the other pattern. DifferAnce, defers a pattern of differences (say the pattern of differences between the blue and the not-blue). That is, one pattern of differences pushes into the background another possible play of patterns. You cannot study the pattern of yellows and the pattern of blues at the same time because differAnce causes one or the other patterns to be "deferred". DifferAnce is the hidden way of seeing things that is deferred out of awareness by our distraction with the imagery that captures our attention. Because it contains this other way to see things "DifferAnce is the...formation of form."(Derrida, 1976: 63). It is the "historical and epochal 'unfolding' of Being..."(Derrida, 1982: 22).

the secret coherence of a text where the systems of significance are stable and fixed, unproblematic representations of a world isomorphic with the thought of the Western individual, attention has to be placed in the fact that reality is not a fixed and totalizing structure but fragmented, diverse, plural, and culture-specific.

Derrida's deconstruction *is*[43], if anything, a process that involves a way of reading that seeks to unmask the problematic nature of center; a permanent exercise to reveal the chain of metaphoric and metonymic links under which repression, displacement, assimilation, condensation, and exclusion occur. Deconstruction is a permanent praxis of questioning hidden meanings in the centrality of the rhetorical discourse in order to subvert the central/privileged term so that the marginalized term, repressed and marginalized, can become central.

There are, of course, several problems in this permanent decentering: the postmodern individual becomes volatile, without anything in which to believe, with no certainties, no security, in the permanent possibility of change, the fluidity that postmodern nihilists criticize.

However, deconstruction is affirmative of the multiplicity, the paradoxes, the richness and vibrancy of our signifying beings and profoundly historical. When it seeks to identify the instability upon which the Western philosophical center (god, truth or the white man of reason) has been placed deconstruction operates by erasing the historicity of writing which lays claim to the absolute (Attridge, 1995).

In contrast to the anti–modern position, the generatrists offer an alternative understanding that seeks to revise modernism's premises and traditional concepts, which have become

---

[43] Derrida refuses the rigidity of definition; he does not want the deconstructive passageway to be caught into the fixed boundaries of method or technique. He rather conceives it as a process of searching for the impossible. Cf. Derrida (1984). "Psyche: Invention of the Other".

institutionalized, corrupt, and entrenched; the aim is to challenge the logic of the oppressive modernist state and undermine the legitimacy of prevailing conservative forces. Sometimes termed constructive postmodernism, it seeks to provide a new scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious standpoint. Unable to produce a revision of the philosophical foundations of the Western thought, postmodernism offers a paradigmatic shift in order to correct the 'bad practices' of the Eurocentric project. It does not attempt to threaten the very survival of the human being; rather postmodernism is a project in search for the demise of totalizing power relations brought about with modernity.

In this sense, it is the deconstructive effort that has been the greatest methodological achievement of post-modernism; the signifying force that can be generated from realizing the meaning of the gaps, the margins, echoes, tropes, digressions, discontinuities, and contradictions. However, the uncomfortable reception that post-modern methods and theories of analysis still holds among many critics seems to reside in the post-modern demise of the Western grand narratives and therefore on the demise of the universality of the Western paradigm. The greatest achievement of post-modern thought is, from my point of view the ability 'to read' against the grain of the rhetorical intention and understand how the European men of reason could inscribe a rationale for oppression and exploitation within their very discourse of Enlightenment and Modernity.

Actually, the Western grand-narratives representing the 'triumph of human reason', crucial to the process of 'legitimation' of the western philosophical thought of the Enlightenment, lost their ability to ensure *per se* the respect for the human rights and the expansion of human liberty. The "incredulity towards and a deep suspicion of the totalizing

sense of such narratives" (Lyotard, 1984: xxiii) encouraged the search for the collective distinctive values of the different experiences of different cultures, of different agents of history. Women's like other repressed subjects' voices, all the complex historical relationships of social protest and liberal academic discourses contributed to bring about the rigidity of dichotomous and hierarchical distinctions. To account for the merging of the subject and object experiences and of the voices unheard so far, scholars and critics had to look for new paradigms that would give evidence of the multiple and particular manifestations in different fields of knowledge: from literature to architecture, to history, social science and politics, with a strong emphasis on a new field of cultural studies.

That only by the deconstructive analysis of the Western discourse will these power relations be clearly evinced makes, in my opinion, of this post-modern methodology one of the founding most relevant steps, and an "irrefusable" tool in literary, social and cultural critique.

1.2 TOWARD AN AFROCENTRIC CRITIQUE

We must not forget that postmodernism is Eurocentric in both its logic and foundations. Although deconstruction is a permanent, ceaseless activity it does not annul the binary oppositions that sustain the very process of deconstruction. In fact, postmodernism legitimizes the other as the one without whom the I does not exist in the same way that it legitimizes *différance.* The distinctive trace that engenders meaning requires difference, and difference requires two contiguous opposite elements to compare: affirmation that exists only by virtue of negation, the physical as opposed to the metaphysical, like body and mind, material and

immaterial, as well as all that functions within a web of differentiations. The center, therefore is not lost: its inhabitants have just moved, temporarily though, historically exchanging places with the periphery, which only means that the inhabitants of the center may change but the mansion will not move.

In the sense that they problematize the totalizing and hegemonic perspective of the Eurocentric knowledge, post-modern theories and methodologies must be regarded as companions to Afrocentricity but not privileged in pursuing the liberation of the colonized mind.

Indeed Afrocentric and Postmodern paradigms depart from some common premises. They both are (1) a critique of any hegemonic perspective and dogmatic commitment; (2) a critique of any methodology that objects to searching for knowledge from different perspectives; (3) a critique of any normative truth as universal paradigm; (4) the sense that any manifestation of art must be seen as a product of social, historical, linguistic, as well as all non-individual determinants that we call expressions of culture; (5) the non-hierarchical recognition of every cultural subject; (6) a critique of any oppressive paradigm: be it race, ethnicity, gender, or class.

However, while Afrocentricity subverts the entire Western structure, postmodernism merely challenges the place and the hierarchical order of the relationships of the intervenients in the European project of modernity. Afrocentricity is in fact a holistic theory of knowledge, an epistemological relocation in African cosmological and ontological dimensions, in a cosmogony situated in the pre-European philosophical thought of the most ancient civilization known to this day: the classical African thought heir to the teachings of Kemetic philosophers. Asante's Afrocentricity is a paradigmatic demise of the Eurocentric monolithic perspective of the world grounded and structured around a system of philosophical and functional parameters that

recuperate the humanistic and pluralistic values of humanity; it represents a challenge and a rejection of the Western modern thought structure in search for a contemporary humanism.

1.3 THE QUEST FOR THE CENTER

Unlike postmodernists, however, Afrocentricity does not deny a center. Unlike postmodernism, instead of playing with removing, dislocating, and relocating the residents of the center, Afrocentricity asserts, in the contingency of the world, an equal value to the multiplicity of cultural and historical centers.

Like the term suggests the paradigm establishes itself in the cosmological realities whose epicenter is Africa and the African experience of the African people "by placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviour" (Asante, 1998: 2). However, unlike the Eurocentric theories, it does not bear a totalitarian spirit because it does not seek to replace "white knowledge" with "black knowledge" (Asante, 1998: xi). On the contrary, being a frontal critique of every sort of prejudice and racist theory, Afrocentricity – a theory of wholeness - seeks ways of unity based on mutual respect for the cultural agency of all black and white people, actually all people in the world. In Asante's words:

> (T)he Afrocentric idea is projected as a model for intercultural agency in which pluralism
> exists without hierarchy and respect for cultural origins, achievements, and prospects is
> freely granted. (Asante, 1998: xii)

The fact that embracing Afrocentricity requires the self-conscious action of relocating the African person in his/her historical and cultural context, African agency cannot be mistaken for the mere group identification with Africa nor can it be regarded as some essentialist trace pertaining to people of African descent. Materially and psychologically colonized for over five hundred years the person that identifies himself/herself with Africa is not more liberated just by assuming his/her Africanity if s/he does not 'think' African or if s/he even 'thinks' anti-African. For the same token to be of African ancestry is not a requirement if one choses to be Afrocentric. There is no essentialist mark of race, nation, gender, or class. Culture, history, myths and spiritual traditions are the identitarian traces through which the meaning of existence rises. This also means that Afrocentricity must not be taken for Afrocentrism. Afrocentricity is a theory not a religion or even an ideology as many of its detractors claimed. In fact, Afrocentric theory seeks neither a totalizing nor a universal scope. It is does not set itself up as a universal standard and does not criticize Eurocentrism in its particularity. What Afrocentric theory requires is "location", African "location" as the philosophical and methodological approach to African traditions and cultures while refusing the subaltern place that has always been conferred to African knowledge, artistic and cultural expressions by Eurocentric scholars.

Afrocentricity is a philosophical paradigm that offers an alternative perspective of reality, liberates the construction of knowledge from the Eurocentric individualistic, hegemonic, dichotomic confinements that build the Western perception of the world. It offers a conceptual framework for social change in the respect for difference and for cultural diversities.

In sympathy with the ongoing critique of institutional practice and the polemic against 'purist' and imperialist tendencies of the Western thought, which grounds and centers the discourse in an original author, post-modernist rejection of the authority of the grand-narratives,

as an unchallenged and universally accepted truth, seems to be one of the ways Western oriented scholars/thinkers have to move forward and achieve progress in the knowledge and understanding of difference.

Another way we have to achieve such a generative force is through the recognition that both Afrocentric theory and post-modernism promote a creative self-criticism of entrenched and fixed positions as a process that could enable people in different research traditions to hear the voices of subjects of different cultures as agents of human history.

However, while Afrocentricity is not incompatible with a postmodern deconstruction of the Western/Eurocentric thought, postmodernism on the contrary cannot replace Afrocentricity in its role as a paradigmatic liberator. The two paradigms can run parallel ways, they can enrich each other's methodologies and insights; postmodernism will even be an extremely useful practice to highlight the mechanisms through which power relations are constructed in the oppressive Western rhetoric. Postmodernism however does not invalidate the Western architecture of thought crystallized around one center and binary/dichotomous concepts of either. .. or. This is the prerogative of Afrocentricity as a theory of knowledge, a theory of a contingent world, based on cultural and historical centeredness.

Afrocentricity is a philosophical formulation committed to the reconstruction of ancient African classical civilizations as the place for interpreting and understanding the history and culture of African peoples, narratives, myths, spirituality and cosmogonies. African classical thought contains foundational premises that create a cosmological conceptual framework totally different from the Western philosophical worldview. Since the ancient African civilizations did not separate religion and philosophy, and their contributions to art, philosophy, and science were

directly connected to the principles of ancient wisdom, African world-sense, cosmogonies, institutions, concepts, symbols, and voices can only be fully perceived and appreciated through a holistic paradigm like Afrocentricity. Embracing cosmological, epistemological, axiological, and aesthetic dimensions Afrocentricity recovers classical African thought while offering an epistemological paradigm for African peoples to reaffirm their meaning of the world and of their existence consistent with their myths of origin where they can mirror their humanity. It provides a method to deal with social and cultural manifestations either from a cultural and aesthetic perspective; a social or behavioural, and a political/functional one, in search for the foundations of African agency and identity. And because African aesthetic creative forces are the expression of African spirituality they are not dissociated either from real life or from the African axiological patter that confers on human beings the responsibility of performing the highest ethical human value: that of preventing chaos. A deconstructive approach to every African cultural expression will provide a deeper understanding of the African pathos and of the aesthetic and philosophical dimensions that underlie the interplay of different African rhythms and subject matters. Why now recover a postmodernist praxis in helping an Afrocentric methodology? Postmodernism, as it has already been pointed out, is a useful exercise companion to Afrocentricity because it provides a technique of disentangling the relations of power in the mainstream discourse that will give evidence of the interferences of the Western perspective and worldview in interpreting, therefore distorting, the African thought. It is a required exercise to understand the Western 'falsifications' of history that does not replace the totally liberating philosophical frame of reference given by the Afrocentric theory. Asante appropriated, analysed, expanded and systematized the African classical thought while simultaneously giving evidence

of its presence in the African contemporary life experience, culture, and spiritual practices that five hundred years of European colonialism preceded by the Islamic colonization did not destroy.

The reason lies undoubtedly in the profound humanism of the African ethos. The idea of inclusiveness and the unity of the world are foundational to the humanistic richness of the African thought and culture where great value is placed on personal relationships (Asante, 2000). However, in the African cosmology personal relationships do not bear the *one-to-one* individualistic tone characteristic of the Western frame of mind. Or rather, although a *one-to-one* encounter may take place at the material level, a whole communal relationship is established as each person is not just himself/herself. In the African judgment each person represents all those who are part of his/her lineage: the ancestors are as part of existence as the living members of the community. In Africa it is not unusual to find social practices of greeting that include asking individually for the wellbeing of the several members of the group. In the structure of many African languages the idea of "how are you doing" (clearly singular when one addresses one single person) is a plural expression that needs to be literally translated by "how are you all doing".

These are fundamental points, expressions of everyday life, that define the African holistic perception of the world, the idea of inclusiveness in whose conceptualization past, present, and future are inseparable. There is in the African cosmogony an orientation towards the entire universe, an intimate connection between human beings, the living, the departed and those yet to be born, in harmony with the cosmos under the cyclical and circular rhythms of life and time. All reflect the Kemetic philosophical and spiritual conception of the world organized around a symbolic Big Bang, a First Occasion or *Tep Sepi* as the moment of creation: the

moment of a vital and absolute harmony (Asante, 2000: 4). This original notion of harmony is the generative force in the Kemetic philosophy; one that implies a permanent search for balance and cosmic order. The meaning of existence is therefore the quest for *Ma'at,* for harmony among human beings, human beings and nature through an ethical and aesthetical praxis of rectitude, justice, and a balanced conduct (Asante, 1998; Karenga, 2006).

Indeed, the leading aspects of both philosophies, the Western and Kemetic, seem to be exactly the same: to answer the crucial quest for the meaning of life and of existence inherent to the human condition. The perspective from where answers were conceptually structured is what shaped two separate, distinct, and antagonist worldviews. Through historians like Herodotus we know that the Greek basis of the Western philosophy was the Kemetic thought (Diop, 1974; James, 1954; Bernal, 1987; Asante, 2000; Karenga, 2006; Obenga, 1989; Ben-Jochanan, 1989). Greek philosophers travelled to Kemet, their contemporary center of knowledge and civilization, to study with the ancient Egyptian priests for extended periods of time and use the formidable resources of the Library of Alexandria. Pythagoras, for example, is said to have lived there for 23 years.

Although the writings of those Greek philosophers reflect many of the Kemetic priests' teachings, they nonetheless departed from these generating concepts of harmony and established a totally different and opposite path by creating the theoretical basis of paradox and conflict: the idea that only by war and conflict can human beings achieve peace and justice (Asante, 2000). This turning point in the conceptualization of the meaning of human existence crystallized in the dichotomous structure of the Western thought; in the separateness of the material world and the spiritual world, in the totalizing concept of an omnipotent and omnipresent superior being, and

the notion of the split nature of human beings from the divine. Western worldview, that privileges the sense of vision, is therefore materialist in its essence, based on rationality, linear in its sense of historical development, fragmentary, dichotomous since it conceives reality as the interplay of binary opposites, and individualistic.

Nothing seems more distant from the holistic, integral, and harmonious sense of the world based on ethical and spiritual dimensions that appeal to human beings' responsibility towards keeping and permanently searching for the balance and harmony of the community, and of the community in a balanced world. The Western concepts of individualism, linearity, and of homogenous historical time as progress do not find echo in the African conceptualization of the world as a holistic system of relationships and values, where everything that exists is interconnected. Commonalities instead of differences, harmony and consensus rather than conflict are valued in the permanent search for re-gaining and keeping balance and harmony when chaos has been produced. Indeed, although great differences in language and cultural practices can be found in the great variety of peoples in the African continent, they perceive the world through common myths, ethical values, cosmological organization, and spiritual meanings and practices.

Afrocentric theory is framed by the holistic values of the Kemetic cosmogony where the human agency is required not on an individualistic basis but as the individual responsibility towards the harmony of the collective world.

Postmodernism needs to dislodge the center piece in an artificial way since the need to occupy the center is a constant reference in the Western thought. Afrocentricity, on the other hand, is a theory of cultural, historical, philosophical centeredness in a holistic conception of the

world. Unlike the permanent need to grab a position in a volatile center, Afrocentricity in

recovering the classic African thought identifies the center with the idea of a cosmological unity:

the center is the world where every human being, like everything else that exists has its place.

Afrocentricity and the Western paradigms differ precisely in the mechanisms through which

identifications and identities are constructed. While the Kemetic philosophical tradition is

inclusive in the Western thought, especially as demonstrated by its postmodernist deconstruction,

identities result from and are "constructed within the play of power and exclusion" (Hall, 1996:

5).

Following Derrida, Laclau explains:

> Derrida has shown how an identity's constitution is always based on excluding
> something and establishing a violent hierarchy between the two resultant poles –
> man/woman, etc. What is peculiar to the second term is thus reduced to the function of an
> accident as opposed to the essentiality of the first. It is the same thing with the black-
> white relationship, in which white, of course, is equivalent 'human being'. 'Woman' and
> 'black' are thus 'marks' (i.e. marked terms) in contrast to the unmarked terms of 'man'
> and 'white'. (Laclau, 1990: 33).

Unity not conflict is the foundational and generative concept of *Sebayet,* the ancient

Kemetic philosophical definition of knowledge and wisdom, around which Asante built the

whole structure of the Afrocentric theory[44].

---

[44] It is important to refer that *sebayet* is the linguistic root to the Greek word *sofia* with the same meaning of 'instruction' and 'knowledge'. (Asante, 1998)

It must now be clear that there is a fundamental impropriety in postmodernism to meet the goal of liberation from the oppressive paradigms of the Western modernity.

At best, postmodernism may be the last stage of a worldwide spread system of hegemony that has exhausted humanity for over five hundred years.

