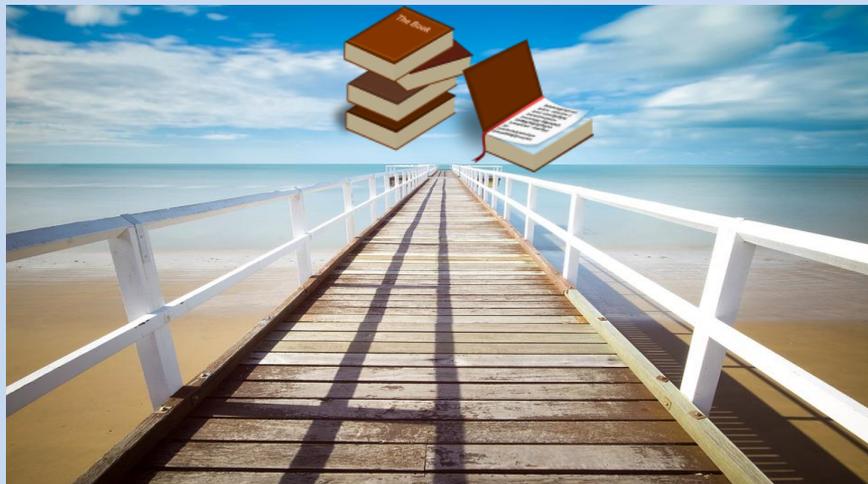




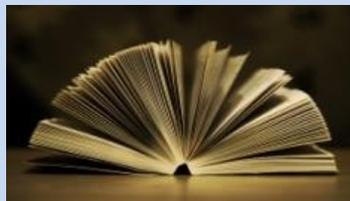
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The Centrality of Afrocentricity in the Challenge for African Renaissance

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Abstract

The spread of Eurocentrism preceded the scramble for Africa. Therefore, the partition of Africa is the result of Eurocentric vision. That project of assimilation has caused profound upheavals in Africa. Cultural chaos, economic predation, political and military domination have contributed to the disorientation and reification of Africans. This paper is a reflection on the ways Africans should follow to fulfill self-determination. Afrocentricity emerges then as a topical approach to restore the African his/her bearings and agency. The question in this article is to highlight the relevance of Afrocentricity as a holistic paradigmatic shift in order to achieve African renaissance. It follows from this analysis that Afrocentricity unveils the dehumanization agenda of Eurocentrism by debunking its hegemony over knowledge. This article, therefore, argues that Afrocentricity is fundamental to Africa's renaissance. It is a commitment rooted in African perspective that promotes unity, reciprocity and equality in diversity.

Key words : agency, african renaissance, afrocentricity, eurocentrism, disorientation, history.

Résumé

La montée de l'eurocentrisme a précédé la ruée vers l'Afrique. Par conséquent, la partition de l'Afrique est le résultat de la vision eurocentric. . Ce projet d'assimilation a causé de profonds bouleversements en Afrique. Le chaos culturel, la prédation économique, la domination politique et militaire ont contribué à la désorientation et à la réification des Africains. Cet article est une réflexion sur les voies que les Africains devraient suivre pour atteindre l'auto-détermination. L'Afrocentricité émerge de ce fait, comme une approche d'actualité pour restaurer à l'Africain ses repères et son agentivité. Le problème dans cet article consiste à mettre en exergue la pertinence de l'Afrocentricité en tant que changement paradigmatique holistique afin de parvenir à la renaissance africaine. Il ressort de cette analyse que l'Afrocentricité dévoile l'agenda de déshumanisation orchestré par l'eurocentrisme en démystifiant son hégémonie sur le Savoir. Cet article soutient donc que l'Afrocentricité est fondamentale pour la renaissance de l'Afrique. C'est un engagement qui s'appuie sur la perspective africaine pour promouvoir l'unité, la réciprocité et l'égalité dans la diversité.

Mots-clés : agentivité, renaissance africaine, afrocentricité, eurocentrisme, désorientation, histoire.

Introduction

The predatory logic that sustains the project of modernism resulted in the epistemicide of the conquered communities by the Euro-American coalition. (Santos, 2014) Transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism have resulted in Africans' mental

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disenfranchisement. Indeed, in the past, foreign religion (Islam and Christianity), colonial school and the capitalist ideology contributed to the bewilderment (and to a certain extent to the brainwashing) of many Africans. (Ngugi, 2009) The Euro-American venture in Africa, aimed at assimilating Africans, that is, making them Africans with western mind. It infers that Africa should “develop” according to the western frame of reference. Africans are, therefore, relegated today to the status of puppets in the conduct of their own history.

