

The Humanities and the Dynamics of African Culture in the 21st Century

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Edited by

John Ayotunde Isola Bewaji

Kenneth W. Harrow

Eunice E. Omonzejie

and Christopher E. Ukhun

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INTRODUCTION

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It is indisputable that Africa is at a crossroads in an increasingly globalized world. Equally unassailable is the fact that in Africa, the Humanities as a broad field of intellection, research and learning appears to have been pigeonholed in debates of relevancy in the development aspirations of many African nations. Historical experiences and contemporary research outputs indicate, however, that the Humanities, in its various shades, is critical to Africa's capacity to respond effectively to the problems of security, corruption, political ineptitude, communal clashes, poverty, superstition, HIV/AIDS and Ebola pandemics, environmental degradation and kidnapping, among many other mounting challenges which confront peoples of Africa. The vibrancy and resilience of Africa's cultures against these and other odds of globalization episodes in the course of our history, demand focused attention of academia to exploit their relevance to contemporary issues.

It is within this purview that the Faculty of Arts, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma - Nigeria organized its 2nd International Conference from 12 to 15 March, 2014 with the theme "*The Humanities and the Dynamics of African culture in the New Millennium*" which sought to explore the relationship between the Humanities and these cultural dynamics in Africa and the African Diaspora.

This book of carefully selected peer-reviewed articles is a product of that auspicious colloquium. The works presented in this compendium provide a comprehensive overview of issues in the Humanities at the turn of the 21st century, which create a veritable platform for the global redefinition and understanding of Africa's rich cultures and traditions. These thought-provoking and compelling studies explore the possibilities of Africa's anchorage on the Humanities for cultural development in the new millennium. Therefore the successful production of this volume represents a huge tribute to our Faculty's commitment to academic excellence.

The book is divided into eight sections based on the sub-themes of the colloquium preceding this publication. These are:

Part I: Ruminations in Metaphysics and Psychology

Part II: Traditions: Pathos and Ethos

Part III: African Religions Interrogated

Part IV: Cinematic and Literary Connections

Part V: Linguistics/Language Dialectics

Part VI: Cultural identities and Values

Part VII: Media and Evolving African Culture

Part VIII. Culture: Theoretical/Historical/Conceptualizations

Contributions to this volume are unanimous in the conclusion that advancing our understanding of Africa's cultural realities is critical to the establishment of sustainable development and socio-cultural stability. Certainly, they demonstrate how the influence of the Humanities is essential in addressing the developmental issues and challenges which plague the continent of Africa and its Diaspora.

PART I:
RUMINATIONS IN METAPHYSICS
AND PSYCHOLOGY

CHAPTER ONE

LIBERATION HUMANITIES?

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Keynote Lecture delivered during the second Faculty of Arts International Conference on *The Humanities & the Dynamics of African Culture in the 21st century*, March 11 to 15, 2014 at Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria

Introduction

More than two decades ago, Nigerian universities went through the throes of a fraught, confused, misguided and flawed disciplinary rationalization in the tertiary level of education. The University of the West Indies went through a similar experience in the mid-90s, which led to the transition of the Unit of Philosophy becoming the third leg of the Department of Language, Linguistics, and Philosophy, and subsequently the Faculties of Arts and Education merging to form what is now the Faculty of Humanities and Education. The effort at rationalization was not unprecedented in most countries of the world as there has always been a need to find a proper mix and balance between the training of the young for service delivery, production of local needs, and for export, and in the general training of the workforce to meet the needs of national development. And when societies define paths to development in certain ways, there usually arises the need to align the training efforts and strategies to the targets set for development. The question one could ask is: was the rationalization driven by the developmental objectives of Nigeria, Jamaica, and the Caribbean (in the case of the University of the West Indies), or was it driven by real or concocted resource dearth?

In the case of Nigeria, the latter was the case. Rationalization was not motivated by development imperatives but by resource allocation

misplacement of priorities (Nigeria is good at manufacturing crises where none exist), which warranted the search for the soft targets from which diversions of resources could be made, to feed the expanding and uncontrollable appetite for misappropriation and conversion of public funds to private use, or for feeding private overseas accounts.