This is not an unexpected conclusion. In fact, Afrocentric scholars like Asante and Mazama have extensively criticized the appropriation of the postmodern paradigm by the African American Studies as inapplicable and nonresponsive to the ultimate Afrocentric goal: the decolonization of the African mind.

The most common points of criticism refer to the 'fluidity' resulting from the loss of a fixed center, of absolute truth followed by the consequent uncertainty, endless play of structures of power, illusion, and the permanent motion (Mazama, 2007)[45] in which critics of postmodernism fear the subject to be 'dissolved' into nihilism.

These, however, are concerns for thinkers invested in the Western philosophical framework. A paradigm that destabilises the center, even if it is with the intention of making it accessible to those whom it has been denied respects only those who conceive of themselves within this conceptual framework. The demise of the Western absolute and hegemonic truth serves the purpose of acceptance of other equally valid truths but only for those who have embraced the 'omniscience' of the Western paradigm. Liberation from oppression and self-determination are not served by the search of some uncertain and contingent central place in an alien structure of the world.

---

[45] Following Madan Sarup (1989) *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism* these are the critical points highlighted as reasons for the 'Dismissal of Post-Modernism' in a working paper by Ama Mazama for her graduate students in 2007.

The postmodern process of deconstruction, in as far as it poses a severe criticism over the preponderant Eurocentric myths of universalism and dismisses the colonizing concepts and racist theories that preside over the triumph of the Western thought, can open to the possibility of a non-hegemonic alternative perspective in the understanding of human expressions in our diverse multicultural society. However, Afrocentricity offers a conception of the human being that is liberating both in its theoretical framework, that is transformative, but also at the functional level by demanding the agency of the self-conscious Afrocentrist towards a victorious consciousness or the affirmation of humanity through the demise of the inhuman.

2. AFROCENTRICITY AND FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Feminism is a complex paradigm that cannot be subsumed under a stereotype like the famous image of Rosie the Riveter[46].

Debates and disagreements on what constitutes feminism and what are its goals, whether it is the pursuit of equality (whether it is sexual freedom, career advancement or something else) or liberation from oppression and what does oppression entail; and where must the women's struggle be focused often occur among different feminist sectors. Black feminists however, have no doubt that race is by far the most pervasive barrier to freedom.

The living and contemporary proof of this was the compelling and disturbing question that divided the Democratic Party and troubled everybody during the 2008 presidential

---

[46] A popular image among American mainstream media during WWII depicting a muscular white housewife symbolizing the reverse of the notion of the supposed physical inferiority that had kept women out of the American industrial labor force that the war effort was requiring at that time.

campaign: was America more prepared to elect a white woman or a black man? This apparently innocent question set the tone to the foundational issues in the building of American society: that of race and sex, and continued in an even more disturbing way with the nomination of a Latina black woman, Judge Sonia Sotomayor, for the Supreme Court and the subsequent fierce hearings addressed to her before the nomination was approved.

In fact, social stratification, central building block of the American nation, was historically constructed by European colonizers to protect their economic and political power upon two major categories: race and sex.

The foundational ideology of the new American nation as we have inherited it i.e., , the racialized character, structure, and development of society and institutions at the expenses of the oppression of the Native peoples and African Americans, also implied a patriarchal order entrenched at a much deeper level in religious beliefs than the mere racial prejudice or individual bigotry.

Physical and psychological violence and oppression were essential to maintaining white privilege and male autocratic superiority. Indeed, although white women were oppressed in the system of the patriarchal family they could inherit and own their own slaves notwithstanding. However, with "no rights whites needed to respect" as per the Supreme Court decision in 1857 on Dred Scott's case, (Feagin, 2006: 120) there has always been a predatory ethics on the part of the European male centered society that conferred white men the *inalienable right,* so they assumed, to put in place a systemic racist and sexist oppression that imprisoned black women in far worse conditions than the ones endured by black men or even white women.

Unlike the majority of the white Founding Fathers, however, who regardless of their oppressive praxis never developed an in-depth analysis of the consequences of the system of benefits that they had helped put in place to serve their own interests, African Americans, both men and women, developed very early a much deeper insight of the material and immaterial conditions of oppression. They studied, dissected and analyzed the causes and consequences of American systemic racism and sexism and offered vast documentation and research.

Therefore the question is: how does White feminist scholarship and black women's scholarship approach the political discourses around these issues? Can we use white feminist and black feminist theoretical frameworks to deconstruct and understand the nature of the power relations behind the racist and sexist innuendos during the electoral debates and hearings? Is the term feminism outdated? Or is it too politically charged to generate change? And if change may occur does it mean erasing gender oppression, or racial oppression? And does it solve class inequalities?

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE MOVEMENT

A brief history of the movement(s) can perhaps illuminate some of these aspects and reveal how the vitality of women's struggles gave way to a sound and consistent corpus of literature that challenges generalist assumptions of male oriented scholarship One major assumption is that there are "fields where women do not really belong" (hooks, 1995: 1); fields where white and black men alike are the center and reference of public and academic discourses, and therefore, the voice of political, social, economic, and philosophical theory.

141

Unlike white feminists, black women fought a twofold battle against racism and sexism. Black feminism grew out of the suffragist movement's failure to address that double struggle. Illuminating are the words of black feminist writer bell hooks dismissing the idea that a common oppression united black and white women across races and classes in America. Rather, hooks contended, leading white feminists in the 1970s reinstated classist white supremacy by not acknowledging the experiences of black women (hooks, 1984).

However whether one likes it or not the history of Feminism as a social movement of the mid-twentieth century in America has its roots in the struggles of black women. This is not to say that there had never been other women concerned with what they perceived as the unequal and unfair position of women in society. In almost every culture we can trace histories/herstories[47] of outstanding women whose voices and lives have become sources of inspiration in the reclamation for human rights, freedom, equality and social justice, balanced and democratic societies. In the emergence of women's movements when women's political and social activism gained momentum by mid-nineteenth century as socially organized struggles, in the United States of America as well as in Europe, several female voices echoed the most treasured values of freedom and citizenship in the liberating context both of the French Revolution and the American Civil War.

In Europe, there are two reference names: Olympe de Gouges, French activist against every form of oppression, particularly that of women, journalist and writer who became a leading political figure during the French Revolution and whose activism granted her public execution

---

[47] The neologism refers to the writing of History from a feminist perspective, emphasizing the role of women, or told from a woman's point of view. The term can first be traced in Robin Morgan's work *Sisterhood is Powerful* published in 1970 and became largely used in during the 1970s and 1980s by second-wave feminist scholars.

by guillotine in Paris in 1793. In 1774 she wrote *L'Esclavage des Nègres,* which would be published only in 1789, followed by her major work *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* published in 1791 and the English woman Mary Wollstonecraft, who published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1790 stepped up and spoke out on behalf of women's right to freedom, education, and suffrage.

In the United States of America the suffragist movement of the mid-nineteenth century originated in close relationship with African American women's involvement in abolitionist activism. By the 1840s, a free woman, Sojourner Truth spoke out for emancipation as well as universal suffrage while fugitive slaves moved to the forefront of the antislavery crusade.

In 1831 in New England, the Anti-Slavery Society was formed, followed by the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833 both organized and led by William Lloyd Garrison. Journalist and one of the most radical anti-slavery activists he advocated that subjugation of human beings under the system of enslavement was not only dehumanizing and destructive of the oppressed but equally debasing and dehumanizing for the oppressor; that slavery was contrary to the democratic values proclaimed in the constitution as well as a threat to peace and national security. Anti-Slavery Societies were of course white male ridden, however it is worth noting that in the nineteenth century, a setting in which illiteracy among women was the rule and the few literate ones were confined to the private sphere of the domestic environment, the voices of many women, black and white, publicly joined the abolitionist cause and, during the 1830s, women became deeply involved in these antislavery societies.

Nineteenth-century black women and white women abolitionists, inspired by the religious reform movements concerning temperance, women's rights, and labor, wrote letters, journals,

speeches, poetry, and prose and joined the Anti-Slavery Society. However, the role of women activists in the abolition movement and in the male dominated Anti-Slavery Societies was problematic under the social and ideological standards of the time. When Abby Kelly was elected to the all-male committee in 1840, it was shaken by great upheaval. Moreover, when Lydia Maria Child, Lucretia Mott, a Philadelphia Quaker minister who made her home a station on the Underground Railroad, and Maria Weston Chapman were also elected to the committee, even with great opposition, there was a final split with these male run societies.

In 1843, Lucretia Mott helped to found the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, and in 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in response to the exclusion of women delegates at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. After the formation of this parallel group, Garrison, who supported the right of women to be on the white male committee, admitted women into his society although many conservative groups continued to spurn them.

Many white women abolitionists combined this struggle with that for women's rights. Among them are Lucy Stone, who taught fugitive slaves how to read and write; the Grimké sisters, who spoke against slavery even though their father was a slave-holder; Abby Kelly, who joined Frederick Douglas, former slave and a major black abolitionist, on his first speaking tours; Susan B. Anthony, who was a general agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society; and Elizabeth Cady Stanton a committed abolitionist, who finally became instrumental in the rising tensions between black and white women devoted to this cause. By separating issues of slavery from other women's rights, namely voting rights, including the opposition to legislation allowing black men the vote, undercurrents of racism in early feminist movements became obvious and

instead of taking advantage of their commonalities the schism between the black and white women's movement became complete because abolition of slavery was black women's first priority (Bennett, 1986).

Notable African American women including Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman are among the most active and outspoken black women abolitionist. Belinda, an enslaved African in her late seventies petitioned the Massachusetts State Legislature for reparations in 1782. "Petition of an African Slave, to the Legislature of Massachusetts" dictated in 1787, narrates the story of a young girl who was abducted from her home in present-day Senegal while in prayer and enslaved for some seventy years (Newson, 1995: 4)

Unlike Phillis Wheatley whose masters consented in her taking lessons along with their daughter, Sojourner Truth was born a slave in Hurley, New York as Isabella Baumfree, and was illiterate. Under enslavement she was forced to marry an older slave with whom she bore five children. She gave birth to thirteen children to see many of them sold into slavery but she escaped around 1828, just before New York's emancipation law.

In 1843, Baumfree who had a remarkable talent to speak in public places dedicated her life to preaching, and took the name Sojourner Truth as she explains:

> And the Lord gave me Sojourner because I was to travel up an' down the land showin' the people their sins, an' being a sign unto them." After a time, she asked for a second name, "and the Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare the truth to the people.[48]

---

[48] http://www.jrank.org/quotations/pages/1652/Sojourner-Truth-adopted-name-Isabella-Van-Wagener-born-Isabella-Baumfree-Truth.html#ixzz0fMkCoc7m

She was not only an abolitionist, but a feminist as well. The following excerpts, the first from her most famous speech "And ain't I a woman?" addressed in 1851 at an Ohio women's rights convention:

> That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (Truth, 1851)[49]

and the second from her address to the first annual meeting of the American Equal Rights Association in 1867 – are well representative of her feminist and abolitionist activism:

> I am above eighty years old; it is about time for me to be going. I have been forty years a slave and forty years free, and would be here forty years more to have equal rights for all. I suppose I am kept here because something remains for me to do; I suppose I am yet to help to break the chain. I have done a great deal of work; as much as a man, but did not get so much pay. I used to work in the field and bind grain, keeping up with the cradler; but men doing no more, got twice as much pay; so with the German women. They work in the field and do as much work, but do not get the pay. We do as much, we eat as much, we want as much. I suppose I am about the only colored woman that goes about to speak for the rights of the colored women. I want to keep the thing stirring, now that the ice is cracked. (Truth, 1867)[50]

---

[49] http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/sojtruth-woman.html
[50] *Keeping the Thing Going While Things Are Stirring* Address to the first annual meeting of the American Equal Rights Association delivered by Sojourner Truth on May 9, 1867 published on http://www.pacifict.com/ron/Sojourner.html.

Like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman was a religious, black woman abolitionist. From the very young age of thirteen Tubman opposed slavery and ran away when she was about twenty-five by way of the Underground Railroad. Tubman, the Conductor and Tubman, the General are her two nicknames that attest her bravery, her strategic wit, and her love for freedom, her courage, and her fearlessness. Carrying a rifle for protection she returned to the South nineteen times and helped about three hundred slaves escape to freedom through the Underground Railroad. Although rewards for her capture placed by Southern plantation owners reached $40,000 she was never caught neither did she ever lose a fugitive. During the Civil War, she acted not only as a nurse and a spy for the Union but as a soldier as well. On the front page of *The Commonwealth,* a Boston newspaper, on Friday, July 10, 1863 parts of a Dispatch regarding Harriet Tubman were published. There Americans could read:

> Col. Montgomery and his gallant band of 300 black soldiers, *under the guidance of a black woman,* dashed into the enemy's country, struck a bold and effective blow, destroying millions of dollars worth of commissary stores, cotton and lordly dwellings, and striking terror into the heart of rebeldom, brought off near 800 slaves and thousands of dollars worth of property, without losing a man or receiving a scratch. It was a glorious consummation.

> (…)

> Since the rebellion she had devoted herself to her great work of delivering the bondman, with an energy and sagacity that cannot be exceeded. *Many and many times she has penetrated the enemy's lines and discovered their situation and condition, and escaped without injury,* but not without extreme hazard.[51]

---

[51] http://www.harriettubman.com/tubman2.html

Although some women's organizations have grappled over time to integrate both white and black women, the point of rupture came with debates around the ratification of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution in 1870. Unable to understand the deep meaning of racism in the lives of African Americans, some even unaware of the fact that racist and sexist oppression were but two vectors of the same ideology, white suffragists would not accept what they considered black women's betrayal to the cause of women's rights. Although subject to the oppressive experience of the rigid patriarchal American society, as white women they seemed unaware of the privileged status that their whiteness conferred on them. Unable to acknowledge that their location forced much denial about the impact of race and racism on black people (hooks, 1995) they 'racially' resented that black women would rather embrace black men's struggle for voting rights than weakening their political position if they persisted in what they perceived as a divisive strategy in banding for women's rights.

In fact, like Hazel (1989) explains that "[t]he struggle of black women to achieve adequate representation within the women's suffrage and temperance movements had been continually undermined by a pernicious and persistent racism, and the World's Congress was no exception"(p. 4). Only four African American women representatives were allowed to speak during the World's Congress of Representative Women in 1893 in Chicago - Anna Julia Cooper, Fannie Jackson Coppin, Fannie Barriel Williams, and Hallie Quinn Brown – while Ida B. Wells protested outside, in the Haitian pavilion, the virtual exclusion of the African American women from the Congress.

As orators or published writers, black women intellectuals represented the material conditions of their racial and sexual oppression and challenged the sexual ideologies of the

nineteenth century to produce an alternative discourse of black womanhood where the effects of racism were rife.

2.2 FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP

Feminist scholarship, produced by both white and black women followed each other's tendencies and concerns. The encounter of African American women abolitionists with white women activists for their right to full citizenship produced a movement that organized and led by white women, if not by white men, clearly confirms the racial limitations suffered by black women even within their own women's environment. Literature produced by these women testified their different experiences and the organized study of this and subsequent corpus of documentation entered the academy under an area commonly known as Women's Studies in the 1960s. Following traditional Western scholarship it is common knowledge that, over time, the introduction of women's experience into historical study has developed in three phases or waves. The first effort, more concerned with women's right to vote than with eradicating racial oppression, concentrated on reporting the lives of the neglected, recovering sources to replace stories of great powerful men by those of outstanding women and the writing of biographies. The writing of history from women's perspective, - "herstory" – dates back to this phase and produced a great impact on the development of social history in general. Black women produced autobiographies and resistance narratives "a fused form of the Western autobiography and the African story-telling tradition" (Newson, 1995: 4). They became very popular in 1840 and offered pain stricken reports of the perils and ordeals an enslaved person faced to escape from slavery, and disasters associated with the flight for freedom.

Different experiences, however, can not only be ascribed to race within women's movements. Several cleavages created several organizations, different agendas, and different approaches. Homosexuality remained a cultural taboo until the third wave of white feminism focused on women's sexuality, and even some liberal-leaning feminists sought to distance themselves from it in terms of organizations and the development of feminist scholarship. Feminists increasingly questioned the use of Feminism as a totalizing and reductionist terminology. By using Feminisms, instead of its singular formulation, they wanted to give witness of the pluralistic stance of the movement.

As far as Western feminist scholarship is concerned the first wave regards the period between the late 19th to the early 20th centuries and the writings by and about women, case studies and personal narratives– herstory; early black women's writings focused on the role of the black matriarch, but the abolitionist movements produced narratives centered on their roles within the black community, fighting racism and segregation, escaping bondage, as well as their efforts to keep family bonds.

In 1920, the American Congress ratified the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote, but the split between black and white feminists had already occurred. It is definitely consolidated during the second wave of feminism (1960s-1980s) with the foundation of the National Black Feminist Organization in 1973.

During this period of roughly thirty years black and white feminist scholars moved from case studies into the quest for a theoretical framework which would enable the understanding of the complexity and diversity of women's experiences. Black feminist scholarship advanced autonomously seeking to develop a frame of reference that would include African American

150

women's experience in the intersections of race, sex, and class in the racist and patriarchal American society while Western grounded feminist scholarship concentrated on deconstructing the genesis of the power relations that kept women in a subordinated position. They were concerned with clarification of concepts and distinctions between female, feminist, and feminine as well as difference between sex and gender.

It was a period when Civil Rights Movements greatly influenced feminists' concerns with legal and cultural inequality, with consciousness raising, mass demonstrations, and black feminist scholarship seized the floor with bell hooks' works, maybe the greatest reference of black feminism during the 1970s.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF GENDER

In 1984 Joan Wallace Scott published a seminal article that would revolutionize the recently created field of Women's Studies and sort of inaugurated the third wave of white feminism from 1990s up to the turn of the century, more concerned with women's sexuality and the reclamation of their femininity and characterized by emphasizing the interactions of gender with race and class. However, while the second-wave feminism operated through coalition building and mass activism, third-wave feminism emphasized individualism, advocated the deconstruction of power relations and consolidated the concept of gender as a category of social analysis, varying both with time and space, class and ethnicity.

"Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" created the concept of gender as a social category. Gender, as theorized by Joan Scott refers to the *roles* assigned to human beings

in the Western societies that shape socially pre-determined behaviours as appropriate for and the proper attributes of men and women. From a biological point of view human bodies are different of course but in the Western culture conveying meaning to a body (male or female) is to place it in a hierarchical scale of values that draws on cultural/social attributions which overlap the biological perspective of the genetic sexual differentiation (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2002a). Defining a human being depends not only on the independent variable sex/biological differentiation[52] but on variable factors such as ideology or cultural perspective under which subjects are socialized. Both men and women in their intimate and public relations are shaped by the socially constructed concept of gender that attributes a 'universal' sense of power to men and a subjected position to women, that can be deconstructed and identified in the relational context independently of biological givens.

By bringing these roles into a relational concept – i.e., only in social interaction do male and female identities generate their social roles - gender becomes the unit of analysis that enables us to understand the mechanisms through which biological activities are transformed into social activities. That is to say that a subject as a psycho-social identity builds upon and through the different behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and values that society conceives as appropriate for women or for men according to their biological differences – let us read sexual characteristics here – and through which social differences are conceptualized in terms of dichotomous oppositions (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2002b).

---

[52] This notion that sex is an invariable factor in defining human beings has been recently challenged by scholars who embrace Queer Theory. Discussing sex and sexual images and orientations from a biological but also from a cultural/social perspective they defend the idea that sex is also a social construction. See Judith Butler, 1993 and 1999.

Using gender as an analytical tool opens up all of traditional historical texts to re-examination; and by applying the deconstructionist technique used by literary criticism to every text, historical, social, or cultural gender as a category of analysis makes possible the understanding of the hidden mechanisms of power relations that sustain white male supremacy. It aims at analysing and interpreting the cultural models of differentiation between men and women in order to establish the grounds of the social hierarchical structures of the Western social paradigm as far as women/men relationships are concerned.

Since gender roles, i.e., the assumption that society expects male and female human beings to be anatomically different from each other and therefore behave differently and according to these differences[53], gender differences keep an intimate relationship between gendered behaviors and stereotyped gender roles. Identification as a male or a female human being, together with one's name and age, are basic and essential individual information that become the ground not only of one's identity but *self*-consciousness when men and women interact in the society at large. Therefore the classification into male and female human beings becomes our gender identity, that is to say the social equivalent meaning and the psychological and cultural identification of one's biological sex, which is not necessarily its representation. This is the symbolic nature of the gendered identity. The fact that women are biologically prepared to bear children does not necessarily mean that they have to be the child carers. A man can be equally nurturing and able to care for the children although this notion is generally overturned by the social construction of masculinity and femininity: the Western based

---

[53] These assumptions were criticized by lesbian/gay scholars in search for their place within this framework which would never occur. Hence their move into critical studies that led to the emergence of Queer Theory.

assumption that gender roles should be based on biological differences (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2002b).

This interchangeable dynamics between the psychological and the social and the consequent male/female gendered identities and relationships are not informed by a clear theory of causality like the ones depending on the means of production. On the contrary they are framed by symbolic systems, linguistic signifying/symbolic systems. De-codification of these symbolic systems uncovers the mechanisms through which gender builds and confers legitimacy to social relations and reveals the reciprocal nature of gender and society. On the other hand, since hierarchical structures stand on general perceptions of the so-called 'natural' differentiations between men and women, deconstructing the contexts also exposes the particular ways in which politics builds gender but also how gender constructs politics.

2.4 POST-FEMINISM

Co-existent with the third wave of feminism in Western scholarship is the new concept of post-feminism which has become more popular since 2000. By deconstructing and de-gendering social, political, and historic discourses it reinforces and develops the theory that women's access to power positions does not imply lack or loss of their femininity. It bears heavily on poststructuralist and postmodernist theoretical frameworks. Questioning previous assumptions of a socially determined and static self and contending that the theory of social determination of the self is anchored in the acceptance of the self-centered rational Cartesian Western male

individual, post-feminist scholarship explains that neither women's selves nor those of non-western individuals were contemplated under this Cartesian framework.

This enlarged discussion around the importance of the concept of gender has two goals: demonstrate its importance in the Western feminist scholarship and demystify much of the stereotypical assumptions that white feminism is an issue of militant man-hatred women. Actually the label, very much due to traditional conservative backlashes, seems to have solidified both in the American mainstream mindset and in African American scholarship as well. Failure to understand that the genesis of these backlashes anchors in the fears of racist and patriarchal societies of losing power and privilege, many women, black and white, have bought into the stereotype and lost an otherwise extremely useful theoretical framework to help eradicate, or at least understand and repudiate the operative mechanisms of white male supremacy, even as they impact on the lives of African American women in American society

Actually like Caroline Ramazanoglu recognized, the extensive feminist debates on methodology, rationality, binary thinking, the social construction of gender, the commonalities and differences between women and how gendered power affects people's lives cannot sensibly be ignored (Ramazanoglu 1993). Notwithstanding, feminism and feminist scholarship have suffered backlashes and a tide of relentless anti-feminism noticeable in the media and the male oriented academy where the intellectual and political challenges posed by feminist scholarship have often been arrogantly ignored by Western scholarship and by black scholarship alike. While the Western scholarship has rather embraced poststructuralist and postmodernist paradigms to challenge and re-examine previously subjugated discourses and identities while working new ways of thinking through multiplicity and diversity, black scholarship has claimed for black

nationalism and self-determination. A complete dismissal of the foundations of authoritative and normative knowledge, Western-based male discourses, much of the black male and black female scholarship has also overlooked feminist theory and feminist scholarship.

For women, both black and white, engaged in the field of Women's Studies the reason is probably that a female academic voice - a woman writing from a woman's perspective – is still taken as much less authoritative than a masculine voice (Aldridge, 2006; Davis, 2000; Clark Hine, 2000). For black nationalists, both men and women, the identification of feminism with the stereotypical idea of man-hatred theory and practice means a limitation to acknowledge the valuable contributions of black feminist scholars who work on the difficult task of using feminist theory to interrogate data and taking accounts of black women's experience as sources of knowledge.

2.5 BLACK WOMEN ON FEMINISM

It is significant that several black women have written on these issues. Indeed, they have produced a serious analysis of black manhood as well as black womanhood and pinpoint much of what remains critical in black men/women relationships. bell hooks is such a scholar as are Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, Patricia Hill Collins and Angela Davis. The following quote, for example, demonstrates clarity.

> Women's studies courses ... focused almost exclusively upon the lives of white women. Black studies, which was much too often male-dominated, also ignored Black women.... Because of white women's racism and Black men's sexism, there was no room in either area for a serious consideration of the lives of Black women. And even

when they have considered Black women, white women usually have not had the capacity to analyze racial politics and Black culture, and Black men have remained blind or resistant to the implications of sexual politics in Black women's lives. (Hull, Scott, and Smith, 1982: xx-xxi)

Although a shift can be identified between bell hooks' first analysis on black manhood (1992; 1995) and that of her latest writings (2004), she has maintained from the very beginning the acute perceptions that the problem of sexism in the African American community has its roots on the patriarchal role model followed by African American men in their search for the assumption of their male roles and identities.

In fact, where do the brothers stand as to sisters' rape? African American men's emasculation under racist dehumanization has been such a tremendous and outrageous episode that has impaired their lives. However, the same consideration has not been given to the rape of women at the hands of white males. This is not to minimize the destructive effects of white racist patriarchy over African American men's manhood; this is merely to highlight the fact that only within a mindset informed by patriarchy is it explicable that men's emasculation is more important and deserves more attention and concern than women's rape. Although many African American men acknowledge the horrors of sexual violence over black women, its psychological consequences have not deserved much attention. On the other hand, whether black men like it or not, the responsibility to raise a family, to protect their children, often the entire household, has denied black women the luxury of victimization. Instead of becoming victims African American women's nurturing bonds have empowered them, something that many African American men also resent.

Maybe the first and most valuable theoretical work in Black Women's Studies was published in Boston in 1981. *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism,* by bell hooks is an examination of the complexity of black womanhood from the perspectives of black women themselves. She advances the thesis that slavery, a reflection of a patriarchal and racist social order, not only oppressed black men, but it defeminized enslaved women as well. Though scholars have emphasized the impact of slavery on black men, which focuses in large part on the theory of the emasculation of the enslaved male, hooks and other black feminist scholars argue that it is imperative that historians and other researchers begin to pay more attention to the impact of sexual exploitation on enslaved women and its impact on their lives.

Feminist scholarship frequently used by women scholars in Black Studies, following the second wave of white feminism, also embraced a theoretical orientation that conceptualized women as a minority group whose issues concerned their oppression and the struggles to overcome it. Soon however, black feminists stressed the fact that African American women's experience and understanding of oppression provided a much broader and encompassing framework than the parochial need to access privilege that motivated white feminists. The borrowed terms in which some white feminists might have perceived the impact of racial oppression in American society did not change the fact that white women themselves were as much part of the racial oppressive system as their male counterparts. On the contrary, because they also bought into the stereotype of the black powerful and dominating matriarch, they also assumed outspoken black women to be much more liberated than white women. bell hooks, again, was right in unveiling the process:

> By projecting onto black women a mythical power and strength White women
> both promote a false image of themselves as powerless, passive victims and deflect

attention away from their aggressiveness, their power, (however limited in a white supremacist, male-dominated state) their willingness to dominate and control others. (hooks, 1984: 14)

From its inception, black feminist thought has developed as a site to bring together experiences and ideas not only for understanding liberation from sex oppression but to construct a holistic approach to every form of domination that they conceived as interlocking factors in the same oppressive social system. Their goal was to generate a practice for resistance and transformation that in a collective effort of both black men and women would liberate them from racialized interiorizations and sexism.

This means that, while black feminism aims at resisting sexist oppression it considers race, class, and sex interlocked categories in the very same system of oppression (Collins, 1998; Crosby, 2003). For this reason, they contend, attempts to eradicate one without questioning and overturning the white hegemonic racialized system of patriarchy will never truly bring freedom and liberation to anyone: certainly to non-white women and men, neither to white women.

Although in a practical sense black feminism is resistance against sexist oppression black feminist praxis has always targeted Western ideology as the site of hegemonic and hierarchical systems of oppression and claimed for the transformation of oppressive social institutions while struggling for self-determination and self-definition, conditions *sine qua non* of African people's empowerment and liberation (hooks, 1992, 1995; Collins, 1990, 1998; Hull *et al*., 1982). Criticisms fired from almost every male-based group like freedom fighters of the Civil Rights Movement, Black Panthers, and Black Nationalists represented an interiorized black version of

the white patriarchy after whose model African American males sought to affirm their masculinity and manhood without realizing how it was working towards a social and intellectual suicide and against the liberation of black people. Considered by black feminists as a residual effect of slavery (Wallace, 1978; Davis, 1999, 2000; Collins, 1990, 1998; hooks, 1981, 1983, 1995) this created a distorted and dislocated African American sense of agency[54]. While black men largely bought into the racial myths created by mainstream patriarchal American society in order to produce the type of psychological impairment that would keep control over, divisiveness and chaos in the African American community, and embraced a white male type of domination, black women feminists insisted on a deeper questioning of all the interlocking systems of oppression which was a clear invitation for black males to join ranks with them in collective work and solidarity in the struggle for liberation. Stereotypes of powerful matriarchs, depicted as disrespectful of the sense of a 'proper manhood' produced a great deal of support for black males who a-critically believed that black feminism was all about a black female-male conflict without realizing that this notion had been insidiously spread by and resorted in the politics of slavery and white supremacy and patriarchy. Like bell hooks put it: "One of the major barriers impeding our capacity as black people to collectively challenge sexism and sexist oppression is the continued equation of black liberation with the development of black patriarchy" (hooks, 1995: 63).

Very much vilified because they used the same Western based paradigms as white feminists to confront women's roots of oppression, black feminist scholars have produced serious and in-depth analysis of their oppressive experiences which did not necessarily mean

---

[54] *C.f. Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* is an insightful work by Angela Davis (1999) where she explains how blues women helped create a Black working class women feminist discourse during the 1920s.

embracing white feminists' ideologies, radical or conservative. Black feminists have used different paradigms to address issues of inequality, injustice, and oppression; but unlike white feminists they have extensively highlighted the interwoven effects of race, gender, and class factors in the oppression of women. However, neither white nor black feminist epistemology seems to have been able to produce a coherently inclusive framework to deal with all these factors at the same time.

In fact, while they produce the same effect - oppression – the dynamics of oppression varies as a function of the different positions that the agents of oppression and the oppressed subjects take in each of these oppressive systems as well as the role they play in it. Class oppression works differently for white and black men; for black women and white women; and it works differently for women and for men. However, without the race factor class can cease to be a cause of oppression since, at least theoretically, it allows for social mobility. Racial oppression, on the other hand, does not apply to white male or female individuals and it establishes systems of privilege and depreciation that deny non-white oppressed subjects access to the same resources as whites because they cannot escape/change their 'race'. Sex oppression is the particular oppression of women by men in a patriarchal social system.

As we can see, the agents and subjects vary; the social structure only apparently is the same; the mechanisms of oppression are different. Notwithstanding all congregate on the oppression of African American women's lives.

Depending on how feminists, black and white conceived of the focus of oppression, they have used theories of patriarchy, Marxist theories, psychoanalytical theories, postmodernist and poststructuralist theories, the theory of gendered identities, post-feminist theories and queer

theories, standpoint theories, and womanism in their attempts to understand the problematic of an oppressive society and the potential of their analysis for political action and transformation.

For the economy of this discussion we will address a brief critique of the ones we consider to have or have had the greatest impact on feminist scholarship in a chronological order, when possible.

Theories of patriarchy sought to understand the religious foundations of male domination over women rooted in natural/biological explanations. Challenging a social hierarchy based on religious myths of origin and nature hardly seemed to leave any room for real transformation as the challenge was placed on deep interiorized religious beliefs. On the other hand these were the same myths that gave legitimacy to social hierarchy based on race and sustained much of the Western ideology of a superior, hegemonic, and totalizing civilization.

Marxist theories concentrated on systems of production and reproduction, and on class oppression. They explained oppression of women in terms of labor market economy and attributed to the historical access of women to the labor market the same mechanisms of oppression that resulted from the class dynamics within the capitalist system. However, neither are women a class in itself nor does historical materialism offer a theory that explains the particular conditions of sub valorization of women's work; the difficulty that they faced in 'intruding' the male labor force; neither does it offer an explanation for the high rates of segregation prevalent well into the 1980s as far as the so-called male and female jobs are concerned; or the fact that the free market economies never recognized the labor force identity of women (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2002a). Neither did Marist theory contemplate the racial dimension.

Therefore it has always fallen short in addressing the multiple factors of black women's oppression.

Psychoanalytical theories emphasized the psychological development of male and female identities and attributed to sex the uneven relationships between men and women therefore reinforcing the role of biology / sexual determinism of the female body and mind, in shaping a subordinated position for women in relation to men while completely ignoring racial prejudice.

Postmodernist/poststructuralist theories discussed the social construction of devaluated female identities under the hegemonic nature of male power that built a universal /public / normative self versus a particular, private, subjected one; considerations of race as well as class were acknowledged but subsumed under gendered identities.

With the introduction of the theory of the gender role identities and gender instead of sex, as a category of social analysis, the dichotomous orientation of the white feminist scholarship was finally overturned. The concept revolutionized the field of Feminist or Women's Studies in the sense that it was a serious critique to the previous conceptualizations of social oppression based on sex. It 'denaturalized' the image of women and the reproductive stereotypes that shaped everything pertaining to women and, by clarifying the socially constructed system of symbolic relations between men and women, made these studies relational instead of sectarian. Moreover, highlighting the symbolic structure of power relations, the theory of the construction of gendered identities provided analytical tools for the deconstruction of the mechanisms under which the social roles expected from and performed by both women and men in society were the expression of this same hierarchical ideology (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2002a).

Another and by no means minor consequence was the 'depoliticization' of feminist scholarship. Consequently, instead of Feminist Studies and Black Feminist Studies or Women's Studies and Black Women's Studies, Gender Studies turned to be the politically correct field that would put no threat either to white or black male dominated scholarship.

Meanwhile, black feminists struggled for the recognition of their theoretical production as valid and unavoidable contributions to the liberation of the African American community. Plagued by ongoing debates on the sources of sexism, black feminists' discourse emphasized that black males' inability to resolve unequal and unbalanced relationships with black women continually subverted the collective efforts of the black liberation movements and black solidarity (Crosby, 2003). Conversely, African American males who felt their manhood was impaired for lack of conditions to provide for a family (Akbar, 1991; Davis, 1994; Madhubuti, 1990, Wallace, 1978) showed their concerns with powerlessness and victimization, and sustained that "it is not an overstatement to say that perhaps the most reviled, mistreated, misunderstood, and neglected human being ever to live in America is the Black male" (Franklin, 1994: 13). African American men seemed to be unaware of the fact that the myth of the superwoman resulted from black women's lacking their men's support during the period of slavery and segregation "to develop complementary, interdependent gender roles" (Crosby, 2003: 15) for the task of rebuilding and reorganizing family structures destroyed by racism. Unlike African American women, on whom the double burden of racial and sexual oppression during enslavement had always been part of their everyday experiences, the assertiveness of power to reclaim African American men's male identity rested on white versions of manhood as heads of the household and providers for the family.

Therefore, primary contentions that black men could not oppress women because racism had rendered them politically and economically powerless seems to have been a general attempt on the part of some African American scholars to "move away from any feminism that holds males accountable for women's oppression" (Hull *et al.,* 1982 : 5).