Those pervasive Euro-American cognitive biases operate in some Africans’ minds as the mainstream. For that category of Africans, to be lifted, Africans have to resort to western episteme propagated as universal, hegemonic and irrefragable. African episteme, in the meanwhile, is said to be non-existent or inadequate to fit the challenges of development. Hegel, for example, viewed Africa as unhistorical, a land that lacks morality, and has no religion, no political organization. (Kuykendall R., 1993) In the same line of argument, to suit “the global village”, an African is to be westernized otherwise, s/he is disqualified. That cultural imperialism is concomitant with economic exploitation, political and military domination of Africa.

Many writers and critics condemn and reject that western hegemonic posture over Africa and the rest of the world. Jack Goody in *The Theft of History* (2006), decrypts how Europe imposed the story of its past to the rest of the world. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) describes the distorted and disdainful representation of Arabs and Asians by Europeans. He followed Foucault’s standpoint: no discourse is fixed and indisputable. Walter Rodney, in a more incisive tone, explains *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) by depicting how Europe could achieve development by exploiting Africa. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has recently warned about “*The Danger of a Single Story*” (2009). The Nigerian writer awakens people to the risks of a unique version of a story. She argues that a one-sided story is always biased as it serves the interests of the story teller. A single story misleads because it does not cover the full context and perspective to accurately explain a situation. Multiple standpoints are therefore more likely to be more balanced.

This article probes the relevance of Afrocentricity as an African version of the story. It explores Afrocentricity as a viable frame of reference to achieve African renaissance in a globalized world. In this postmodern context where the hegemonic western grand narrative (the

claim for human progress and liberation) has been pulled to pieces, (Lyotard, 1984) it is central to take into account the African version of the story as part of the global story. Afrocentricity emerges then as an alternative story that debunks the universality and the hegemony of the West's version of the story. For Asante, the leading figure of Afrocentricity, "the Afrocentric paradigm is a revolutionary shift in thinking proposed as a structural adjustment to black disorientation, decenteredness, and lack of agency". (Asante, 2008, p. 9) Afrocentricity sheds light on the relevance of agency, that is, the necessity for black people to act independently and choose their own future without the constraints of dominant external forces. That advocacy for autonomy is a call for the awakening of black people's consciousness about history, politics, society, culture, economy, moral etc. that have long been represented and implemented according to the western frame of reference to serve their interests.

This article therefore asserts that Africans can face and fulfill renaissance by referring to Afrocentricity as a revolutionary paradigm for self-determination in a globalized world. Concepts deriving from the theory of Afrocentricity like disorientation and agency are used as reference to enlighten the development and the relevance of Afrocentricity. To back up that thesis, the first part of the analysis explores the civilizational grounds that gave rise to Afrocentricity. The second part exposes the epistemological boundary line between Afrocentricity and Eurocentrism. The third part, unveils the ideology pertaining Afrocentricity that makes it a viable way for the renaissance of Africa.

1. Afrocentricity : Grounds for a Commitment

The term Afrocentricity dates to the 1970's and has been made popular by Molefi Kete Asante since the 1980's. (Chawane, 2021) His works are inspired from the writings of Langston Hughes, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. DuBois, in a word, all African American writers, scholars, scholar-activists, intellectuals that opposed the enslavement of black people. Afrocentricity also derives from the findings of Cheikh Anta Diop whose works are considered as the major source of influence; "because he reconstructed African cultural theory with Africa as subject" (Asante,1988). One can also add the works of some contemporary writers and intellectuals like Maulana Karenga, Ama Mazama, Marimba Ani, Theophile Obenga, Tsehloane Keto Ben-Jochannan, and Niousséré Kalala Omotunde. Inspired from the chaos of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, colonialism, racial segregation and neo-colonialism undergone by Africans and African descents, Afrocentricity emerged in the context of the

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ongoing political domination, economic exploitation, cultural and scholarly disavowal of Africans by western policy.