Even more significant was the challenge that some of the faculty members may not have been teaching what they were paid to teach, as they continue to peddle to their hapless wards the need for them to emancipate themselves from mental slavery of the twin bogey of religious backwardness and ethnic jingoism in the case of Nigeria, while in the case of Jamaica there is scant appreciation of the destructive pervasiveness of the contrived tribalism of political partisanship by the members of the academy who should champion the emancipation of the inheritors of colonial and plantation slavery to move to self-ownership of their destinies, as Bob Marley had canvassed when he advocated that people should emancipate themselves from mental slavery. And to compound matters, in recent times, there were reports of a state in the South West of Nigeria where the misguided powers (in the executive arm of government) told teachers of history, the indigenous languages, and other “ephemeral”, subjects, to go and find something “better” to do – including higglering as option, politics (parasitism of the first order), law enforcement (police and “wetin u carry” ability), food vending, and farming! This is not to say that higglering (long distance buying and selling of eclectic items as in haberdashery), food vending or farming are not noble and respectable occupations which require a lot of entrepreneurial skill and discipline to be successful at; what rankles is the ignominy of the imbecility of such a directive from functionaries of government charged with the responsibility of leading present generations to secure better future for generations unborn.

Regarding the vaunted rationalization bandwagon heralded by a cacophony of pollutive noise, what we witnessed was the loss of direction for both the educational system and traditions in terms of focus, principle, practice, and goal, to the extent that we started to glorify area boys and girls in the academy. Virtually all aspects of life are suffused with noise, panning into what I have described as the higgler-ization of the academy and the Coronation-ization of discourse, after the Jamaican Coronation Market open buying and selling traditions, which were retentions from the African heritage of those forcibly enslaved in New World plantations.

In this discussion we suggest that the inherited humanities education, as we have it passed down to us with the legacy of colonialism and Oxbridge tradition, without liberation from the shackles of

institutionalized intellectual slavery, colonialism, imperialism, cronyism, and global hegemonic pressures and directives from external erstwhile controlling colonial forces, cannot but continue to produce the parodies of humanity which have bred upheavals, discontent, insurgency, misplacement of resources, and total abandonment of reason in official quarters in Nigeria; of which the one mentioned earlier of (a) a government disparaging humanities education, as well as (b) the global unemployment/underemployment of the youth that pervades Nigeria and Jamaica, and indeed many African landscapes, and (c) the near failed state status of Nigeria and Jamaica, with rampant crime and near anarchy are just some examples. To clarify what is meant here we divide our discussion into four sections in which:

- a) We examine the epistemicide on which the inherited humanities education has been built in Nigeria, as well as in other African societies,
- b) We chronicle the deleterious effects of this epistemicide on Nigeria, Jamaica, and the rest of global Africa, bearing in mind that Africa has six regions as defined by the African Union.
- c) We articulate what we describe as **liberation humanities** and,
- d) We sketch, by way of recommendations, the potential positive effects of liberation humanities on Nigeria and the rest of Africa and its Diaspora.

Epistemicide

By a quirk of macabre genius, Western (establishment male Western with its extensions in North America and the Pacific in the form of Australia and New Zealand) societies seem to have mastered the art of cultural engineering necessary to destroy the social, cultural, political, educational, psychological, religious, and all other intellectual modes of being of peoples of other climes (Mazower 1998). As Europe awoke from its primitivism and backwardness, being behind human beings in other climes until the middle of the last millennium, and carefully perusing the foundations of atavistic domination of other people, choreographed in its new found religion, with the most violent scriptures ever concocted in human history as guide, it set about the business of world domination in earnest. What is known as the Dark Ages in Europe was only dark because it was a time when Europeans suffered from extreme poverty, ignorance, disease, and want; a time when its humanities, the sciences, and technology were so rudimentary that it had only succeeded in occasional

emergence from the cave to gaze in awe at the ferocity of nature, while looking down South and East in awe at the greatness of the Egyptians, the Abyssinians, the Persians, the Indians, and the Chinese with envy and greed (Mazower 1998). This was responsible for the sudden ferment of theories of political and social existence, evidenced in the contract theories, designed to explain and tame the extremisms of political power holders in society and generating strands of nihilism, fascism, and existentialism (Bewaji 1998). Clearly this was a time when Africans, as well as human beings in other climes, had understood the processes and forces of nature, domesticated animals, dammed the Nile, knew about Caesarean Section, neurosurgery on the human head, performed various feats of architectural engineering, mapped the movements of the “heavenly” bodies, created empires and states, and advanced the knowledge of pharmacology, metallurgies, mathematics, sciences, and technologies (Mokhtar 1990; Davidson 1992, 1995; Shyllon 1987).