Playing with racial divisiveness, *i. e*., blaming women who dare expose their oppressive experiences at the hands of some black men and charging them with bringing disunity into the community, these scholars have been trying to conceal the levels of violence and subjugation exerted by some black men on black women while requesting that black women would see black men as victimized in similar ways to them, or at least by some of the same mechanisms and that a stronger critique of American social inequality should be incorporated into feminism. This is an amazing appeal since black feminist scholarship, although some women like bell hooks, Patricia Hill-Collins, Angela Davis, Michelle Wallace and others broke the silence behind "racial" solidarity and extensively exposed black women's oppression at the hands of some African American men, had repeatedly acknowledged that black men had also been deeply impacted by racism; that only a common struggle of men and women would be of some efficiency; that it was crucial to understand and disentangle the overlapping systems of oppression and their impact on African Americans' lives; that only by overturning them all would African American people achieve freedom.

The problem seems to have been (it still is, in many instances) a lack of commitment to self-criticism and consciousness raising on the part of the black men; inability to the address their a-critical embrace of Western ideology and their role in reproducing the same sexist values and behaviors of the white male patriarchy: a kind of "extreme misorientation" (Asante, 2009:

150) with severe psychological effects on the African American males and the African American community.

Black women feminists could not accept without severe criticism the "male-as-powerless-victim argument since it fails to recognize or accept responsibility for the real power black males have" (Crosby, 203: 19) and asked how could some black men hit their women and still expect that they would see them as their heroes, their leaders, their lovers, their friends? This reality generated strong critiques of black patriarchy although black feminists also conceded that "many Black males held egalitarian values, were anti-sexist, and coped with the alienation they experienced by doing anti-sexist work" (Crosby, 2003: 11) and that it was where they found hope for the collective engagement, solidarity, and strong sense of agency to bring about ideological transformation and a liberatory praxis.

However, myths and stereotypes are hard to die, and detractors of feminism and of black feminism for the same token, persisted in defining the movement as a man-hatred women's issue and this has served as the *leitmotive* to refuse the recognition of its epistemological and functional value.

With the emergence of Gender Studies in the academy, a politically correct and depoliticized area, the question about its place in the African American Studies came once again to the fore. Unlike the 'divisive' black feminism would Gender Studies, in the intersection with African American Studies, have the potential to confront social problems of the Africa American community where "we [still] have a generation of African American youths marked by mass Black incarceration, hyper-masculinity, ultra-materialism, rugged individualism, poor self-image, and absentee fathers" (Hull *et al*., 1982: 3)?

2.6 BLACK WOMANISM

The problem, some scholars contended, was one of self-definition: (1) how sexual oppression is defined within the African American community and by African American scholarship; (2) whether sexual oppression is the central issue to be addressed as far as African American male / female relationships are concerned.

Although it represented a major step forward in the white feminist theory owing to its relational character and the ability to deconstruct the symbolic system of power relations, Gender was not a solution for feminist scholarship, black or white because it was not providing and integrated system of analysis of the multi-variants of oppression that would equally contemplate all the agents and subjects involved.

At the same time, black feminist scholarship was questioning the 'separatist' / dychotomic basis of male/female relationship in white feminism and African centered black women scholars challenged this 'segregationist' orientation as alien to the African traditions and values. They also echoed the need for self-definition and self-determination alongside black nationalist scholars. Their work was committed to building an Afrocentric self-defining theoretical framework and methodology for agency and transformation of the black male/female relationships. Some like Clenora Hudson-Weems (2003) and Nah Dove (2003) re-appropriated Alice Walker's terminology and called this 'new' orientation Africana womanism or plainly womanism. The departure from the so-called 'antagonistic' genesis of white feminist scholarship (women opposing men; confronting and challenging their position of privilege) to claim for the need to overturn black feminists' orientation as far as African American community is concerned is a problematic start to any academic critique. Some scholars ignore previous theoretical

findings. On the other hand, the relational aspect of feminist scholarship was established over twenty years ago; on the other hand, black women feminists like bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins produced a consistent critique of white feminist agendas while emphasizing the need for an integrated paradigm, relational, and African centered. Neither can scholars make *tabula rasa* of previous findings while developing a new theory nor is it enough to use a different terminology if it is not grounded in a sound theoretical framework. In effect, Africana womanism (Hudson-Weems, 2003) is an attempt to provide an alternative approach to Western centered feminist scholarship. However, it overlooks not only scholarship based on Gender but black women feminist scholarship as well. The creation of an alternative concept, sharing and answering black nationalist aspirations, advocates an African location for complementarity (Hudson-Weems, 2003; Nah Dove, 2003). Unlike the Eurocentric concept of complementarity, broadly addressed by white feminist theories of patriarchy, which is but a metaphor for the subordination of women in the white patriarchal discourse, this is a liberating and empowering one to make it truly liberating and operational. However it has to be grounded in the premises of a totally different paradigm or philosophy like Patricia Hill-Collins has been doing for at least twenty years.

With *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* published in 1990, Patricia Hill-Collins reconceptualizes the social relations of domination and resistance by using an Afrocentric methodology that places "Black women's experiences at the center of analysis [and] offers fresh insights on the prevailing concepts, paradigms, and epistemologies of this worldview and on its feminist and Afrocentric critiques" (Hill-Collins, 1990: 221). This Afrocentric approach seems to be the natural development of the feminist standpoint theory as attempted by white feminist scholars that she had previously

adopted, adapted, and applied to theorize about the experiences of black women. In fact, the conceptualization of feminist standpoint as the definition of how the social location of the knower affects what and how s/he knows has most likely travelled from the idea of centeredness in one's own cultural location and the agency it generates which are fulcral concepts in the Afrocentric theory of social change built by Molefi Asante in the 1970s[55].

In her work "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought," originally published in *Social Problems 33:6* (1986) and reprinted in Sandra Harding (2004) she seems to be very distant from the central scope of white feminist standpoint scholarship – that of 'objectivity'[56]. In her 1986 article Hill-Collins concentrates in the social and cultural location and perspective from where to generate theory (women's perspective or rather African American women's perspective, which is quite an Afrocentric approach.

Black feminist thought, as defined by Patricia Hill-Collins echoing bell hooks and other black feminist scholars, entails a reconceptualization about the way social relations of dominance and oppression are the result of interlocking axes of exclusion like race, gender, and class but also religion, sexual orientation, age, and ethnicity. They were also very much aware that these axes of oppression working within a more generalized matrix of domination require a paradigmatic shift from the Western epistemological framework of assessing what is 'true' about the definition of reality of subordinated groups (Hill-Collins, 1990).

---

[55] *C.f.* Asante, M.K. (1980). *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

[56] Harding, Sandra (ed.) (2004).*The Feminist Standpoint Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies.* New York*:* Routledge. In white feminist scholarship Standpoint means "strong objectivity" as generated by the multiple layers of women's experiences in contrast to "weak objectivity" (male single point perspective) which is the usual meaning of the term "objectivity" ("value free"). However, the concept does not apply to nonwestern epistemologies. They often do not aspire to objectivity (weak or strong), so there is no point using this as a rhetorical device, analytical tool or theoretical framework.

In fact, it is not the use of such or such nomenclature that defines a philosophical and epistemological critique of the Eurocentric and androcentric scholarship, but the process of constructive revision of the Western paradigm when applied to African experience, values, and sense of the world (Steady, 2005).

In the Western thought it has been imperative for those in position of power to establish their purportedly superior biology as a way of affirming their privilege and dominance that would give legitimacy to a social hierarchy of dominance over difference, over the "other" (Oyewùmí, 2005). This matrix of domination that Hill-Collins identified demanded more than a paradigmatic shift. She urged an African location of black feminist epistemology to reconceptualize power relations, to redefine the concept of family and community, to place black women's experiences in the center of analysis instead of objects or mere subject matter in the framework of mainstream scholarship. Indeed she states:

> Afrocentric feminist notions of family reflect this reconceptualization process. Black women's experiences as bloodmothers, othermothers, and community mothers reveal that the mythical norm of a heterosexual, married couple, nuclear family with a nonworking spouse and a husband earning a "family wage" is far from being natural, universal and preferred but instead is deeply embedded in specific race and class formations. Placing African-American women in the center of analysis not only reveals much-needed information about Black women's experiences but also questions Eurocentric masculinist perspectives on family. (Hill-Collins, 1990: 222)

Under the ideological and philosophical construction of the Western thought human beings fall into the Western dichotomy of the binary oppositions of body and mind, male and female, individual and community, actually a conceptual framework of power defining

hierarchies since the way difference is approached and inequality is constructed depends mainly from the mindset of the one who has the power to impose his/her definitions.

Thus, while we can say that gender is the "most historically constant" gaze in Europe, in the USA the historically constant gaze is focused on race. Emphasizing the fundamental role of the feminist scholarship in deconstructing the male-oriented Western institutions and discourses, and the mechanisms through which, under a Western worldview, "differences and hierarchy (…) are enshrined on bodies; and bodies enshrine differences and hierarchy" (Oyewùmí, 2005: 8) is an important clarification for women scholars of African descent. It is one of the greatest challenges as well, because only by a clear understanding of the mechanisms through which the Western legitimates social inequality, will they definitively be able to undermine and disclose the inadequacy of these paradigms to address issues of women located in different cultures and worldsenses. However, a constructive critique of the hegemony of the feminist and Western paradigms is not enough. There are different cultural and historical ways of social constructedness that claim for the dismissal of the Western thought as hegemonic.

In a study of a pre-nineteenth-century African culture, the Yuruba Oyò, Oyewùmí (2005) discusses the thematic of worldsenses *versus* the Western cultural worldviews by providing evidence that "the nature of one's anatomy did not define one's social position" (p. 13), among the Òyò. She contends that it is not the visual perception of bodies as male or female that determines the social hierarchy in the Òyò culture and that African societies are based on a cosmogony of wholeness that call for an integration of all things and senses. Therefore, the Western Eurocentric body of reasoning and cultural approach to African women or women of African descent has to be dismissed as inadequate and an African cultural location is required

instead. And she concludes by calling attention to the fact that applying the Western Eurocentric reasoning and cultural approach to African women or women of African descent without the perception of the cultural location of these women must be refused as inadequate.

In fact, even if it is important for women of African descent to be aware that the race-biased discourse in the USA is permeated by the insidious gender-biased Western discourse the escape from the Eurocentric epistemological framework that is prevalent in the academy has to be grounded in Afrocentric scholarship and in a new disciple.

In Africology, under the Afrocentric theory of knowledge, black women scholars, researchers, and activists find the philosophical and cosmological perspective, the paradigmatic framework, research tools, and a methodology of analysis that will ultimately confer women of African descent their own liberating discourses and transformative agendas. Indeed, this would be an acknowledgement of the path for self-determination and empowerment of male/female relationships within the African American community as well as a condition to the advancement of black women's scholarship and the discipline.

3. AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES. POST-COLONIALISM OR NEO-COLONIALISM?

> Does 'post-colonial' mark the ruptural point between two epistemes in
> intellectual history or does it refer to 'the strict chronologies of history *tout
> court*? (Shohat, 1992: 101)

For contemporary European history the collapse of communism around 1989 and its consequences may have been the dramatic turning point and the last episode, a kind of final blow, catapulting the implosion of the Western referent as a stable foundational center for all human activity. The socialist project that had remained Europeans' last hope to overturn the social and dehumanizing effects of capitalism was also failing. The upshot of the two catastrophic war episodes, the consequences of the Jewish holocaust and all the insanity into which 'superior' Europeans' behavior has escalated led by Hitler's concept of nationalism and Arian purity proved catastrophic for the survival of the Enlightenment project. Consequently the fact that entitlement to hegemony lost momentum, that African nations sought independence, that increasing free market practices after Soviet Union collapse turned to be an aggression to democracy, and that independence of former colonized countries destabilized the Western sense of security, all produced the widespread apprehension that the world as it has been known so far might be coming to the 'end of history'.

This same perception of chaos had struck the African continent over five hundred years ago under the colonial project of Europe. Around 1989, when Europe was entering a crisis of the most cherished values of modernity, Africa was at the throes of self-definition and self-determination after the last imperial European country – Portugal - was finally forced out of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, S. Tome e Principe. The first to arrive in Africa and the last to leave, the Portuguese opened the routes/roots to the most extensive, intense, and lasting dehumanization on the face of the earth.

The independent movements that precipitated processes of decolonization in Africa during the 1960s, which began with the independence of Egypt from the British imperialism in

1952, produced profound and paradoxical changes both in Africa but also in Europe whose expressions are generally captured under another 'post-and-ism' theoretical framework. Postcolonialism is concerned with apprehending the consequences of the explosion of the relatively fixed notions of culture and unsettling questions about how best to think about culture and identity. Served by postcolonial theory, and influenced by all the 'post' paradigms of mid-twentieth century postcolonialism is considered to move around the ambiguous territory of 'racial identities' that fluctuate according to historical contingency. In a very general sense it is considered as the study of the interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized in the modern period. This definition leaves other moments and experiences of colonialism outside the range of postcolonial studies which makes this definition problematic on the one hand, while on the other it places the focus on everything pertaining to 'the time following the establishment of independence in a colony'[57]. Temporal but also geographical spaces and cultural ones are at stake here. Therefore, fluid as it may be as to its scope, postcolonialism seems to refer to the life experiences of colonial and colonized peoples in the heydays of European colonialism in the second half of the twentieth century. With a particular emphasis on questions of the cultural productions of the colonized societies, mainly literature as the expression of the quest for self-determination and identity, one of the major areas within postcolonial theory is precisely postcolonial literature. But what is it? What should be included in the postcolonial canon? What language should be used by postcolonial writers?

To discuss postcolonialism we have to engage in theoretical but also political and cultural conversations, while they are not separate spheres. On the contrary, they flow one after or because of the other.

---

[57] Cf. *The American Heritage Dictionary*.

Postcolonial theory gained thrust in European-based academic settings in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It became visible especially among the Left wing European intellectuals roughly around the period when poststructuralism and postmodernism sought to articulate the meaning of the political, economic, social, and cultural changes with the demise of the 'eternal truths' of the Western modern project. It was also the time when under the concept of globalization another important face of colonialism was gaining ground. In short, Postcolonialism may be roughly defined as a mode of analysis or thinking about the world based on issues of identity formation in a postmodern growingly globalized world as a result of the struggle for self-determination and political independence of colonized countries.

Homi Bhabha (1994) explains that in postcolonialism, like with the other 'posts', the descriptor 'post' does not signify a temporal order but a spatial and contemporaneous relationship with modernity. Other scholars claim a certain ambiguity around the theory and the term. Among the innumerous debates that have shaped the field, the prevalent idea seems to be that its focus is placed on the modifications brought into the certainties around which the Western thought orderly structured the center of the universe, and on how they would affect the Western equilibrium and the world re-alignment, immediately after African countries under colonial and imperial European powers regained their political independence.

In the Western historical frame of reference this period became known as decolonization, and the 'postcolonial' area of studies, greatly influenced by scholars from the recently independent countries studying in Great Britain and the USA like Edward Said from Egypt, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha from India, Stuart Hall from the Caribbean (to name some of the most influential scholars in this area), sought to apprehend and provide theory that would map

the peculiar situations faced by the countries in the so-called 'developing world'. In the footsteps of the poststructuralist and postmodernist theories, postcolonialism contemplated the consequences of the new organization of the world at a global scale; how it impacted on redefining identities, how relationships changed between former colonized and colonizing countries; how the West incorporated and arranged 'other dissonant, even dissent histories and voices' (Bhabha, 1994: 6); how the systemic need of guarding privilege worked on re-establishing global inequalities in economic, political, social, and cultural fields where postcolonial theory serves in fact the new face of colonialism: neocolonialism proper.

3.1 TALKING GLOBAL AND POSTCOLONIAL: THE POLITICAL-ECONOMIC THRUST

As the concept of globalization gained renewed currency around the 1980s to include great international movement of commodities, money, information, and people, technology, international organizations, and legal systems, various social scientists have demonstrated that globalization is not a new phenomenon; that there is continuity between contemporary trends of globalization and earlier periods[58]. When it is considered today as being a long process, tracking the expansion of human population and the growth of the so-called 'civilization' that has accelerated dramatically in the past 50 years, earlier forms of globalization have actually existed. From the Silk Road during the Mongol Empire, through the expansion of European trade, in the 16th and 17th centuries, when the Portuguese and Spanish Empires reached to all corners of the

---

[58] *Cf*. P. Raskin, T. Banuri, G. Gallopín, P. Gutman, A. Hammond, R. Kates et al. (2002). In [http://www.gtinitiative.org/documents/Great_Transitions.pdf The Great Transition: The Promise and the Lure of the Times Ahead]. Boston, MA: [http://www.tellus.org Tellus Institute]. October, 2006.

world, linking East and West, North and South, a notion of global domination emerged that moved Europe to the center of the world.

Globalization also became a business phenomenon in the 17th century when the first multinational company was founded in The Netherlands, the Dutch East India Company established as a private owned and the first company in the world to issue shares, an important driver for the flow and accumulation of capitals; it was the natural result of the 16th century institution of Slave Trade, the crystallization of one of the biggest global enterprises and basis for the economic resurgence of Western Empires at a worldwide scale.

Liberalization in the 19th century markets is often called "The First Era of Globalization", a period characterized by rapid growth in international trade and investment, among the European imperial powers, their colonies and, later, the United States of America. The "First Era of Globalization" began to break down at the beginning of the first modern European war (WWI), and later collapsed during the gold standard crisis and the Great Depression in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Globalization, as we have it in our era, is a direct consequence of WWII. It has been driven by the need to mediate trade disputes in the war aftermath; to set up a uniform platform of trading under the auspices of world organizations in order to remove restrictions on free trade and ultimately reduce trade tariffs and barriers. In other words, it was thought and designed to save the capitalist economic order of the West. Since the end of WWII, following the advent of the United Nation and financial institutions like the Bretton Woods[59], there has been an

---

[59] Bretton Woods system of international monetary management was the first example of a fully negotiated monetary structure among independent nation-states. Established in the immediate aftermath of the Second

explosion in the expansion, reach, and power of multinational corporations followed by a rapid growth of global capital in civil society[60].