Fundamentally, Afrocentricity is a call for a change in vision, and action for the liberation of all black people in the world. That change starts by the understanding of the way Europe has propagated and imposed knowledge about Africa as hegemonic and universal. Indeed, there was a prevailing idea propagated by a Euro-centered literature arguing that Europe's intrusion in Africa was a benevolent mission that aimed at improving Africans' lives. That view on Africa was propagated by writers and propagandists such as Joseph Arthur Gobineau, who developed the theory of the Arian master race, in his book, *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1855). He supported the idea of the superiority of white race over the rest of the human beings. The human skin color was admitted as the key criterion for their taxonomy. Later on, other European writers will follow in Gobineau's footsteps. Edward Berenson's *Heroes of Empire* (2010), for example, assigns a "human face" to European imperialism through the adventure of five European explorers in Africa from 1870 to 1914. That essay demonstrates that the colonial enterprise is still acclaimed by some contemporary proponents and writers. That breed of authors supported the argument that Atlantic slave trade and colonialism brought civilization and modernization in Africa. Africans were viewed as uncivilized; therefore, the European way of living was imposed to African indigenous populations in order to save them from "barbarity and darkness".

That Euro-centered literature somehow concurs with the triviality of African humanities. Consequently, European authors and politicians of that epoch of African invasion, were convinced of their racial superiority in all aspects of life. African knowledge in that context was viewed as non-existent. In the midst of that upheaval, European values and culture took precedence over African way of life. The western norm became the reference for the African societies. The production and diffusion of knowledge about Africa were only the prerogative of European writers and politicians. They represented Africa according to their interests, history and culture. That period was dominated by the European standpoint. They embellished European actions in Africa and advocated the "the civilizing mission". In sum, that Eurocentric propaganda literature legitimized transatlantic slave trade and colonialism as a moral obligation.

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In such a context, African indigenous knowledge was gradually destroyed or at best, sidelined. It means that the African person or community fell into an identity crisis because s/he was to conform to western axiology and taxonomy while being rooted in African mores. African assets like languages, names, religions, system of governance, land, in sum, the African civilization was undermined by that western hegemonic invasion. Moreover, that situation was aggravated by the mercantile agenda of that European intrusion. This is what the Portuguese sociologist, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, (2014, p. 153) designates by the term “epistemicide”. He writes that,

the destruction of knowledge is not an epistemological artifact without consequences. It involves the destruction of the social practices and the disqualification of the social agents that operate according to such knowledges. In mainstream economics the particular intensity of the significant spectator has imposed an especially arrogant single view, and, as a consequence, the epistemicide has been broader and deeper.

The destruction or the marginalization of the African system of knowledge has led to a bewilderment of the African person and community. Cultural hybridity rather refers to westernization. Today, many Africans ape western culture and erect it as the norm to be followed. There is an unconscious hierarchization of cultures of which the Euro-American culture is idealized. In the Afrocentrist view, such an African person is said to be disorientated because s/he lives according to a borrowed system of reference. In addition, s/he implicitly admits inferiority, marginality and defeat in the face of the Euro-centrist dogma and policy of exploitation. Therefore, s/he is not aware of the situation of dominance and cannot envisage any struggle for the renaissance of Africa. Ama Mazama explains that paradox:

Afrocentricity contends that our main problem as African people is our usually unconscious adoption of the western worldview and perspective and their attendant conceptual frameworks. The list of those ideas and theories have invaded our lives as normal, natural, or even worse, ideal is infinite” (Mazama, 2001, p. 387).

Yet, African early written literature emerged as a counter attack to debunk the supposed European civilizing mission. Writers’ literary oeuvre depicted with realism African epistemicide, that is the destruction of the indigenous system of knowledge. In narrative fiction, the writing style, the theme, as well as the pertaining ideology demonstrate that there existed an African humanity that was worth disclosing and enhancing. Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) has occupied a prominent place in the history of African written literature. The novel, indeed, is a representation of the African (Igbo tribe) standpoint about the intrusion of western civilization in Africa. The narrative is, to a certain extent, a symbolic depiction and

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revelation of the existence of an African traditional societal organization before the invasion of the Europeans. Achebe's fiction reminds that there was an African system of reference unknown to the invaders. Early African written literature, on the whole, denounces the objectification of Africans through European slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism. African writers give to the world a "different version of the story". They breach the hegemony of western imposed discourse and civilization.

In the same vein postcolonial theoretician like Fanon, in a more vitriolic tone, critics the idea of African subalternity in the context of white domination. For him, black Inferiority complex is primarily caused by economic motives before being internalized. The mercantile logic represents the real ground of colonialism. Therefore, there should be an awareness about that motive. He writes that, "the true disalienation of the black man implies a brutal awareness of the social and economic realities" (Fanon, 1966, p. 4) He goes further by adding that "the Black problem is not just about Blacks living among whites, but about Blacks exploited, enslaved, and despised by colonialist and capitalist society that happens to be white. (Fanon, 1966, p. 157) Other influential theoreticians in the field of postcolonial studies like Homi Bhabha and Spivac share somehow the legitimate commitment for self-determination of people under domination. They concur that there are alternative perceptions of the relation between the colonizer and the colonized.