We may remember that when Europeans finally became aware that there were other human beings in other parts of the world and started venturing out of their abysmal enclaves, they called such forays explorations, discovery journeys and expeditions. Driven by the desire to find resources to support the miserable existence of the cold regions and the appetite of the bourgeoisie goods and services, by contrast with the exploited class, Europeans forayed into other climes for exploitation, appropriation, and expropriation. It was no wonder that when they got to the Caribbean they thought, in ignorance, they had reached the land of Genghis Khan and the Indian subcontinent, naming their newfound land the West Indies. Even more fantastic was the idea that Columbus discovered the Americas, a continent with which Africa had traded and to which its migrant and visiting traders and settlers had bequeathed the Pyramids and other accoutrements of civilization. But these European falsifications of history are still being taught to our children today, making us welcome and celebrating a black history month as a corrective to thousands of years and months of destruction of African history, indigenous knowledge systems, cultures, and civilizations.

It is very serious that having been deceived that civilization began only 2,600 years ago, when the Western man became human, and that all else before then was naught; having been enslaved or colonized by superior brutality, and having been dependent for so long on the pittance that the oppressive West has ever been generous to drip and trickle down, the only thing that the Africana human being could aim to become is Western (Taiwo 2010, Fanon 1961, 1952). We not only do this by wearing three piece suits in 40 degree Celsius weather (in Botswana in December for

example), nor do we simply ape the white male's mannerisms and idiosyncrasies, we become disconnected socially from each other by becoming individualistic and atomistic, not caring to take interest in each other's existence. To compound the situation we also disconnect by buying into the political party contestations of greedy cabals in the name of the warped farce called "democracy", and we top it up by toning up our skins, so as to attain what is regarded as high colour (browning), or marry up (marrying a light skinned person or of Indian, Chinese, or Caucasian extraction, no matter how ugly the person may be) to gain acceptance for our humanity, within the group of those we consider superior on account of their complexion! And even when science tells us that there is no superior or inferior humans anywhere, and even when apostles of freedom in the West celebrate equality of humans (meaning equality of thieving whites), Africana peoples still, out of self-hatred or *ignorantiam tremens*, continue to prefer the rejects of the foreign societies as expatriates in their own societies.

All of these add up to a rank failure that we must speak of, so that maybe, just maybe, someone in the quarters of power and authority would say: "Wait a minute! How did we get to this sorry pass so quickly? We, who were descendants of great ancestry, what happened to turn us into collective beggars that no one wants to see? How did we become a collective disaster as a people, capable only of dusting the shoes of other people? Why are we totally shameless in the decadence of our existence, pursuing crass primitive accumulation for personal aggrandisement, in opposition to looking out for our collective interest? Why are we capable only of drawing the proverbial water and hewing stones and making mortar and bricks for the development of other races, their cities and civilizations, and not finding anything good in ourselves and in our kind?" We even wholly swallowed the sham suggestion that borrowing and indebtedness were necessary for the development of our societies, thereby becoming enmeshed in the debt trap, grants and aids dependency syndrome, and using the best of our resources to service interests on these loans. We should instead be able to utilize our resources for education and other social services for our people. And probably then someone would do a more serious analysis of the diet of rubbish that we call education – Western education – the purveyor of Western barbarism, which is mostly capable only of destruction in the name of progress and civilization through inordinate consumerism and pollution, and then maybe we would seek to redirect our mode of upbringing of our young to a more civilized and indigenous African path, and then probably our humanity may be restored and the rest of the world may come back to learn from us again,

as the masters who made humanity possible in the first place! But in order to properly understand the Africana predicament, there is a need to understand what I call “epistemicide”, which in my view, is the most carefully crafted and implemented mechanism for the destruction of Africana peoples.