Although there are four main economic flows that characterize globalization affecting: (1) goods and services (exports/imports flows); (2) labor/people (migration flows); (3) capital (inward/outward direct investments); and (4) technology/information, e.g. international research and development flows, the term globalization does not only refer to these collective changes as a process. It includes the process of understanding the causes of the turbulent changes arising from this worldwide reorientation and the power to define what is knowledge, who determines it, and how it travels.

Labelled primarily as a positive strategy designed to increase standards of living, literacy and health to developing countries (most particularly women and children, through improvements in child mortality, access to clean water and education) and to further wealth to the 'developing' ones, globalization has turned out to be a true engine of corporate imperialism re-organized to serve another type of colonial dependency in total disregard for the local standards of human rights. Its negative effects include cultural assimilation via cultural imperialism, the export of artificial wants, and the destruction of national identity or inhibition of authentic local and global community traditions, ecology and cultures.

Great European War (WWII) out of 44 Allied nations negotiations to repair and govern the economic relationships of the Western economy, it laid the foundations of the World Bank (one of five institutions created in 1946 under the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development-IBRD) and the International Monetary Fund-IMF. The goal was to secure and control a monetary policy to support the economic privileges of the leading states that had created it, especially under the hegemonic position of the United States. (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

[60] see Florini, A.(2000). *The Third Force.* Tokyo: JCIE

Like the colonial enterprise headed by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century and followed by the European empires over Asia, Africa and the Americas, globalization is but an updated terminology to identify phenomena of imperialism and exploitation with its consequent oppressive policies. Similarly globalization is less a unifying process than a new face of that which causes deep fractures, uneven access to resources, exploitation, control, and subjugation.

Of course, there are always two analytical perspectives: the hegemonic one of those who largely profit from the new established order; and the one of those who most severely suffer from its damaging consequences. And there is no possible reconciling grounds since one can only exist at the expenses of the other.

As we have seen, globalization reinforces hegemonic policies of capitalist imperialism, patriarchal subordination of women to global capitalism and world markets; accounts for the pauperization and exploitation of the most vulnerable sectors of the populations; reinforces class and race oppressions; violence and sexual abuse; unequal distribution of resources as well as uneven access to health, education, and political and social agency.

In fact this neo-liberal globalization is a new economic order which means the concentration and centralization of economy at a worldwide level that includes: re-organization of economy in international joint ventures; free tariffs and barriers for capital and goods of/among the loaning countries; exhaustion of regional economies; power of trans-national corporations as decision makers; money markets' overriding influence over states; state's economic deregulation; privatizations; reduced social security benefits: unemployment; degradation of working conditions; growth of unregulated economic sectors; economic crisis and

recession; corporations' mobility in search for cheapest labor; precarious job markets; increasing pauperization and eventually famine.

Can postcolonialism reverse the tide of governments sanctioning predatory policies over people and natural resources that promote savage profit oriented economic benefits in complete disregard for the human rights, for the environment and the well-being of the populations who are, ultimately, the agents and producers of the global wealth?

3.2 THE THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION

Stuart Hall considers that postcolonialism is "a sign of desire for some, and equally for others, a signifier of danger" (Hall, 1998:242). The relevant question now has to be placed in defining who are the 'others' and 'some'? Is Stuart Hall reverting the place of the subjects of postcolonialism to challenge the Western predatory politics of neo-colonialism or is he sticking to the Western notion of the 'other' as the subjected subject whose agency is still endangered by "an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject" (Spivak, 1988: 271)?

Said (1979) and Spivak (1988) have shown that within the contemporary relations of power the dominant ideology plays with fluid forms of representation that defy fixed categories of identity formation on the one hand, and with politics of power and state, or rather, nation-state on the other. Western discourse always makes sure that when it problematizes the colonized subject the discussion is always framed by Western parameters, i.e., how is the colonized subject represented within the Western discourse by the theory of "'subject-effects' [that] gives an

illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while often providing a cover for this [Western] subject of knowledge" (Spivak, 1988: 271). This critique is in line with Said's discussion on *Orientalism* where he acknowledges the fact that, as a production of Western scholarship, the 'Oriental' subject is built as an 'object' of study and charged with 'otherness' by a stereotypical discourse constructed from the Western perspective , which is basically racist, imperialist, and almost totally Eurocentric (Said, 1979:). The oriental other is never a free subject of thought or action. It exists as part of the Western dichotomous structure where the polarities between the Occident and the Orient are inscribed. A structure that also conceives of time and of the world as linear where two different points are inscribed as opposite extremes of a straight line instead of in the contiguity of a circle. Similarly, Shohat (1992) claims that "postcolonialism is politically ambivalent because it blurs the clear-cut distinctions between colonizers and colonized hitherto associated with the paradigms of 'colonialism, 'neo-colonialism' and 'Third Worldism' (Hall, 1998: 242).

In some ways the Afrocentrists have claimed that Africa has also been constructed much like the Orient, although Said's Egypt is part of Orient as opposed to being part of Europe. In the Western framework, postcolonial theory included, Egypt is never part of the African continent.

The several attempts to define the concept also bring confusion among scholars who pay particular attention to the temporal dimensions involved. Shohat (1992), for instance, concerned with the 'after' time of colonialism, questions what sort of 'difference' does postcolonial time bring to the life of the colonized; what are the implications of postcolonial politics; if, in this 'after-colonialism', this means real self-definition for the colonized subject whose very existence as such depends on the terms of the binary opposition between colonizers and colonized? And if

not, does the colonized subject pure and simply disappear? Does s/he collapse into the universalizing categories now that it seems that his/her existence dissolved into the 'after' and therefore void of what was previously and no longer is? In Spivak's (1988) Marxist discussion on the place of the 'subaltern' the issue is very clear: the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably defined by the ideology of the colonizer within whose and only framework s/he exists as such in the circuit of colonial production of symbols and identities. The poststructuralist and postmodernist 'dislocations or 'slippages' of the discourse, apparently dislocations of interests, motives, and power are invoked to merely secure 'a new balance of hegemonic relations' (Spivak, 1998: 280).

Actually, in Spivak's as well as in Said's criticism of the Western discourse and Western scholarship, where all the 'posts' including postcolonial theory(ies) and postcolonial scholars are inscribed, the point is clearly made that the colonized subaltern (Indian, African, or Oriental) cannot speak because, in keeping for itself the power to define knowledge, the European subject never grants the subaltern 'the permission to narrate' (Spivak, 1988: 283). Other critics, like Elle Shohat and Arif Dirlik also find postcolonial discourse tainted with the exact same hegemonic ideologies however disguised under a fashionable language of the linguistic and cultural fields much *en vogue* among displaced intellectuals seeking for the validation of the West. Otherwise, as Dirlik rhetorically asks, why should the postcolonial, "a concept which is intended to be critical, (…) appear to be complicitous in the consecration of hegemony?" (Dirlik, 1994: 331)

In the chapter entitled "When was 'The Post-Colonial'?" published in *The Post-Colonial Question* in 1998, Stuart Hall, on the other hand, contends that postcolonialism only seems 'to be complicitous' with the hegemonic Western thought. In fact, Hall advocates, the merit of

182

postcolonialism is the fact that it has overcome the framework of binary opposition acknowledging and accepting the 'multiplicity'. By this 'foundational' (?) shift the colonized subject will no longer be excluded from, but indeed included, Hall sustains, in the production and access to knowledge. What knowledge is Hall referring to he does not explicitly clarify although through his writings we will finally conclude that he is talking about the Western knowledge *bien entendu*.

He is more transparent when he discusses the process of identity building for colonized people (Hall, 1995) in his article "Negotiating Caribbean Identities". He treats identity as a reflection of culture where culture itself is considered the resulting 'force' of the interplay of multiple 'vectors': political mobilization, cultural development (whatever it may be), and economic development. Unlike the sense of 'fixed' and stable notions of identity that the Western thought implies, Hall describes identity formation as a construction, a process of negotiating a sense of oneself within the contemporary political global agenda. The fact that societies today are more unstable and mobile than ever before, culturally and ethnically hybrids, displaces essentialist assumptions of identity formation. He advocates that the sole stabilized ground around which identities can be organized is a cultural sense of belonging. However, in addressing specifically the identity of colonized peoples he suggests that to know who the subject of the independence movements are likely to be, and in whose name cultural decolonization is being conducted is crucial to define the colonized identity. This seems to be problematic. If this is the case who has the power to determine who you are? Self-determination is not a matter of 'decolonization' but one of freedom to self-definition that is not contemplated when the agency is again placed on the colonizer and not on the colonized side (decolonization *versus* independence).

While S. Hall defines the search of identity as a search for origins, he disclaims cultural origin as the central request for the process of identity building of the colonized because there are situations, he explains, when historical hybridity makes it difficult if not impossible to locate survivors of the indigenous peoples. To overcome this difficulty Hall moves into the second parameter of identity building that he links to questions of representation. By placing original culture(s) into the vanishing point he moves the center of the process to that of identification re-inscribing the colonized subject – even after 'decolonization' – in the subjected position as an assimilationist mosaic of the cross cultural experiences historically constructed by colonialism itself. Hall declares that his own conclusions are based on his own experience being of Caribbean origin. Caribbean identities do not any longer have anything to do with original cultures since they are lost in far off places and times. Identifying himself as a Caribbean has to be the result of the cultural hybridity of the place. Actually he says:

> Silencing as well as remembering, identity is always a question of producing in the future an account of the past that is to say it is always about narrative, the stories which cultures tell themselves about who they are and where they came from. … However everybody there comes from somewhere else. (…) their true cultures, the places they really come from, the traditions that really formed them, are somewhere else. (Hall, 1995: 5-6)

Stuart Hall's theoretical positioning is, from my point of view, one of the most impressive examples of the ways in which embracing postcolonial theory represents a continuation of the colonized status of the colonized mind.

When in 1951 he roamed Great Britain for education, he also concluded a process of acculturation that he euphemistically called one of being "twice diasporized": "the break with

those original cultural sources as passed through the traumas of violent rupture" (Hall, 1995: 6-7). He finds identity in this complex process of negotiating across cultures to which he seeks identification. In other words, the anxiety of the colonial subject is produced by the sense of his/her precarious status in mainstream ideology, if and when assimilation seems to be the only answer to recognize oneself. The problem for Stuart Hall is the same as the problem for people of African origin that consists in rejecting 'the existence of a distinct contemporary African culture in the Americas, as opposed to the oft-cited hybrid cultural legacy based on the enslavement experience of Blacks" (Bankole-Medina, 2008: 17). Although he recognizes that through the process of enslavement "the oral life (…) maintained an umbilical connection with the African homeland and culture" (p. 7) his personal strive for identity clearly depicts how his sense of who he was changed as he adapted to his historical conditions. Colonized peoples' identities, he concludes in a postmodernist approach, are unstable as a consequence of: (1) colonization and enslavement; (2) lack of a cultural revolution *au pair* of political independence.

Stuart Hall's postcolonial discourse resonates with the Western paradigms as he is searching for validation, acceptance, and, in his own words, identification. For him, the path to ascertain colonized peoples' identities is one of adjustment to the Western frames of reference. He regrets that "the African diasporas of the new world have been in one way or another incapable of finding a place in modern history without the symbolic return to Africa" (Hall, 1995: 9). To corroborate his point Stuart Hall holds on poets and writers of the Black Arts Movement, and Négritude, especially Aimé Césaire, in their quest for identity. With a forty year *décalage* from the time where these first existential cries were trying to make themselves heard, Stuart Hall maintains that the symbolic return to Africa would mean risking being "ghettoized as ethnic" among his European peers. He insists, using arguments similar to those of other scholars

and thinkers of African descent who identify themselves as Blacks rather than Africans, that the experience of colonialism and enslavement has produced a special 'caste': Africans who identify themselves by their blackness whose voices have never been placed outside nor excluded from the production of modernity in the twentieth century. The symbolic return to Africa in search for cultural centeredness is, in Hall's perspective, "the enterprise of somewhat nostalgic and sentimental nationalists" (Hall, 1995: 11).

And he goes on, explaining his point, in a rhetoric that can only be the product of deep misorientation:

> Africa is not waiting there in the fifteenth or seventeenth century, waiting for you to roll back across the Atlantic and rediscover it in its tribal purity, waiting there in its prelogical mentality, waiting to be awoken from inside by its returning sons and daughters. (Hall, 1995: 11)

Stuart Hall, for whom the use of the creole or the patois[61] represented a degradation, learned well the language, and in the language, of the colonizer. He seems satisfied that postcolonial theory, within the Western framework of the 'posts' era, harbors new members whose recognition requires the negotiation of hybridity. In fact, by producing a discourse of complacency Stuart Hall secures his validation within the Western academy not as much as a voice of modernity but as an accepted legitimate representative of postmodernity.

He concedes that identity is a product of history, cultural traditions, lost and marginal languages (apud), those marginalized experiences, those peoples and histories that remain

---

[61] For the ethiology, definition, and functional vitality of these linguistic entities see, among others, Ama Mazama's entries "Creole" and "Creolization" (2005) in the *Encyclopedia of Black Studies* and *The Angolar Creole Portuguese of São Tomé: its grammar and sociolinguistic history* authored by Gerardo Auguso Lorenzino (1998).

unwritten. Paradoxically, however, he adds that identity is not in the past to be found but in the future to be constructed.

The most interesting and simultaneously most bewildering fact about these paradoxical statements is their apparent claim for an African cultural location. However, a deep analysis of his discourse reveals that for Stuart Hall these facts can only make sense within the condescendence of the Western conceptual structure that he deems the only true and valid set of paradigmatic frameworks.

Only in this line of reasoning can the statement with which he concludes his theory on the building of the colonized identities, be appreciated:

> But I remain profoundly convinced that their [Caribbean people] identities for the twenty-first century do not lie in taking old identities literally, but in using the enormously rich and complex cultural heritages to which history has made them heir, as the different musics out of which a Caribbean sound might one day be produced. (Hall, 199: 14)

Postcolonial theory may well be the expression of the efforts of the Western academy to incorporate lines of understanding the new positionality of colonizing nations *vis à vis* the newly independent nations. But the perspective underlying the postcolonial discourse is clearly Eurocentric. In Spivak, Said, and definitely in Stuart Hall it is constructed within the conceptual framework of Western hegemonic and dichotomous ideology of center versus periphery, first world versus third world, logical versus prelogical mentality, translated by the type of language and rhetoric used by postcolonial scholars. The attempts to map the relevance and the place of the postcolonial subject are always inscribed in these polarities, part of the same political game in

187

which the West views the processes of independence as its willingness to grant former colonies a 'decolonized' status.

There are, of course, a number of different times and trajectories as far as regaining their independence for different colonized countries which dictate different and varied expressions of power relations and local dispositions. However, postcolonial theory is not a 'post-independence' need but the consequence of 'post-decolonization' worries. In fact, the implicit use of the word 'decolonization' places the agency on the colonizer while 'independence' is the sole meaningful referent to the colonized.

Postcolonialist theory is, again, a Western scholarship's label to define, from the outside, what should have been entirely the product of the self-definition and agency of the colonized. Of course that decolonization transfers the centrality of the process of independence from the activism and self-determination of the colonized peoples to that of the 'magnanimous' colonizer. Regardless of the positive signs of inclusiveness that the postcolonial theory may show, it is primarily concerned with the consequences of decolonization to the colonizer's world and only secondarily with what comes with independence to the 'decolonized' countries. Stuart Hall's discourse in this regard is unequivocal when he declares that postcolonialism "refers to a general process of decolonisation which, like colonisation itself, has marked the colonising societies as powerfully as it has the colonised (of course, in different ways)" (Hall, 1998: 247).

It is not enough to recognize that in this 'post' period there was a subversion of the place of the terms in the Western paradigms. The recognition, eventually the acceptance, of the 'other' does not erase the ideological structure that creates him/her. On the contrary, it represents a reinforcement that keeps the 'other' subjected to the I/we who have the power to accept or reject

his/her existence. Postcolonialism like every other modern or postmodern European ideology, never conceded or realized their limits. They never retreated into their own conceptual sphere leaving the floor integrally to those they have for centuries dominated. Stuart Hall's words are again paradigmatic:

> The long-term historical and cultural effect of the 'transculturation' which characterized the colonising experience proved, in my view, to be irreversible... [while] postcolonial discourse now re-inscribes 'colonisation' as part o an essentially transnational and transcultural 'global' process [that] produces a decentred, diasporic or 'global' rewriting of earlier nation-centred imperial grand narratives. (Hall, 1998: 247)

The danger of the postcolonial discourse for the 'decolonization' of colonized peoples' minds is precisely the fact that it relocates the power of political definitions on colonial hands. Visibility and acceptance of cultural diversity, the possibility to voice the otherwise silent languages constitute part of the European *avant-garde* quest for the exotic. It does not mean the colonized exercise of agency. For Hall, the crucial point in postcolonial theory is the shift from one cultural center to that of cultural hybridity at a global scale; the ability of the postcolonial framework to deal with the after-effects of 'decolonization' in the 'post-colonial' states. However, in line with poststructuralism, and postmodernism, postcolonial theory merely calls for a detour to re-think the implications of the political transformation as far as the role of the Western subject is concerned, without ever critically abandon the normative Western rhetoric. The problem with Stuart Hall's intellectual positioning is that he has a sense of cultural hybridity that very much resonates with the Eurocentric assimalationist and diffusionist theories (Blaut, 1993). Although he finally recognizes that "all the key concepts (....) have been subjected to a deep and thoroughgoing critique, exposing their assumptions as a set of foundational effects (...)

this deconstruction does not abolish them, in the classic movement of supersession, an Aufghebung" (Hall, 1998: 255) he is apparently unable or unwilling to move in the direction of his own decolonization.