The Afrocentric standpoint derives from that commitment for the African to revisit history as a subject who "tells the story" by emphasizing the African point of view. Afrocentricity intends to deconstruct the Euro-American predominating narrative by exposing its dehumanizing agenda. It is an alternative response to the annihilation, the distortion and the oppression of Africans and African descents. Afrocentricity advocates liberation and agency of black people and equality with the rest of the world. The substantive issue that irrigates the Afrocentric project is "the use of its epistemological framework to accommodate diversity without hierarchy" (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2014, p. xiv) Afrocentricity, in that perspective, becomes a reference, an alternative vision that unveils a side of African history and culture in order to demonstrate the capacity of Africans to achieve a renaissance from the chaos caused by western imperialism. It is therefore important to elucidate the meaning of Afrocentric epistemological rupture with Westernity.

2. The Meaning of the afrocentric epistemological Rupture

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that deals with the issue of knowledge. It questions the nature of that knowledge and the way it is acquired. Epistemological rupture is a concept coined by French philosopher Gaston Bachelard in 1938. Louis Althusser also used it. It is a concept that means a transformation or a radical change of a scientific paradigm and theory. In other words, it refers to the breaking down of “a truth” alleged to be irrefragable. That change gives way to a new orientation, new formula, new paradigm etc. Copernican Revolution, Darwin’s Theory of Evolution, Quantum Mechanics, Einstein’s Theory of Relativity and Freud’s Psychoanalysis are some examples of scientific epistemological ruptures in history.

The production of knowledge and its use for divergent interests has always generated misunderstanding in societies. Eurocentrism and Afrocentricity have indeed different perceptions and uses of historical knowledge. Afrocentricity defends a revisionist standpoint that castigates the dominating Euro-American position about history of Africa and its use. This analysis probes that divergence to deconstruct the Eurocentric allegation of centeredness, universality, hegemony and irrefragability. The objective is to show that Africa is capable of facing the challenges of modernity and globalization according to its own epistemological paradigm.

Among contemporary Africans at home or abroad, the prevailing and dominating paradigm that structures their thought and existence, has always been the euro-centered perspective. In the Afrocentric view it has even become a truism to assert that Africans have been formatted according to the Eurocentric model of thought and world view. Historical factors like slave trade, colonialism and today’s neo-colonialism have contributed to the dislocation of Africans. It means that Africans have shaped their identity, built their landmark, designed their system of thought according to the Eurocentric perspective. In such a context, Africans are disoriented, lost in the claws of Eurocentrism. They become passive consumers of history, cosmogony, culture, symbols, myths, institutions, axiology etc. generated by the Eurocentric worldview and interests. “The story” they learn and tell are the mimicry of the borrowed Euro-American story. This is designated by Afrocentrists as “the dislocation”, that is the loss of one’s own system of reference to the profit of another one. Asante calls for a critical observation on African societal achievements and posits them as a valuable part of humanity. For him, the systematic imitation of the West by Africans equates with their disorientation. He

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writes that, “(...) we have seen imitation and duplication, not innovation and tradition. The Akan people who created Kente cloth never attended the Rhode Island School of Design or the London School of Design. Yet their creation rival those of the most trained students of the West” (Asante, 2017, p. 178).

In the Afrocentric view, therefore, Marxism and feminism are direct responses to a situation of injustice undergone by a category of people. Marxism, analyses the uneven distribution of wealth by the ruling class and advocates the struggle of the laborers in order to take control of the means of production and ultimately set up a stateless society. As to feminism, it denounces the androcentrism that prevents western women from enjoying the same privileges as men. Both theories lay the epistemological groundwork for the liberation of oppressed people. In the same perspective, Afrocentricity emerges as an epistemological rupture to provide the African the empowerment to act not as a passive consumer of western civilization, but as an active producer of his/her own civilization in the context of globalization. It upholds an alternative historical perspective which “places the African people at the center of any analysis of African phenomena in terms of action and behavior” (Chawane, 2021, p. 80).