Understanding Epistemicide

Both “genocide” and “infanticide” are examples of crimes that have been recognized by all civilizations as acts of cruelty, inhumanity, and reprehensible oppression by humans to other humans and to our common humanity. Genocide has received the most condemnation, by comparison to infanticide, because of the experience of the Jews; but the other peoples who have been the targets of genocide, like the Palestinians or similar gruesome experiences in Africa, the Americas, or Asia, have not been fortunate to have equally condemned their oppressors and destroyers. This is probably a result of the limited capacity of the victims of these assaults to advocate, demand, and obtain redress, which evidences the Yoruba proverb, *bi owo eni o ba i te eku ida, a ki I be e re iku to pa baba eni* – if one is not holding the sword by the handle, one should not ask what/who killed one’s father. But no effort has been made, to the best of my knowledge, either to understand, document, and annotate the worst form of human cruelty and destruction, with the most effective harmful effects on peoples and cultures that has ever been devised by human beings and visited on other human beings – epistemicide – or to actively redress its effects.

What is epistemicide? How does it work? How is it used? What are the motives of its purveyors? What effects or consequences does it have on societies and peoples and their development? Why is it so dangerous? Who benefits from it? How is it to be redressed or defeated, in order for Africa’s proper development to begin in earnest? These are only some of the pressing critical questions that must be asked and answered. It is clear to me that raising these issues may not be popular, just as mentioning the question of reparations to black people for the sordid slaveries in the Atlantic and the Arabian worlds are unpopular, and efforts to bring them to light usually disregarded.

Let me itemize the various manifestations, stages, and advancement of “epistemicide” as was perpetrated by the Europeans on Africa, before undertaking a precise definition of the phenomenon. This inventorization, I believe, will place in proper relief, and beyond doubt, the situation which Africana peoples have to contend with, in order to ever begin to undertake

the project of continental independence and there-after intellectual and cultural reclamation for the overall project of identity and existential redemption for global African peoples:

- a) In the first instance, we have the Hamitic hypothesis, which suggested that because of some egregious event in some remote part of the Arabian Desert, where one drunken man's nudity was accidentally observed by his son, all blacks were cursed to be servants to all other hues of humanity.
- b) Second was the deliberate stealing of the intellectual cultural heritage in the arts, sciences, mathematics, technologies, civilizations, artefacts, religions, epistemologies, and metaphysics of Africa, among others (Bernal 1987; Davidson 1966, 1992; Diop 1974, 1978, 1992; James 1954; Okpaku 1988; Sertima 1991, 1993; Williams 1971; Williams 1931). Thus we now hear even from colleagues that Africans only had oral traditions, as if it was possible to build and maintain the cities that dotted the space-scape of Africa before the Common Era without writing, record keeping, and science and technology.
- c) The third stage which followed was a period of consistent, persistent, meticulous, concerted, and systematic assault on and destruction of African indigenous knowledge systems, the historical evidence of African civilizations, value systems, governance structures, arts, philosophies (metaphysics especially), religions and philosophies of religion, and identities (Diop 1974, Bernal 1987, Williams 1971, James 1974).
- d) The next stage is the denial of the existence of African civilization, the denial of African intellectual contributions to humanity, and the attendant denial of the great African scientific and technological knowledge systems and the denial of the existence and meaningfulness and validity of alternative and other epistemological and metaphysical paradigms, apart from the Judeo-Christian European and Arabo-Islamic paradigms (Hegel 1958; Locke 1990; Farrar, Tempels, Goody 1971, 1977; Horton 1993; Croegaert 2005, etc).
- e) The deliberate replacement of African knowledge systems, educational content, systems and practices, value systems, cultural ideas and practices, identities, religious systems and practices, ideologies and metaphysics of being, with European (and Arab) ones that were developed in environments of discord, poverty, and inhumanity of the most extreme became a systematic objective when the first Europeans finally ventured out of Europe.

- f) The culmination of the above was the total negation of the humanity and intellectual capacity of the subaltern peoples of the world – with Africa being the most affected.