3.3 POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND LITERARY CRITICISM

How did colonial education and language influence the culture and identity of the colonized? What were the forms of resistance against the colonial control? How did it change existing knowledge systems? These and other pertinent questions are the subject matter of some of the best works of major figures of the so-called postcolonial literature: theorists like Spivak, Said, Bhabha, Hall, Fanon, Memmi but also poets, writers, and playwrighters from all continents and all diasporas affected by colonialism.

Their theoretical and fictional works are critical to understand the distorted or at least foggy interpretations produced by Western literary criticism about this particular field. The descriptor 'postcolonial literature', intended to harbor the literary work of the 'postcolonial' world, is charged with cultural and ideological terminology that locates its production and analysis under the perspective of colonial epistemology.

Nzingha Gaffin (2006: 283) points out that postcolonial literary theory "is laden with culturally offensive terminology such as 'minority literature', 'standard literary criticism', 'colonial theorists', and 'phases of imperialism' – terminology that points to the controlling consciousness of the West". And Christel Temple (2007) rejects the very applicability of this reductionist and flawed descriptor since the global nature of African literature calls for its inclusion in a field like Comparative Literature instead of postcolonial literature. Therefore, for

the sake of this Afrocentric discussion, African literature will replace *tout court* any other terminology.

The first major concern of African literature in the second half of the twentieth century was the rehabilitation of the cultural damage caused by colonialism and that of coming to terms with the agonies of nation building which became a central preoccupation of African literary work after independence (Adeeko, 2005).

Some authors like to emphasize the fact that the development of African literature would not have happened without the imposition of the colonizers' teachings in their own languages. Others contend that the assimilated African elite who were trained in British or French or Portuguese-run schools to learn the language and culture of the colonizer, adopted their models and followed their teachings even to the point of losing much of their cultural links, namely to their native languages and cultures.

In the post-independence years writers wondered whether the origin of the social crisis lied in the malformed capitalist structures handed down to them with independence or whether it was the result of large-scale mismanagement, misoriented by the pervasive white assumption about the inability of the African people to rule themselves. In any case the intense literary production of this period reflects the writers' conflicting views on the most suitable ways of understanding the African predicament. It was a remarkable period of literary production and consciousness raising, labelled by the colonizing forces as political unrest, mass agitation and insurgence, followed in many cases by a brutal answer in the attempt to suppress it[62].

---

[62] Portuguese secret police PIDE, for instance, charged heavily African writers with its Gestapo-like techniques.

The rampant repression of writers and other cultural leaders in the post-independence nations belied the atmosphere of freedom and the most needed exchange of ideas. Works that favoured mass mobilization and radical ideologies, besides putting their authors at risk of fatal political harassment, were likely to be removed from circulation and their authors at best exiled (Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a fairly good example of both situations).

Nowadays, African literature faces the crisis of production that confronts other aspects of national life. Democratic political institutions together with economic production have collapsed and literary and cultural development has declined in proportion to the economic instability.

Everywhere, in Africa, few indigenous publishers have been able to meet the challenges of the book shortages caused by the economic crisis. The situation varies from country to country and multinationals, which dominated the publishing scene in the 1960s and 1970s, have been more often than not engaged in producing books that were mostly irrelevant to enhance African literature, African creative writing, or writing in African languages.

After the boom development in the 1970s, the crisis that since the 1980s has been affecting, and will continue to heavily affect the book industries in Africa, is dictated both by infrastructural problems and the economic recession that impact on the continent of Africa in the neo-colonial era. Other problems, however, social and cultural ones add to this complex issue.

Two major strategies of colonial domination, far more devastating than the imposed foreign political and economic measures into the African continent under colonial regimens, were the creation of a local 'trained' elite of African administrators or 'puppet' rulers upon whom the colonial administration or government system would keep control (Boahen. 1990:

241) and the compulsory schooling/education in the European language elevated to the status of national languages. As a consequence, distortion of values, repressive directions, and European visions paraded as African cultural values while ideologies and moralities alien to African senses were imposed on the expenses of the demise of the African culture regarded as savage, dissolute, and immoral.

> (…)one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford. (Thiong'o, 1986: 11)

As distinguished scholars found themselves in a situation where they had to struggle for their place in the fabric of the French, British, or Portuguese societies as second rate citizens, the true veil of colonial oppression was being lifted and literature was precisely the first piece of intellectual resistance. The call for nationalist movements was an essential element of consciousness raising that preceded the formal struggle for independence. Works by African writers such as Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, Francisco José Tenreiro (an internationally less known Angolan poet of the *Négritude* movement), as well as Amílcar Cabral (from Cape Verde, founder of PAIGC[63]) and Agostinho Neto (founder of MPLA[64] and first president of Angola after independence) are among the best examples of 'combat' literature that extended from the African continent in the European and American diasporas.

---

[63] PAIGC stands for African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.
[64] MPLA stands for Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

Therefore, though British, as well as French, Belgium, and Portuguese colonialism came down heavily on indigenous cultures, especially on everything connected to the African performing arts, resilience and resistance subverted the tools of the oppressor into arms for the oppressed.

The creative vigor that was witnessed in the African literature (written in whatever language) during the 1970s and 1980s was very much the result of an African acute awareness of the role that art plays in issues of everyday life and therefore in the fight for freedom and the building and consolidation of a distinctive African identity. This cultural struggle, which became even more compelling in the desolation and despair that permeated most African societies after a negotiated or conquered political independence that never granted Africans the much needed freedom in other fields of national venture and much less their self-determination, took to the traditional African themes and techniques, performative devices, storytelling, satire, drum, dance and symbols of traditional performance, and produced a dynamic protest literature, poetry, and drama addressing political and social oppression while, at the same time, acknowledged and rebuilt the reality and richness of the indigenous cultures. In Nigeria, like in South Africa, in Kenya like in the Cameroon, African writers, poets, playwrighters excelled like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Ngûgî wa Thiong'o and so many others…

Like Fanon, Ngûgî wa Thiong'o stresses in his book *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language In African Literature*: "What is the difference between a politician

who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages?" (Thiong'o, 1986:.26)

Therefore, to address critically Orature as the particular African art form that regains oral African traditions of storytelling, proverbs, singing and dancing, call and response, myths and cosmogonies to the written production, means to question the location of the work of contemporary African writers; discuss their role in the global literature and whether telling the African history and rebuilding social historical connection to African cultural aesthetical values requires an African language.

In fact, the history of a language, of the way its words are formed and the syntax arranged, is the living history and culture of a people, one may wonder how much more comfortable would it be for an African writer to deal with his/her own native language rather than the one of a forced upon culture? To what extent will it be possible for an African writer to explore the poetic and sensorial dimensions and mythoforms of his/her native language in order to meet a much more fulfilling expression of African feelings and worldviews, rather than that of a colonial language?

Though "translations" of emotions, feelings, views, and senses may be excellent ones, much of the poetic and mythical dimensions of the indigenous language have been lost in its translation into a European language. Only because lexis, syntax, semantics, rules and the cultural heritage of word formation can never overlap. Neither can cosmogonies and worldviews.

Since "literature is the manipulation of language, and the established practice is to base the determination of its cultural underpinning on the language of its expression" (Owomoyela, 1993: 360) this will become a fundamental issue that will have to be part of a school of literary criticism where writers and critics share an undisputed Afrocentric location. Otherwise, the risk of misinterpretation and disorientation will remain insurmountable for the colonized African mind. As Spivak says:

'The subject' implied by the texts of insurgency can only serve as a counterpossibility for the narrative sanctions granted to the colonial subject in the dominant groups. The postcolonial intellectuals learn that their privilege is their loss. In this they are a paradigm of the intellectuals. (Spivak, 1988: 287)

6. SIXTH CHAPTER

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The present dissertation is, in more than one sense, the representation of my intellectual journey moving from an epistemological location in Western postmodernism to become an Afrocentric scholar in the process of my quest to defeat the *inhuman*, my search for a more humanistic and ideologically less polluted mind and for a more human humanity.

As a Western postmodern thinking subject, an epistemological question has always underlain my approach to understanding the world in my pursuit for agency in advancing ideas of freedom from any sort of oppression and dehumanization in society, constantly pushing the limits of my thought: is it possible for the subject of knowledge to escape ideology?

The dyadic relationship between the object of knowledge and the Western rationality requires identification, i.e., the achievement of harmony between what is perceived and the ideology that informs that perception. The ideologies that assailed the world as we see it today, disseminated from a Eurocentric grand narrative, have germinated into rough individualism, fratricide wars, spoliation of cultures and resources, of peoples and environment, demand from humanity to vehemently overturn identification with such ideologies.

With the postmodern paradigm, dissonance, *différance*, and interpellation are the deconstructive tools of the postmodern thinker in order to break the chain of identifications and the foundational standards upon which the Western construction of knowledge is produced.

However, as we have seen in previous discussions, not even postmodernism could bring a consistent transformation of the paradigms that sustain the thought of the West and its

ideologies. Therefore, it is important to know what are we talking about when we refer to ideology.

In cognitive philosophy *Weltanshauung* (worldview / worldsense / ideology / perspective) is the sum total of the individual common experiences within a particular social order, ranging from geographical/environmental conditions to economic resources available, socio-cultural systems and linguistic families. It emerges as an integrated representation of the way in which individuals perceive and conceive the world, and is organized around ontological and cosmological dimensions, ethical and aesthetical values and moral behaviors. *Weltanschauung* is therefore the frame of reference for the construction of the subject through the various dimensions of human perception and experience; a framework that is crystallized in the political, economic, religious, cultural, and social institutions of power.

Louis Althuser (2001), however, transcends this concept of ideology based on our individual perceptions of the world when he introduces the notion of super structure, using a Marxist metaphor, of the mode of production of concepts as the ultimate and determining instance in the *abstract* relations created between individuals and the objects, places, and times. What becomes essential then, is to be aware of the fact that categories and concepts through which we think the real are not themselves the same as immediate reality. They are mediated by operations of association, worked out in and framed by the social institutions and the state apparatuses, whose levels of operation and the way in which they induce responses is crucial to understand.

In fact, this is also Fredric Jameson's reading of Althusser's theory of ideology that he considers to be a deep epistemological shift from his predecessors:

[W]hat we normally think of as ideological positions – thoughts, opinions, worldviews, with all their political implications and consequences – never exist only in the mind or in the individual experience and consciousness; they are always supported and reinforced, indeed reproduced, by social institutions and apparatuses, whether those are state based, like the army or the judicial instance, or seemingly as private as the family and the school, the art museum and the institutions of media, the church and the small-claims court. Ideology is institutional first and foremost and only later on to be considered a matter of consciousness. (Jameson, 2001: xii)

For Althusser, however, this symbolic order – or ideology – is a corpus of ideal (idealized and fabricated) relationships organized in a structure whose function and intent is to reproduce the conditions *sine qua non* of the productive system from whose social and economic dynamics they evolve, the process through which the individual is carried, within this relationship, to the level of subject, *i. e*., to the point where an individual is endowed with a consciousness of the ideological conceptual dispositive that determines his/her condition of existing in the world.

This same amounts to say that subjects who work as reflections of the symbolic order become objects under the subjugation of this same ideology.

A similar position adopts Jean-François Lyotard by considering the emergence of the subject in the transposition from inhuman into the human stage (Lyotard, 2007). In fact, he also contends that the faith in the future and progress of humanity that was the Enlightenment stance is not the answer to a more human human being. Actually Lyotard does not seem to believe that this which is called development has the potential to draw on the most pure form of inhuman, that stage of the human being prior to the upgrade into becoming a human by force of socio/economic and social structure where the subject recognizes him/herself. On the contrary, this so-called

development, and the institutions to that end, is for Lyotard the inhuman that threatens to annihilate any sense of the *primordial inhuman*, which is "'proper' to humankind" (Lyotard, 2007: 2) that may still be left within the individual after s/he has been made fit into society, social consciousness, and reason as we can perceive from the following statement:

> The inhumanity of the system which is currently being consolidated under the name of development (among others) must not be confused with the infinitely secret one of which the soul is hostage. To believe, as happened to me, that the first can take over from the second, give it expression, is a mistake. The system rather has the consequence of causing the forgetting of what escapes it. (Lyotard, 2007: 2)

This is also what Althusser observes when he acknowledges a dialectical relationship between subject and ideology. So the question remains the same for both authors: if we are ideology (Althusser, 2001) how much is left of inhuman that may transcend the inhumanity of the ideology as Lyotard (2007) calls it?

Is there a way out of ideology? Resistance. Struggle: action(s) that has to be taken drawing on the "miserable and admirable indetermination from which [the soul]was born and does not cease to be born – which is to say, with the other inhuman" (Lyotard, 2007: 7). For Althusser the possibility for agency dwells in the recognition and understanding of the fallacy under which the superstructure works and organizes the symbolic order. The ideological subject has the ability to unmask the oppressive ways of ideology; we can revolt and change the institutional practices. Notwithstanding, we are the subjects of our own oppression: the ones who operate/create the illusion of 'real' representation and identification. Such is the fragility of the subject. Revolution, when it happens, relates to the practices of oppression, not to the organization of the

superstructure. This paradoxically means that every new revolution is, after all, the emergence of a new order of a structure of power that reproduces oppression.

Both Althusser's theory of ideology and Lyotard's appeal to the preservation of the inhuman against the terrorizing forces that make us subjects definitely constitute attempts to escape ideology by a process of interrogation of the whole inventory of ideas that frame our perception of the world *vis à vis* our experiences. Since what is represented in ideology is not a system of real relationships but the imaginary relations of the individuals to the world, i.e., our individual perceptions mediated by our own conditions, subjects will have to be able to deconstruct (Derrida, 1982a) the symbolic interactions and networks of power relations with which ideology 'terrorizes' the inhuman (Lyotard, 2007: 4), inscribes itself in the Freudian unconscious or leads the subject through the Lacanian mirror stage.

For the subject that only exists in his/her own recognition of the symbolic order the danger is the disillusionment and a sense of apathy and aimlessness that freezes his/her ability to act. However, these authors sustain that the menace of the impossibility of recognition becomes a driving force. It creates a sense of agitation that reclaims the subject's agency into questioning his/her role as object defined by and identifying with the superstructure. Instead of indifference it develops the subject's ability to deconstruct the symbolic order and the interactions of oppression to ultimately refuse the inhumanity of being determined by development and progress which is the ideology of the present time.

Although animated by these simulacra (Baudrillard, 1983) of agency that kept my activism alive I was still feeling trapped in the ideological structure of the Western thought that

could only grant me the 'privilege' of making me aware that I am the subject of my own oppression.

In fact I had no other frame of reference until I was introduced to Afrocentricity, a theory of social change that critically addresses the ostensible hegemonic, totalizing, and universal scope of Eurocentric theories.

A Revolutionary Paradigm

Departing from the recognition that Eurocentricity as a particular world view is "a normal expression of culture but could be abnormal if it imposed its cultural particularity as universal while denying and degrading other cultural (…) views" (Asante, 2003: 61) Afrocentricity entails a detailed investigation and questioning of the Eurocentric nature of knowledge. However primarily oriented to avoid personal and collective destruction of people of African descent by reclaiming an African cultural and historical past as the coherent meeting point of every African, Afrocentricity provides a critique to Western distortions of history and to its diffusionist proclivities. With the responsibility of historicizing concepts, perspectives and common cultural traits among people of African descent and identifying the cosmological and ontological symbols that frame an African conceptualization of the world, Asante (1980) has set the basis of this revolutionary approach to knowledge. Intended primarily to set the foundations for the empowerment and agency of people of African descent, the epistemological status of the theory was elevated by Mazama (2003) to that of a paradigmatic matrix to an academic discipline: Africology, Actually, as Mazama demonstrated, with the Afrocentric paradigm the discipline

meets all the requirements, defines tools, and provides methodological resources under a consistent, coherent, and cohesive theory of knowledge. Africology, defined by Asante as the study of phenomena, events, ideas and personalities related to Africa, meets , as Mazama consistently proved, all the required criteria of an autonomous academic discipline: (1) object of study or subject matter; (2) method; (3) theory; (4) conceptual framework; and (5) institutionalization.

Afrocentricity is, therefore, a theory of knowledge constructed upon a cultural and social African centered holistic philosophical paradigm framed by three conceptual fundamental stances inherent to the African human condition – feeling, knowing, and acting.

The Afrocentric paradigm (Mazama, 2003) involves the systematic exploration of relationships, social codes, oral traditions, spoken and written discourses, communicative behaviours, customs and practices, urban street/vernacular codes, musical expressions, and spiritual symbols and systems of people of African descent. Operating in the arena of human interactions, Afrocentricity claims an African holistic cosmology that recognizes the interrelatedness of the affective, cognitive, and conative or behavioural dimensions in the construction of the African identity and the self-consciousness of African people in the continent and the diaspora. Centered in African cosmological and ontological perspectives and the African subject in the African philosophical perspective, the theory is built upon a particular *Afrika hisia ya dunia*[65] that becomes its central operative concept. Constantly disrupted by Western ideologies, Afrocentric methodology requires a constant awareness and questioning as to the location of the ideas expressed and the perspective both of the producer of knowledge as well as

---

[65] The Kiswahili expression for the African sense of the world.

that of the critic. It generates social change precisely because it relocates the African descent subject in his/her own cultural and historical centeredness where s/he becomes agent in the world and is revolutionary because grounded in the cultural and ideological centeredness of every human being, the Afrocentric theory of knowledge embraces a conception of a shared world of plural perspectives without hegemony.

AFROCENTRIC LIBERATING METHODOLOGY

With Afrocentricity we are in the presence of an alternative approach to knowledge that has the methodological and epistemological potential to embrace the domains of ontology, cosmology, ethics, and aesthetics, and a paradigm that entails in its functional framework the functional aspects of African life and experience.