Afrocentricity theory advocates a set of knowledge that intends to give Africans the sense of location, the epistemological, psychological and intellectual armaments to set Africa free from the Eurocentric dogmatism. Afrocentricity is a practical knowledge that proposes an alternative reading of the history of black people. Africans are authors of their own narrative. For example, *Maat* in ancient Egypt (Kemet), is valued as moral principles that can help today's Africans face the challenges of globalization and achieve development. In fact, *Maat* is a perception grounded on humankind's endeavor to live in a natural and harmonic state. It symbolizes the permanent search for truth, justice, harmony, balance, law, morality, justice and order. Whereas, in the Eurocentrist view, Africa was a vast land of barbarity until they brought “the light of civilization”.

Other examples highlight that divergent approach of history. According to Eurocentrism, Africa came to existence, the day the first European explorers set foot in “the dark continent” to bring light and welfare to Africans. Eurocentrism sees the intrusion in Africa as a “legitimate civilization mission” for the good of Africans enchained in the dark. That perception of history operates in the African system of thought as the grand and irrefragable

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narrative to be absorbed and spread. For example, African schools and institutions, will teach that René Caillié, the French explorer, discovered Timbuktu (Mali) in 1828. There is a subliminal idea that “the discovery” by the first European René Caillié marks the beginning of the existence of Timbuktu. The Eurocentrist discourse implicitly decides and legitimates “the birth” of Timbuktu. The epistemological rupture means the revision of history to relocate Africans according to their own worldview. In this specific case of Timbuktu, Afrocentricity theory explains that Timbuktu existed since the 12th century and was organized with a system of governance, and even built the university of Sankore, the first university in the world before René Caillié’s so-called discovery. So, contrarily to Eurocentric dogma, Africans were producers of knowledge, art, literature, science long before their contact with European invaders. Henrik Clarke writes that ‘the Songhay Empire, and the university of Sankore, at Timbuctoo, was in existence over a hundred years after the slave trade had already been started along the west coast of Africa’. (Henrik Clarke, 144, p. 1977)

So, history is told according to the African perspective and interests. On the whole, Afrocentricity theory shares Diop’s approach that considers the Nile valley in ancient Egypt as the historical starting point of black African people. The Egypto-Nubian antiquity is for the Africans, what the Greco-Roman antiquity is for Europeans. Asante explains the relevance of that epistemological rupture:

By regaining our own (African) 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 (Asante, 1998, p.8).

Yet, critics have been levelled against Afrocentrists’ approach concerning the past. One of the contention points is the use of history as myth. It is admitted among the detractors that Afrocentricity is grounded in fantasies. According to them, Afrocentrists’ reference to the past is “a therapeutic mythology designed to restore the self-esteem of black American by creating a past that has never existed”. (Walker, 2001, p.xvvi). Walker (2001), Lefkowitz (1996), Adekele (2009), Howe (1999), Kwame Antony Appiah (1992) and many other critiques concur that there is a confusion between history and myth in the Afrocentric claim for historical truth. Proponents of Afrocentricity are critiqued to distort historical facts to romanticize the past of black people. That is why they assimilate Afrocentricity to Dorothy Nelkin’s creation science. It is a narrative that claims pseudo-scientific arguments to reexplain facts, theories, paradigms

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in geology, history, archeology, linguistics etc. According to Wilson J. Moses, "Afrocentrism and "creation science" are in the same category, evangelical utopian movements that couch their belief-systems in pseudo-scientific terms. They sublimate the frustration of their adherents, as they attempt to cope with the stresses and anxiety of modern urban life." (Moses, 1994, p. 47)

In addition to the critic about the lack of empirical evidence, Afrocentricity is also critiqued to promote African identity as static. For those critics, there is an African essentialism that undergirds the concept of agency. Tunde Adeleke asserts that, "the term "Afrocentric essentialism" refers to the use of Africa to advance a monolithic and homogenous history, culture and identity for all blacks, regardless of geographical location" (Adeleke, 2009, p. 11) In that perspective Afrocentricity is the reverse of Eurocentrism's claim of civilizational hegemony. Walker (2001, p. 4) maintains that Afrocentricity is Eurocentrism in black face. Besides, the acclaimed idea of "the African contribution to world civilization" by Afrocentrists is said to be exaggerated. Afrocentricity's detractors concur that African worldview is not driven by a scholarly agenda but rather motivated by an ideological and political objective.