What then is “epistemicide”? I define “epistemicide” as the deliberate act, behaviour, exercise or crime, violent or non-violent, overt or benign, of omission or commission, committed against a group or groups with the sole or ultimate intent of destroying the existence of the group or groups; it is a coordinated plan of different actions and inactions aimed at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national or racial groups, with the ultimate intention of annihilating the groups themselves or making a nullity the identity, self-esteem, self-awareness or corporate existence, as autonomous or separate being, of a group or groups. It is the deliberate, calculated, concerted and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group identity, or belief in such separate identity and existence, through the negations of their knowledge systems, denial and expropriation of their intellectual property, and foisting on the intellect of the target society or group a mendicant and supplicant, genuflecting approach to existence.

It is by far more dangerous than both genocide and infanticide combined, but it often manifests in the most sophisticated and benign manner, subtly appearing to create in the victim a Stockholm syndrome kind of reaction and attitude. This is because epistemicide, when visited on the intellectual heritage of any group, society, or people, has a lasting effect, which transmutes into internalized, replicable, self-destruction of the intellectual heritage of the target society or group, thereby becoming self-sponsoring, self-propelling, self-promoting, and almost irreversible in consequences.

Old habits die hard and every local white researcher who has access to some funding and some half-baked idea constitutes himself/herself as an expert on Africa, claiming to know where Africans came from and how they have lived their lives in the jungles and in the crevices of the deserts! Various scholars have enunciated aspects of this phenomenon - from Fanon to Rodney and Taiwo - but what has been missing has been a synthesis, to explain why the Africana predicament is this parlous. Even as late as 1999, Croegaert would write the following inponderable nonsense:

At a later date an important cultural landmark appears whose origins seem to be round about 900 BC: the Nok culture. This culture will develop in a surprising and original way between 500 BC and 200 AD on the Bauchi plateau north of the Benue-Niger confluent (sic) in what is now Nigeria. It is one of those privileged places where the classical elements propitious to

the birth and propagation of all cultures are present: streams and rivers, the “roads-that-walk”. Here then appears the first evidence of a typically Negro artistic creation: terracotta figurines with thick prominent lips, stylized coiffures, and enlarged eyes with slightly divergent pupils producing already the artist’s personal vision which goes beyond descriptive naturalism (Croegaert 1999, 19).

His exercise does not warrant being dignified in any way, but we note it just to show how deep-seated epistemicide is, and how lasting the epistemic deficit that arises from it has been. It is to this – leadership epistemic deficit – that we now turn.

Effects of Epistemicide on Nigeria and global Africa – Epistemic Deficit

How does epistemicide work? How is/was it used? What are the motives or goals of its purveyors? What effects or consequences does it have on societies and peoples and their development? Why is it so dangerous? Who benefits from it? How is it to be redressed or defeated, in order for Africa’s proper development to begin in earnest? To answer these questions there is a need for us to annotate what is described as **epistemic deficit** here, especially on the part of Africana social, scientific, technological, political, economic, religious, intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, cultural, and psychological leadership.

Olufemi Taiwo (2010) has described *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa*, by separating Christianity from colonialism and thereby lamenting the fact that the colonial masters did not allow Christian modernity to take root, so that the Europeanization of Africa would have been complete, and the cloning of the African humanity after the Western European ego-individualist destructive paradigm would have been total. He thinks that the various problems afflicting Africa, such as those of governance, economic disempowerment, technological weakness, social non-cohesion, educational deprivation, cultural and religious limbo, intellectual and scientific backwardness which leads to the acceptance of mediocrity, and numerous other ills in the Africana socio-political terrain, are consequences of Africa failing to be properly and totally colonized with wholesome ideas of modernity. He assumes that the colonizers were altruistic and benevolent human beings, who were set on the agenda of true “civilization” of the peoples of other climes, such that it was because some miscreants in the colonial process misappropriated and mismanaged, for personal and group narrow selfish interests, that Africa’s developmental process were scuttled and derailed. For Taiwo (2010, 51), it is:

Needless to say, the program of economic transformation that a true transition to modernity would have necessitated never took off: from the standpoint of the dominant administrator class, the colonies were useful only for the natural resources that could be extracted from them. This is why we must develop a different attitude in our assessment of the missionary role in the transition to modernity in Africa.