Afrocentricity is a transformative paradigm that demands an Afrocentric consciousness. It materializes as the only liberating location, the only place to conceptualize the world consistent with African history and culture which confers both freedom from oppression and freedom to achieving psychological and cultural decolonization of the mind (Fanon, 1963; Thiong'o, 1986), or as Asante (1990) puts it, the only one way for African people to make sense of their world, which is existing on their African own terms.

In an academic dimension and as the matrix of a discipline, Africological study is grounded in African cosmology, African epistemology, African axiology, and African aesthetics and can be approached under three conceptual levels:

- Cognitive – which entails a metaphysical or organizing principle that determines the perception of reality and a sociological dimension or the establishment of a disciplinary matrix generated by a particular set of metaphysical principles or agreed upon values;

- Structural – entailing a specific conceptual apparatus, methodology, and research tools and the recognition of an Afrocentric intellectual community;

- Functional –aiming at the activation of African people's consciousness towards liberation and epistemological and social corrective

and assisted by its own specific methodology that will have to be grounded in the respect for the following aspects:

- Agency of people of African descent, i.e., the recognition of their role as agents of their own history instead of objects or mere subject matter in the framework of Eurocentric disciplines;

- Theoretical and functional African location which means to place African experiences, cultures, social web practices and behaviors at the center refusing the subaltern positions that have always been conferred to African/African American historic and cultural expressions by European scholarship;

- Critique of every reductionist, hegemonic, and totalizing theory.

The revolutionary dimension of the theory lies in the fact that, on placing African ideas and values at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviors, it demonstrates the existence of an African way of perceiving the world. This is precisely the point

where Afrocentricity steps outside of the historical constraints of the fixed and limited European historicism to generate new interpretations, new criticisms, ultimately the acquisition of new knowledge. Moreover, by challenging the orientation to world history as divorced from the history of the African subject Afrocentricity places the critic/scholar inside the African experience and African ideals and values at the center of inquiry. In an epistemological framework structured around African codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, and myths the African becomes subject of history not only as subject (Asante. 1987: 6) but as its agent in the world arena.

THE PARADIGMATIC RUPTURE

While the Western thought, condensed in the Eurocentric paradigm, has failed in solving the crucial stances of humanity in a modern world where the male white individual had to confront the collapse of his civilizational project and was left adrift in the void created by his impossible transcendence, the Afrocentric paradigm seized the floor of the Western hermeneutics and transcending any parochial or essentialist assumption becomes a new place of human consciousness, a non-hegemonic and non-hierarchical location from where to assess the world, and the possibility of a perspective on data that definitely demises European hegemony (Asante: 2007a).

However, this epistemological and paradigmatic rupture that Afrocentricity represents goes beyond cultural feuds. It transcends traps of color line divide, and parochial systems of

inequality and oppression, and offers the potential to move on to a non-hegemonic platform for human knowledge and recognition of diversity in equal terms.

Afrocentricity is therefore a revolutionary theory of knowledge, a philosophical paradigm that answers many of the subject's anxieties that contemporary Western discourses have been unable to overcome when we want to understand, and overturn, the deep structure of power relations that have almost erased colonized peoples' agency out of the world landscape; when we look for a paradigm that provides the epistemological tools to scientifically address issues of oppression, marginalization, and dislocation; when we are scholarly committed to social change, and liberation, and the advancement of knowledge to that effect; when we look for present-day most coherent humanistic philosophy and hermeneutics; when we seek to correct history and to overcome the Western based void of agency where the individual is still left subject in the still modern, still rational individuality of the Western mindset.

And indeed, the worldwide dimension achieved by the Afrocentric paradigm and theory of knowledge is now condensed in this last volume of Asante's quartet, *An Afrocentric Manifesto* (2007a), where the paradigm itself transcends any criticism of parochial or essentialistic assumptions and becomes the place of human consciousness, a non-hegemonic and non-hierarchical location from where to assess the world, the possibility of a perspective on data that definitely demises European hegemony.

Here Afrocentricity and the paradigmatic rupture with the dominant Western paradigms is definitely reaffirmed by Asante: "Afrocentricity, if anything, is a shout out for rationality in the midst of confusion, order in the presence of chaos, and respect for cultures in a world that tramples on both the rights and the definitions of the rights of humans" (Asante: 2007: 7).

Unlike Thomas Kuhn's theory (1962) of what a paradigm is as extensively discussed by Mazama (2003), and the notion that knowledge progresses through paradigmatic shifts, I contend that the philosophical realm of Afrocentricity goes beyond Kuhn's conceptualization. In fact, Kuhn defines paradigm as a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline, and that tend to evolve in time. This evolution is conceived as a paradigmatic shift by Kuhn's own standards. The paradigmatic shift, in Kuhn's definition, can therefore be considered a framework of concepts, results, and procedures within which **subsequent** conceptual work is structured, and refers to a common set of philosophies and methods shared by a scientific community. While such shifts can affect the rationally and logically structured set of propositions of concrete historical situations, and real conditions of existence gain precedence over previous purported truths, the fact is that they are mere 'actualizations' within one and the same referential framework or ideological structure.

Afrocentric philosophical paradigm jumps out of the Western philosophical and scientific discourses, of the political and ideological Western frames of reference to totally disrupt the hegemonic and totalizing foundations of European and Eurocentric epistemologies constructed under the particular European cosmovision. The philosophical, cosmological, and ontological sense of the world inherited from ancient Kemet that are the conceptual building blocks of Afrocentricity represent, therefore, not a mere paradigmatic shift but a paradigmatic and epistemological rupture in the worldwide history of ideas.

Unlike the universal character reclaimed by Eurocentric ideologies, Afrocentricity unapologetically honors historical and cultural contingency. This sense of contingency and

respect is precisely that which generates the whole encompassing scope of the theory that can be appropriated by anyone anywhere. In fact, the parameters of the theory (1) remain equally valid if applied to locate any people as agents in the center of their own culture and history, which testifies to the fact that Afrocentricity is not a reversed Eurocentrism but a liberating theory from every form of oppression, distortion and dislocation; (2) the theory stands as an intellectual enterprise available as an intellectual orientation to knowledge that rejects essentialism. One does not need to be African to embrace the Afrocentric paradigm as his/her intellectual orientation, in exactly the same way that one cannot assume to be Afrocentric just by being of African descent; (3) it is not a separatist/segregationist/reversed racist theory. In fact the Afrocentric orientation to knowledge – directed primarily to the function of liberating the African mind from colonial distortions and enslavement, requires historical correction and the acknowledgment both by Africans of their cultural heritage and by Europeans and Arabs, Christians or Muslims (those historically most involved in attempts to subjugate African peoples) as well as by every other cultural agent. Where it is a corrective to distorted knowledge, Afrocentricity promotes human equality overcoming any socially constructed hierarchies: racial or ethnic, national, economic, and gendered.

For Todorov (2001) the practice of racism supported by an ideology of racialism is what produces the most dangerous results in peoples' oppressions.

Conversely, I would say that when the Afrocentric paradigm and theory of knowledge grounds and supports Africanity, it produces the only true place of liberation for African people. Moreover, within this same functional dimension the Afrocentric philosophical paradigm proves

to have the potential to liberate the human mind from the shackles of every form of toxic ideologies.

This means, in conclusion, that Afrocentricity prevents African dislocation, helps African re-location and offers a non-African thinker the epistemological and paradigmatic location from where to deliberately commit 'discipline suicide' (Asante, 1998) and embrace the intellectual enterprise of adopting an Afrocentric theory of knowledge as his/her philosophical and personal orientation to life. To commit disciplinary suicide does not equate with cultural or historical dislocation. These are two non–incompatible aspects of one's intellectual ability. In fact, as a white European I have no intention of denying my cultural heritage. On the contrary, because I am very much aware of its deepest characteristics can I be confident to embrace a critical philosophical orientation that answers the catastrophic outcomes that the Eurocentric ideologies brought to humanity *inter alia* because Afrocentricity is not sanctioned by any political or economic state apparatus.

WORKS CITED

Adeeko, Adeleke (2005). *The Slave's Rebellion: Literature, History, Orature.*

      Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 2005.

Achebe, Chinua (1994). *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Anchor Books.

Akbar, Na'im (2003). "Africentric Social Sciences for Human Liberation" in A. Mazama (ed.).

      The Afrocentric Paradigm. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 131-143.

      _____ (1991). *Visions for Black Men.* Tallahassee: Mind Productions and Associates,

      Inc.

Althusser, Louis (1966). "Lettre sur la connaissance de l'art (réponse à André Daspre)" in *Lenin*

      and Philosophy and Other Essays. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 151-55.

      _____ (2001). *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York, NY: Monthly

      Review Press.

Angelou, Maya (1990). *I Shall Not Be Moved*. New York: Random House Inc.

Ani, Marimba (1994). *Yurugu*, Lawrenceville, NJ: Africa World Press.

Arnold, James A. (1981). *Modernism and Négritude: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire*.

      Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Asante, M. K. (1993). *Malcolm X As a Cultural Hero & Other Afrocentric Essays*. Trenton,

      N.J.: African World Press.

_____ (2003). "Afrocentricity and the Eurocentric Nature of Knowledge" in J. Lehmann, *Critical Theory: Diverse Objects, Diverse Subjects*. New York: Elsevier Science, 61-70.

_____ [1980] (2003). *Afrocentricity: The theory of social change* (rev. ed.). Chicago: African American Images,

_____ (1988). *Afrocentricity*. Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc..

_____ (1990). *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press.

_____ (1998). *The Afrocentric Idea* (rev. ed.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

_____ (1999). *The Painful Demise of Eurocentrism*. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, Inc.

_____ (2003). "The Quest for a Method" in A. Mazama (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 145-150.

_____ (2005a). "Afrocentricity: Notes on a Disciplinary Position" in J. L. Conyers, *Afrocentric Traditions*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1-13.

_____ (2007a). *An Afrocentric Manifesto.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

_____ (2007b). *Cheikh Anta Diop. An Intellectual Portrait.* Los Angeles: The University of Sankore Press.

_____ (2007c). *The History of Africa: The Quest for Eternal Harmony*. London and New York: Routledge.

_____ (2009). "Resisting Westernity and Refusing Development" in Kum-Kum Bhavnani, John Foran, Priya A. Kurian, and Debashish Munshi, eds., *On the Edges of Development: Cultural Interventions.* New York: Routledge, pp. 67-**?.**

_____ (1983). "The Ideological Significance of Afrocentricity in International Communication". *Journal of Black Studies*. Vol. 14 No. 1, September 1983: 3-19.

_____ (1991). "Afrocentricity and Gender". *New Essence*. Spring.

_____ (2000). *The Egyptian Philosophers: Ancient African Voices from Imhotep to Akhenaten.* Chicago, IL: African American Images.

_____ (2009). *Erasing Racism. The Survival of the American Nation*. Second Edition. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Asante, M. K. and Abarry, Abu (1996). *African Intellectual Heritage*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Asante, M. K. and Ama Mazama (2002). *Egypt vs. Greece and the American Academy.* Chicago: African American Images.

_____ (eds.) (2005). *Encyclopedia of Black Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

_____ (eds.) (2008). *Encyclopedia of African Religion*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Asante, M. K. and Karenga, Maulana (2006). *Handbook of Black Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage
Publications.

Aldridge, Delores (2006). "Women in the Development of Africana Studies" in M. K. Asante,
and M. Karenga. *Handbook of Black Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications: 51-66.

Attridge, Derek (1995). "Singularities, Responsibilities: Derrida, Deconstruction and Literary
Criticism" in Cathy Caruth and Deborah Esch (eds.). *Critical Encounters:
Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing*. New Brunswick, NJ:
Rutgers University Press: 109-110.

Bankole, Katherine. "Instructional Themes in Twentieth Century African American Women's
History". *Africalogical Perspectives*. October / November 2004.

Bankole-Medina, K. (2008). "Afrocentricity and the Force of the Asantian Thought: Shifting
Paradigms and Altering Worlds". *Africological Perspectives*, vol. 5, n. 1: 17-25.

Baudrillard, Jean (1983). *Simulations*. Trans. Nicola Dufresne. New York, NY: Semiotext(e).

Belinda, "Petition of an African Slave, to the Legislature of Massachusetts" in *American
Museum, or Repository of Ancient and Modern Fugitive Pieces, Prose and
Poetical* 1 (June 1787): 538–540.

Benjamin, Medea and Mendonça, Maisa (1997).*Benedita da Silva. An Afro-Brazilian Woman's
Story of Politics and Love*. Oakland, CA: Food First Books.

Ben-Jochannan, Y. [1970] (1991). *African Origins of the Major "Western Religions"*. Baltimore:
Black Classic Press.

_____ [1972] (1989). *Black Man of the Nile and His Family*. Baltimore: Black

      Classic Press.

Bennett, Lerone (1984*). Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America: 1619–1964*.

      Revised edition. New York, N.Y : Penguin Books.

Berkin, Carol Ruth and Norton, Mary Beth (1979). *Women of America: A History.* Boston :

      Houghton Mifflin Co.,.

Bernal, Martin (1987). *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Culture*. New

      Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Bernstein, Richard (1980). "Philosophy in the Conversation of Mankind", *Review of Metaphysics*

      32, n° 4: 762.

Berry, Mary Frances Berry and Blassingame, John (1982). *Long Memory: The Black Experience*

      in America. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Bhabha, Homi (1994). *The Location of Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Blaut, J. M. (1993). *The Colonizer's Model of the World. Geographical Diffusionism and*

      Eurocentric History. New York: The Guilford Press.

_____ (2000). *Eight Eurocentric Historians*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Boahen, Adu (ed.) (1990). *General History of Africa: Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-*

      1935. Vol. VII. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bock, Gisela (1991). "Challenging Dichotomies: Perspectives on Women's History" in Karen
Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson, and Jane Rendall (eds.). *Writing Women's History*:
International Perspectives. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1-23.

Bordo, Susan (1986). "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought", *Signs,* vol. 11, nº 3, Spring
1986: 439-456.

Braxton, Joanne M. (1989). *Black Women Writing Autobiography*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple
University Press

Browning, Gary, Halci, Abigail and Webster, Frank (2000). *Understanding Contemporary
Society*. *Theories of the Present*. London: Sage Publications.

Butler, Judith (1987). "Variations on Sex and Gender: Beauvoir, Witting, and Foucault" in Seyla
Benhabib and Drucila Cornell. *Feminism As Critique*. London: Basil Blackwell.

Butler, Judith (1999). *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, NY:
Routledge.

Cabral, Amílcar (1996). The Weapon of Theory. On 12/11/2009 at
http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/cabral/1996/weapon-theory.htm.

Camões, Luís de (1955). *Obras completas.* 2ª ed..Lisboa: Livraria Sá da Costa.

Cannon-Brown, Willie (2006). *Nefer. The Aesthetic Ideal in Classic Egypt*. New York:
Routledge.

Carby, Hazel V.(1989). *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American
Woman Novelist.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Césaire, Aimé (2001). *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated from the French by Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Chinweizu, Jamie and Madubuike, I. (1983). *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*. Washington, DC: Howard University Press.

Chinweizu, J. (1975). *The West and the Rest of Us: White Predators, Black Slavers and the African Elite*. New York: Random House.

Collins, Patricia H. (1990). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

_____ (1998). *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

_____ (2004). "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought" in Sandra Harding (ed.). *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*. New York: Routledge, 103-126.

Conyers Jr., J. L. (2004). "The Evolution of Africology". *Journal of Black Studies, Vol. 34, Nº 5*, May, 640-652.

Couto, Mia (1992). *Terra Sonâmbola*. Lisboa: Caminho. English translation by D. Brookshaw (2006). *Sleepwalking Land*. London: Serpent's Tail.

Crosby, N. S. , 2003-08-16 "Black Feminist Praxis: (Re)Visioning Sexism, Solidarity, and Social Movement". *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological*

Association, Atlanta Hilton Hotel, Atlanta, GA Online <.PDF>. 2009-05-26 from

http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p107777_index.html

Cummings, J. F. (2005). *How to Rule the World*. Tokyo: Blue Ocean.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi (2004). *Nervous Conditions*. Emeryville: Seal Press.

Davidson, Basil (1961). *Black Mother: The Years of the African Slave Trade*. Boston: Little

      Brown & Co.

Davis, Angela (1999). *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie*

      Smith, and Billie Holiday New York, NY: Vintage Books.

_____ (2000). Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves" in

      F. W. Hayes (ed.). *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*.

      San Diego, CA: Collegiate Press, 83-96.

_____ (2000). "I Am a Revolutionary Black Woman." in Manning Marable and Leith

      Mullings (eds.). *Let Nobody Turn Us Around. Voices of Resistance, Reform, and*

      Renewal. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 482-6.

Derrida, J. (1976). *Grammatology*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press.

_____ (1982a). "Différance" in J. Derrida (ed.), *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. 3-27.

      Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 3-27

Diop, Cheikh Anta (1974) *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality?* Translated by

      Mercer Cook. Westport: Lawrence Hill Books.

_____ (1991). *Civilization or Barbarism. An Authentic Anthropology.* Translated

by Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi. New York: Lawrence Hill Books.

Dirlik, Arif (1994). After the Revolution: Waking to Global Capitalism. Hanover, NH:

University Press of New England.

Douglass, Frederick [1845] (1994). *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American*

Slave Written by Himself. New York, NY: Library of America.

Dove, Nah (2003). "Defining Africana Womanist Theory" in Ama Mazama (ed.). *The*

Afrocentric Paradigm. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 165-183.

Du Bois, W.E.B (1986). *W.E.B. Du Bois: Writings.* Ed. N. Huggins. New York, NY: Library

Classics of the United States, Inc.

_____ (2003). *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life*

from the Last Decade of Its First Century. New York, NY: International Publishers, Inc.

_____ (1935). *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which*

Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880.

New York, NY: Russell & Russell.

_____ (1996). *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study.* Philadelphia, PA: University

of Pennsylvania Press.

_____ (2001). *The Negro.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press

Falola T. (2001). Africa, vol. 3: *Colonial Africa 1885-1939.* Durham, NC: Carolina Academic

Press.