In the meanwhile, Eurocentrism advocates that Whites' perception is absolute, universal, and irrefragable; in addition, Afrocentricity thinkers' works are criticized to be figments of an African utopia. The matter is that Eurocentrism claims to represent the norm, the standard that every people, no matter their history and culture, have to assimilate and validate as the unique and viable system of reference. However, that pervasive Eurocentric standpoint is biased; because the West stole other people's achievements to readapt to their culture and history. (Jack Goody, 2006) There is therefore a Manichean hierarchization of peoples and culture: the superiors vs the inferiors, the dominators vs the dominated, the civilized vs the uncivilized, the Center vs the Periphery etc. The question of the accuracy of the past is, in fact, of secondary importance because there is no history without ideology. Joyce Appleby (1995, p. 7- 8) raises the point:

If truth depends on the observer's standpoint, how can there be any transcendent, universal, or absolute truth, or at least truths that hold for all groups for many generations? (...) knowledge about the past is simply an ideological construction intended to serve particular interests making history a series of myths establishing or reinforcing group identities"

The Afrocentric episteme is to reveal the side of history hidden by western hypocrisy and mercantile predatory assault. Contrary to Eurocentrism, Afrocentricity does not claim

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hegemony neither in knowledge nor in politics. Afrocentricity advocates diversity, and plurality of views. In other words, Afrocentricity does not claim to be “the” norm (or the Center) but argues that humankind is made of different norms. Each culture has its norm, its center; not any center has precedence over another center. The Afrocentric epistemological rupture fundamentally promotes multiculturalism as the hallmark of its commitment. No culture, no people should be downtrodden and left on the fringe of “the global village”. Yet, in that perspective, Africans remain anchored in their own center while encountering the alterity. They aim to be sovereign in every aspect of their life. Monteiro-Ferreira is more explicit. She says that, “Actually, this means that Afrocentric theory seeks neither a totalizing nor a universal scope and certainly not an essentialized perspective on knowledge. It does not set itself up as a universal standard and does not criticize Eurocentrism in its particularity”. (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2014, p. 1)

So, in the Afrocentric perspective, the epistemological rupture means that Africans should be committed to build a world in which “pluralism exists without hierarchy and respect for cultural origins, achievements, and prospect is freely granted “(Asante, 1998, p. xii) The Afrocentric vision is relevant as it is a claim for co-existence, the right to heterogeneity and mutual respect. However, in the context of globalization, that ideal of multiculturalism faces the reality of western predatory logic over Africa. Afrocentricity will therefore operate as an ideology for the liberation of contemporary Africa.

3. Afrocentricity: the Ideology of Liberation

Knowledge about history, rid of western logic of mystification, gives the Africans the capacity to act for a positive change. It is a commitment for a new narrative of the African history. In this optic, Afrocentricity generates a new African identity which is rather focused on awareness and struggle instead of victimization and defeat. There is a shift in paradigm. Africans are henceforth subjects of their own destiny. This is designated in the Afrocentric theory as the concept of “agency”; that is the capacity for Africans to acquire “the psychological and cultural resources necessary for the advancement of human freedom”. (Asante, 2008, p. 40) Today’s Africans have to claim solidarity and act independently as agents in order to retrieve their political, economic, social, cultural and by extension, their military freedom. Such a commitment to finding the African subject place is an effective struggle for liberation; which ineluctably leads to the renaissance of Africa.

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Prominent scholars of Afrocentricity insisted on the commitment to finding the African subject place. That standpoint first starts with the change of the Euro-American names of Africans into native African names. For the scholars of Afrocentricity Euro-American names are slave names that infer that Africans are still sealed by the Euro-American predatory ideology. Africans that have Euro-American names are still the property of White slave owners. Scholars of Afrocentricity set the pace by getting rid of their Euro-American names. Molefi Kete Asante, born Arthur Lee Smith Jr. Ama Mazama, born Marie-Josée Cérol. Maulana Ndabezitha Karenga born Ronald McKinley Everett. Marimba Ani, born Dona Richard. Niousséré Kalala Omotunde, born Jean-Philippe Corvo. They all convey through their new African names an effective shift of identity. For those scholars, the global village, or the multicultural world should be the expression of heterogeneity and not the enforcement of a Euro-American homogeneity; and that position starts with the change of names. It means the refusal to be the property of a dominating entity.