Fanon, Frantz (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated from the French by Richard

Philcox. New York: Grove Press.

_____ (1986). *Black Skin White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto

Press.

_____ (1959). *Reciprocal Bases of National Culture and the Fight for Freedom.* In

12/11/2009 at http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/fanon/national-culture.htm

Feagin, Joe (2006). *Systemic Racism. A Theory of Oppression*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Felicilda, Maxwell (2001). "The Unhistorical Historian: A Careful Examination

of Hegel's Philosophy of History" in *Diwatao, vol. 1 nº 1*. San Beda College Department

of Philosophy & Human Resource Development.

Florini, A.(2000). *The Third Force.* Tokyo: JCIE.

Foucault, Michel (1961). *Folie et déraison. Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. Paris, Plon.

Translation into Portuguese (1978). *História da Loucura*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

_____ (1966). *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*. Paris,

Gallimard. Translation into Portuguese (1981). *As Palavras e as Coisas. Uma

Arqueologia das Ciências Humanas.* 2ª ed. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.

_____ (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*.

Colin Gordon (ed.). London: Harvester.

_____ (1984). "What is Enlightenment?". In Paul Rabinov (ed.). *The Foucault

Reader.*New York, NY: Pantheon: 32-50.

Franklin, C. W. (1994). "'Ain't I a Man?' The Efficacy of Black Masculinities for Men's Studies in the 1990s" in R. Majors and J.U. Gordon (eds.). *The American Black Male: His Present Status and His Future.* Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 272-283.

Franklin, John Hope (1974). *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, New York, NY: Knopf

Fukuyama, Francis (1992c). *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York : Maxwell Macmillan International.

Gaffin, V. Nzinga (2006). "The Context of Agency: Liberating African Consciousness From Postcolonial Discourse Theory" in M. K. Asante and M. Karenga (eds.). *Handbook of Black Studies.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications: 282-300.

Galeano, [1971] (1997). *Open Veins of Latin America*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Garvey, Marcus. Primary Sources in http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/filmmore/ps.html

Gates, J. H. (1993-1994). "Does Academic Correctness Repress Separatist or Afrocentrist Scholarship?" *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Nº 2*. Winter, 40-48.

Giddens, Anthony (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Giddings, Paula (1984). *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York, NY: Bantam.

Gordon, L. (2008). *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Presss.

_____ (2005). Black Existentialism. In M. K. Asante, and Ama Mazama (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Black Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 123-126.

_____ (ed.) (1997). *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy.* New York: Routledge

Graham, M. J. (1999). The African-Centered Worldview: Toward a Paradigm for Social Work. *Journal of Black Studies, Vol. 30, nº 1*, September, 103-122.

Gyekye, Kwame (1996). *African Cultural Values. An Introduction*. Philadelphia, PA: Sankofa Publishing Company.

Habermas, Jürgen (1989). *The Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Hall, Stuart (1991). "The Local and the Global: Globalisation and Ethnicity" in A. King (ed.). *Culture, Globalization and the World System*. London: Macmillan.

_____ (1995). "Negotiating Caribbean Identities". *New Left Review* I/290: 3-14.

_____ (1998). "When Was 'The Postcolonial'? Thinking at the Limit". In Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds.). *The Post-Colonial Question*. New York, NY: Routledge:

Hall, Stuart and Du Gay, Paul (1996). *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage.

Haraway, Donna (2004). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in Sandra Harding (ed.). *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*. New York: Routledge, 81-102.

Harding, Sandra (2004). "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity'" in Sandra Harding (ed.). *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*. New York: Routledge, 127- 140.

Hegel, Georg W. F. (2002). *Fenomenologia do Espírito*. Tradução de Paulo Menezes. Petrópolis: Vozes.

Hilliard, A. (2003). "Pedagogy in Ancient Kemet" in A. Mazama (ed.), *The Afrocentric Pardigm*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 265-281.

Hine, Darlene Clark (2000). *The African-American Odyssey.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Hobsbawm, Eric (1989). *The Age of the Empire, 1875-1914*.New York, NY: Vintage Books.

hooks, bell (1981). *Aint I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism.*

_____ (1984). *Feminist Theory. From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press.

_____ (1996). *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*. New York: Henry Holt and Company Inc.

_____ (2004). *We Real Cool. Black Men and Masculinity*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hudson-Weems, Clenora (2003). "Africana Womanism" in A. Mazama (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 153-163.

Huggins, Nathan (ed.) (1986). *W.E.B. Du Bois: Writings.* New York, NY: Library Classics of the United States, Inc.

Hull, Gloria T., Scott, Patricia Bell, and Smith, Barbara (eds.) (1982). *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies.* Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press.

Ihonvbere, Julius O. (1994). *Pan-Africanism: Agenda for African Unity in the 1990s.* On 02/20/2010 at http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/30/033.html

Jahn, Jaheinz (1961). *Muntu: An Outline Of The New African Culture*. New York: Grove Press.

James, George M. (1954). *Stolen Legacy*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press.

James, Joy and Sharpley-Whiting, T. Denean (2000). *The Black Feminist Reader*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd.

Jameson, Frederic (1992). *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Stanley Fish (ed.). Duke University Press.

Jones, Claudia (2000). "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!" in Manning Marable and Leith Mullings (eds.). *Let Nobody Turn Us Around. Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 340-51.

Jones, Eric L. (1981). *The European Miracle Environments, Economies and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia.* Cambridge. Cambridge University Presss.

Jones, Gayle (1991). *Liberating Voices. Oral Tradition in African American Literature.* New York: Penguin Books.

Jones, William (1973). *Is God a White Racist?: A Preamble to Black Theology.* New York, NY: Anchor/Doubleday.

Kant, Immanuel (1952). *The Critique of Judgment*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Karenga, Maulana (1989)*. Selections from the Husia: sacred Wisdom of Ancient Egypt.* Los Angeles: Unversity of Sankore Press.

_____ (1993). *Introduction to Black Studies*. Los Angeles: The University of Sankore Press.

_____ (2003). "Afrocentricity and Multicultural Education: Concept, Challenge and Contribution" in A. Mazama (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 73-94.

_____ (2005). "Kawaida" in M. K. Asante and A. Mazama (eds.). *Encyclopedia of Black Studies.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 290-295.

_____ (2006). *Maat: The Moral Idea in Ancient Egypt*. Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press.

Karenga, Maulana in www.africawithin.com/karenga/karenga_african_culture.htm.

Keto, Tsehloane [1989] (1994). *The Africa Centered Perspective of History*. Londn: Karnak House.

Koch, Sascha Pablo (2008). *Kant. Vida, Pensamento e Obra*. Lisboa: Planeta De Agostini.

Kuhn, Thomas (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. Chicago, Il: Chicago University Press.

Kumar, Krishan (2000). "Post-history: living at the end" in *Understanding Contemporary Society. Theories of the Present*. Gary Browning, Abigail Halcli and Frank Webster (eds.). London: Sage Publications, 57-70.

Lacan, J. (1977). "The Mirror-Stage as Formative of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" transl. by Alan Sheridan in *Écrits: A Selection*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

_____ (1998). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. New York and London : W.W. Norton.

Laclau, Ernesto (1990). *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time.* London: Verso.

Lerner, Gerda (1972). *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History*. New York: Vintage Books.

Lewis, David L. (1993). *W.E.B. Du Bois* - Biography of a Race, 1868-1919. New York, NY: H. Holt.

Loewenberg, Bert James and Bogin, Ruth , eds. (1976). *Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Lorde, Audrey (2000). "I Am Your Sister" in Manning Marable and Leith Mullings (eds.). *Let Nobody Turn Us Around. Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 537-44.

Lorenzino, A Gerardo (1998). *The Angolar Creole Portuguese of São Tomé: its grammar and sociolinguistic history*. München: LINCOM Europa.

Lyotard, Jean-François (1984). *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge* (1979). Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

Lyotard, Jean-François (2007). *The Inhuman. Reflections on Time*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

_____ [1979](1984). *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

Madhubuti, H. R. (1990). *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous? The Afrikan Family in Transition*. Chicago: Third World Press.

Malcolm X. Primary Sources in http://www.brothermalcolm.net/

Mandel, Ernest (1968). *Marxist Economic Theory*. New York: Monthly Review Press Vol 2: 443-44.

Martins, Oliveira (1978). *O Brasil e as Colónias Portuguesas*. Lisboa: Guimarães Ed.

Marx, Karl [1873] (s.d.). *O Capital*. Translated by António Dias Gomes after the 2nd German edition. Mafra: Delfos.

Mayos, Gonçal (2008). *Hegel. Vida, Pensamento e Obra*. Lisboa: Planeta De Agostini.

Mazama, Ama (2001). The Afrocentric Paradigm. Contours and Definitions. *Journal of Black Studies, vol. 31 Nº4*, March, 387-405.

_____ (2003). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*. Trenton: Africa World Press.

_____ (2005). "Creole" in M. K. Asante and Ama Mazama (eds). *Encyclopedia of Black Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications: 202-204.

_____ (2005). "Creoliztion" in M. K. Asante and Ama Mazama (eds). *Encyclopedia of Black Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications: 204-205.

_____ (2006). "The Intelletual Basis of the Black Studies Discourse" in M. K. Asante and M. Karenga (eds.). *Handbook of Black Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Mazrui, Ali (1996). "Africa's Tripartite Heritage: Towards Cultural Synthesis" in M. K. Asante and Abu Abarry (1996). *African Intellectual Heritage*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 210-217.

Mbiti, J (1991). *Introduction to African Religion.* Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Medina, João (1993). *História de Portugal. dos Tempos Pré-Históricos aos Nossos Dias*. Lisboa: Ediclube.

Memmi, Albert (1967). *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Boston : Beacon.

Miike, Y. (2006). Western Theory in Western Research? An Asiacentric Agenda for Asaian Communication Studies. *The Review of Communication,* Vol. 6, January-April, Nº 1-2, 4-31.

Modupe, Danjuma S. (2003). "The Afrocentric Philosophical Perspective: A Narrative Outline" in Ama Mazama (ed.). *The Afrocentric Paradigm*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 55-72.

Mohanty, Chandra T. (1991). "Under Western Eyes" in Chandra Mohanty *et al.*. *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Monteiro, Anthony (2000). "Being an African in the World: the Du Boisian Epistemology" in
The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, March: 220-249.

Monteiro-Ferreira, Ana (2005). "Re-evaluating Zulu Religion. An Afrocentric Analysis."
Journal of Black Studies. Volume 35, No. 3: 347-363.

_____ (2002a). *Desigualdades de Género no Actual Sistema Educativo*
Português. Coimbra: Quarteto.

_____ (2002b). *Igualdade de Oportunidades.* Lisboa: Universidade Aberta.

Morrison, Toni (1987). *Beloved*. New York: Plume.

Mudimbe, Valentin (1994). *The Idea of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
New York: Routledge.

Nascimento, Abdias and Nascimento, Elisa L. (1989). *Brazil, Mixture or Massacre?:*
Essays in the Genocide of a Black People. Dover, MA: Majority Press.

Nascimento, Abdias (1980). *O Quilombismo: Documentos de uma Militancia Pan-*
Africanista. Petrópolis: Vozes.

Newson, Adele S. (1995). "Abolition" in *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the*
United States. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-5.

Nietzsche, F. (1969). *Thus Spoke Zarathrusta*. London: Penguin Books.

Nkrumah, Kwame (1961). *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology*. London:
William Heinemann, Ltd.

_____ (1966). *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*. New York:

International Publishers Co., Inc.

_____ (1967) Africa: National and Social Revolution: Collection of Papers Read at

the Cairo Seminar. Prague: Peace and Socialism Publishers. On 12/11/2009 at

http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nkrumah/1967/african-socialism-revisited.htm.

_____ (1996). "Consciencism" in A. Abarry and M. K. Asante (eds). *African

Intellectual Heritage*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 354-369.

_____ (1998). *Africa Must Unite*. London: PANAF.

Nobles, W. (1984). *Understanding the Black Family.* London: Black Family Institute Publishers.

 Nyérère, Julius (1968). *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Obenga, Theophile (1989). "African Philosophy of the Pharaonic Period" in Ivan van Sertima,

(ed.). *Egypt Revisited*. New Brunswick: Transaction.

Okafor, Viktor [2002] (2010). *Africology*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Co.

Okpewho, Isidore (1985). *The Heritage of African Poetry*. London: Longman Publishing Group.

_____ (1992). *African Oral Literature. Backgrounds, Character, and Continuity*.

Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Omari, T Peter (1970). *Kwame Nkrumah: The Anatomy of an African Dictatorship*. New York:

Africana Publishing Corporation.

Opoku, K. A. (1978). *West African Traditional Religion*. Awka, Damien: Kucena.

Owomoyela, Oyekan (1993). A History of Twentieth-Century African Literatures. Lincoln and
     London: University of Nebraska Press.

Oyewùmí, Oyèrónké (ed.) (2005). *African Gender Studies: A Reader*. New York, NY: Palgrave,
     Macmillan

Pinto, Fernão Mendes (1994). *Peregrinação*. Madrid: R.B.A. Editores.

Pires, M. Laura B. (2004). *Teorias da Cultura*. Lisboa: Universidade Católica Editora.

Ramazanoglu, Caroline (ed.) (1993) *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions
     Between Foucault and Feminism*. London: Routledge.

Raskin, P., Banuri, T., Gallopín, G., Gutman, P., Hammond, A., Kates R. et al. (2002). On
     10/21/2006 at [http://www.gtinitiative.org/documents/Great_Transitions.pdf The Great
     Transition: The Promise and the Lure of the Times Ahead]. Boston, MA:
     [http://www.tellus.org Tellus Institute].

Ribeiro, D. (1995). *O Povo Brasileiro – A Formação e o Sentido do Brasil*. São Paulo: Editora
     Loyola

Riviere, Ruth (2006). "The Canons of Afrocentric Research". In M. K. Asante and M. Karenga
     (eds.). *Handbook of Black Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Rodney, Walter (1974). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.* Washington, D.C.: Howard
     University Press.

Said, Edward (1979). *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Random House.

_____ (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Sartre, Jean-Paul (1957). *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. London: Methuen.

_____ (1958). *Black Orpheus*. No. 2, January, 1958: 39-41.

_____ (1960). *La critique de la raison dialectique*. Paris: Gallimard.

Schaff, Adam (1963). *A Philosophy of Man*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Scott, Joan (1999). *Gender and the Politics of History* (rev. ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.

_____ (1986; 1988). "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" in Joan Scott. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Senghor, Léopold S. (1936). "What is Négritude" in Paul E. Sigmund, Jr. (ed.). *The Ideologies of the Developing Nations*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 248-249.

Shawver, L. (1996). "What Postmodernism Can Do for Psychoanalysis: A Guide to the Postmodern Vision". *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 56(4): 371-394.

Shohat, Ella (1992). "Notes on the Poscolonial" in *Social Text*, 31/32: 99-113.

Spivak, Gayatri C. (1990). The Post-colonial Critique: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues. Edited by Sarah Harasym. New York: Routledge.

_____ (1988). "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.). *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press: 271-313.

Steady, Filomina (2005). "Back Cover" in Oyèrónké Oyewùmí. *African Gender Studies: A Reader*. New York, NY: Palgrave, Macmillan

Stephenson, Susan (2000). "Narrative" in Gary Browning, Abigail Halcli and Frank Webster (eds.). *Understanding Contemporary Society. Theories of the Present*. London: Sage Publications, 112-26.

Talaván, Rubén (2008). *Descartes. Vida, Pensamento e Obra*. Lisboa: Planeta De Agostini.

Temple, Christel (2007). *Literary Spaces: Introduction to Comparative Black Literature*. Durham, NC: Caroline Academic Press.

Thiong'o, Ngŭgĭ wa (1986). *Decolonizing the Mind. The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Todorov. T. (2001). "Race and Racism". In J. Solomos and L. Back (eds.). *Theories of Race and Racism. The Reader*. London/New York: Routledge, 64-70.

Truth, Sojourner (1851). Speech Delivered at Women's Convention, Akron, Ohio 2010-02-12 from http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/sojtruth-woman.html.

_____ (1867-05-09).*Keeping the Thing Going While Things Are Stirring*. Address to the first annual meeting of the American Equal Rights Association. 2010-02-12 from http://www.pacifict.com/ron/Sojourner.html.

Van Dyck, S. (1995). "Toward an Afrocentric Perspective: The Significance of Afrocentricity" in D. Ziegler. *Molefi Kete Asante and Afrocentricity*. Washington, DC: Winston, 1-8.

Wallace, M. (1978). *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*. New York, NY: Warner Books.

Weber, Max [1922] (1968). *Economy and Society*. Eds. Gunether Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Welsh-Asante, Kariamu (2003). *Umfundalai: An African Dance Technique*. Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press.

West, Cornel (1993). *Race Matters*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Winters, Clyde (2002). "Ancient Afrocentric History and the Genetic Model" in M. K. Asante and A. Mazama (eds.). *Egypt vs Greece and the American Academy*. Chicago, Il: African American Images.

Woodyard, J. L. (1991). Evolution of a Discipline: Intellectual Antecedents of African American Studies. *Journal of Black Studies, Vol. 22, Nº 2*, Dec., 239-251.

Wright, Richard [1940] (2005). *Native Son*. New York, NT: Harper Perennial.

Zack, Naomi (1993). *Race and Mixed Race*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Zauditu-Selassie, Kokahvah (2005). "I Got a Home in Dat Rock: Memory, Orisa, and Yoruba Spiritual Identity in African American Literature" in Toyin Falola and Ann Genova (eds.). *Orisa: Yoruba Goods and Spiritual Identity in Africa and the Diaspora*. New York: Africa World Press.

_____ (2007). "Women Who Know Things: African Epistemologies, Ecocriticism, and Female Spiritual Authority in the Novels of Toni Morrison". *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, *vol. 1, 7*, 338-44.