So, besides its epistemological groundings and perspectives, Afrocentricity is also a societal vision that intends to debunk the hegemonic position of Eurocentrism and sets up a non-hierarchical world in which Africans are capable of agency, that is, free to decide their future. The ideology of Afrocentricity operates therefore as a commitment for black liberation. According to Asante, "Africans must pursue the most determined manner the practice of renaissance, that is, rebirth of the culture, philosophy, traditions, and values of the continent, not in some antiquated form but in the spirit of creatives responses to the contemporary times (Asante, 2008, p. 68). It means that to achieve renaissance, Africans have to lean on their cultural matrix to elaborate a coherent, present-day and operational ideology.

The epistemological rupture of Afrocentricity, as detailed in the above section, aims at the formation of an ideology of liberation. The domains of economy, politics, culture, moral and to an extent, military defense, are revisited from the Afrocentric perspective. The objective is to demonstrate that Africans are capable of self-determination by referring to the wisdom of Maat: a system of values deriving from the ancient Egypt that is fundamentally based on the advocacy of truth, justice, harmony and balance. (Karenga 2003) That is why in the Afrocentric view, the search for agency does not mean the denial or the subjugation of non-Africans. The ideology of liberation is a call for human voluntary collaboration for mutually beneficial

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relationship: an exchange in which everyone is accountable to one another. Notions like exclusion, racism, exploitation, autarchy etc. are proscribed. Freedom and reciprocal respect undergird the Afrocentric ideology for liberation. Afrocentricity identifies Pan-Africanism as the political cornerstone of that ideology of liberation.

Pan-Africanism represents the essence of the Afrocentric political struggle for renaissance. The idea of African unity emerged within the African Americans in the period of slavery. Early African American politicians and writers concurred that Pan-Africanism was the pivotal tool against black disenfranchisement. Pan-Africanism today means the coming together of all Africans as one nation, one people no matter the domiciliation. It implies the development of a historical consciousness cognizant of the benefits of that unity in today's context of globalization.

On the African continent, Pan-Africanism represented the core of the struggle of early African intellectuals. Cheikh Anta Diop, for example, theorized the urge for that renaissance in a series of essays. Afrocentrists today view the Senegalese researcher's works as foundational to the theory of Afrocentricity. He charted the pathway for the renaissance of Africa. His combined intellectual and political ambition was to aware Africans about their cultural, political, economic potentialities and to foster the necessity of African renaissance.

For the researcher, the issue of African renaissance, is first of all, the development of a historical consciousness. Diop's works assert that African history and culture were distorted to suit the predatory greed of the West. He demonstrated the anteriority of African civilization and debunked the idea of barbarity of African culture propagated by the West. Then, his works contributed to the development of a critical mind, that is, the conscientization about African subalternity and oppression by the West. He writes that "there exists a capitalist exploitation which is the cause of all our misery and which cannot stop without the total annihilation of colonialism" (Diop, 1990, p. 48). That is why he declared that, "we must oppose coalition with coalition" (Diop, 1990, p. 177). The concept of agency matches with the call by Diop for unity and action for the liberation of Africa. Diop's works are irrigated by the necessity of Pan-Africanism as the prerequisite for African renaissance.

In addition to the commitment for Pan-Africanism, Afrocentricity advocates a fair relationship between Africans and non-Africans. According to that logic, there is no idea of auto-isolation; and economic exchanges, for example, should be based on the principle of mutual respect for the good of the people. African raw materials, in that case, are African

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people's property. As such, the first beneficiaries should be the African people and not the West and their accomplices, that is, the African political leaders. In the context of global exchange, based on the rules of market economy, the logic of reciprocity should be preeminent in any deal. Contrarily to the Eurocentric philosophy and practices based on theft, lie, greed, arrogance, condescension and enslavement of Africans, Afrocentricity is a commitment for a mutual beneficial deal. The ideology of liberation is a strong and head on claim for an equitable economic exchange. African fiction writers like Ayi Kwei Armah have represented that Afrocentric ideal for transactions between people. The African way in *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), is based on "reciprocity, equity and equality". The critic Abena Busia (1992, p. 62) explains the ideological stance of that narrative:

The concept of reciprocity is an important one in the work. The tribulations begin when the people forget that for everything given, something must be received in return; "the way" teaches that those who give without receiving are the victims of their recipients, and their generosity is a form of self-hatred.

On the whole, the Afrocentrist ideology aims to build a new African mindset. Being Afrocentrist means practicing the concept of agency; that is working independently and not enjoying a freedom by derogation. That new standpoint should be rooted in the imperative claim and implementation of the subject place in issues dealing with the fate of the African people. Being African on a mere essentialist ground, is not operational in the Afrocentrist perspective. Asante (2008, p. 47) asserts that,

Only those who are consciously African, given to appreciating the need to resist annihilation culturally, politically and economically, can claim to be adequately in the arena of Afrocentricity. This is not to say that there are not Africans, just not Afrocentric. Thus, to be African, Afrocentrically located, is to claim a kinship with struggle and pursue an ethic of justice against all forms of human oppression.

Besides, training the African minds for the implementation of the Afrocentrist ideology of liberation should be mandatory. The primary asset to achieve African renaissance is the grey matter. That is why in the vision of the theorists of Afrocentricity, universities in Africa should be designed to decolonize the mind as N'gugi suggests in his essay. Carter G. Woodson's *The Miseducation of the Negro* (1933), set an important principle that should guide the education of black people in the context of oppression and domination. He contended that Blacks'

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education should be substantive and useful for the development of the black learners and should not oppress, mislead and degrade them.

For the theorists of Afrocentricity, therefore, students in African schools and universities today are taught according to a curriculum dominated by western ideology and knowledge. The teachings are not designed in the Afrocentric view and do not serve the African interests. Western educational standards contribute to the dislocation and dis-agency of young graduate Africans. According to Asante, “Afrocentricity seeks to respond to the dislocation of the African student in such an educational system by providing philosophical and theoretical guidelines and criteria which are centered in the African perception of reality”. (Asante, 2008, p. 79) The Institute KemetMaat Cheikh Anta Diop appears, in this regard, to be an avant-gardist university that aims to develop the critical mind of young Africans according to the Afrocentrist ideology of African liberation.

Today for the new generation of African critics, it is necessary to draw from the achievements of African culture and history, the resources for Africa's development. From now on, Africans must banish the almost childish imitation of the West. They in a way, follow the Afrocentrist perspective. Felwine Sarr (2016, p. 10), for example, calls on Africans to remove themselves from the dependence of the West. The West is criticized for “its mechanical model of civilization that has ordained the mandate of quantity over quality, of having over being”. For the critic, the imperative commitment for self-determination (Afrotopia) should be rooted in African societal assets. Sarr (2016, p. 11) asserts that:

Within a global context where the project of civilization has broken down, the African utopia will consist of opening up other paths for living together and rearticulating the relations between the different cultural, social, economic, and political spheres, by creating a new space of signification, and by organizing a new scale of values that would be founded upon its own cultures and fertile ontomythologies. Constructing societies that make sense for those living within them. Going against the tide of Western globalization, charting their own course.

Afrocentricity remains a theoretical and ideological perspective that has the capacity to trigger effective development in Africa. However, it is a long-term commitment. The gap between the ideal of change and the reality of its implementation requires more time. That is why the education of the population, especially, young people in the perspective of Afrocentricity, is mandatory.

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Conclusion

For the theorists of Afrocentricity, the commitment for African renaissance is imperative. It is the key condition to set Africa free from the cultural shackles, the economic predation, the political and military domination imposed by the West. To fulfill that goal, there should be a conscientization about the nature and the outcome of the current relationship between Africa and the globe, chiefly, with the Euro-American coalition.

That call for awareness is first of all about history and its use. This paper points out the distorted representation of Africa in Eurocentrism literature that aims to serve the interests of the West. Afrocentricity amends the image and the role of Africa in history by highlighting the contribution of Africa in the production of knowledge. That revisionist posture proved that Africa was rather dynamic, opened up and organized in all aspects of life. In that posture, there is a subtle warning that he who does not know his history, is condemned to undergo it. Africans retrieve their centeredness and feel more confident in the struggle for renaissance.

Afrocentricity is then a contemporary combat for the liberation of Africa. African self-assertion starts with the riddance of the mental bondage that makes the African see him/herself as a black version of a Euro-American. From that condition, s/he engages a relation based not on exploitation and domination, but on equity, reciprocity and respect with non-Africans. It means that economy, politics, culture and military defense are henceforth organized and sustained by the principle of agency. Afrocentricity eliminates the position and the role of marginality and advocates the commitment for subject place and role in the context of globalization.

Thought criticized for its romanticized representation of Africa in history, Afrocentricity remains a relevant theoretical framework and a persuasive ideology to fulfill the African renaissance. The conscientization dynamism, the permanent recall of the African's capacity for self-determination, the advocacy for multiculturalism based on equality are some of the characteristics that position Afrocentricity as a viable armament for the renaissance of Africa in this globalized world.

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