For someone who started out an illustrious academic carrier with a careful examination of the philosophy of individualism, it is strange that he was able to make the kind of distinction that he makes between the instrument of colonization and the goal or effect of colonization, approbating one and denigrating the other, without seeing that there can be no meaningful way of separating the instrument from the product. The objective of his analysis is the empowerment of African scholars with epistemic tools for proper analysis and understanding of the African predicament, but this has become circumvented in a quagmire of personal disenchantment with the miasma of African material, cultural, intellectual stagnation, and economic underdevelopment. This is an understandable quagmire, but the exculpation of religion from the totality of the project of epistemicide leads one to appreciate even better the intellectual and leadership epistemic deficit that we wish to annotate in this section. As a person who is closely acquainted with the contributions of this author in the trenches with the progressive activism and protest movement against colonialism, it is strange how Taiwo came to the conclusions he has reached, especially when one bears in mind the content of the Christian scriptures and the use to which they have been put historically to underwrite slavery, colonial, and post-colonial projects.

In my view, the objective is different, but the methodology is akin to what the colonial scholars have articulated. Taiwo's objective is to stimulate scholars to begin to take a second look at the reasons why Africa's development has, at best, been epileptic if not totally comatose, and why Africa has remained at the bottom of the socio-economic, material, and technological development. But his reasoning is so similar to that of Horton in uncanny ways and even in the selection of parsimonious illustrations, that one would wonder whether Taiwo realizes it. Take for example, when he says:

The second obstacle to my kind of rethinking is that nationalist historiography, as well as a widely dispersed anti-colonial animus among African intellectuals, leads to a plague-on-all-your-houses attitude, under which it is almost *de rigueur* for African scholars to criticize anything colonial and, by association, anything Western. One unfortunate effect of this attitude is that it does not differentiate between what Christianity did

and what colonialism wrought; and as a result gives short shrift to the ideas and strivings of Africans who accepted Christianity but not colonialism and celebrated what it brought them in terms of social living, being human, and such like. It is part of my hope that the case made here will persuade more scholars to take the products – ideas, institutions, practices – of African agents more seriously, regardless of whether or not we agree with them (Taiwo 2010, 52).

To properly understand the hiatus here, it is only necessary to illustrate what I describe as “epistemic deficit”. At the presentation of my essay “Education and Society – Requiem for Western Education in Africana Societies” in Rio De Janeiro CBAAC International Colloquium in November 2008, one member of the audience asked me how I was able to celebrate the death of Western education, when it was that education which made it possible for me to be here, far away from my African continent hometown, speaking this foreign tongue – English– so well and being able to be understood by diverse peoples whose native languages were not even English? The assumptions were that were it not for good old colonization, I would not have been able to be so far away from home and to be understood by peoples of other climes, as if Africans had not roamed the world before Europe became civilized enough to venture out of its miserable land space.

Further, it was presumed that my humanity would not have been meaningful or complete without my colonization, as if your, my, our ancestors who built the pyramids, the great cities of Zimbabwe, the West African cities before Western males visited them, dammed the Nile, and who had visited the Aztec country and built pyramids there were not way more civilized than the primitive cavemen which Europeans were until the beginning of the last millennium. For them, the best accident that ever happened to me was my being educated in Western schools and being able to speak in this forked tongue; after all, this is what Robin Horton (1993) had meant when he celebrated the world, or European language, English: “And comparisons between such thought-systems required a standard, universally-current medium. Both of these considerations dictated that the thought-systems of the various peoples of the world be translated into terms of a ‘world’ language. And for the time being, ‘world’ language meant Western language” (Horton 1993, 2).

When I say that contemporary Africans have a leadership epistemic deficit in all areas, I do not mean that Africana leaders are lacking in all manners or forms of technical know-how, formal or book knowledge, schooling in the form of attendance at classroom-based learning, geared toward parasitism and elitism. That type of oversimplification will not be

meaningful, nor would such general intellectual insult be sustainable in any way. In fact, to make such an arrogant statement would condemn one's analysis to a limbo of political grandstanding. Nor am I suggesting that some of the African intellectuals are not probably the most brilliant in the areas of their specialization – including sadly, as in the case of Taiwo above, being some of the most brilliant apologists of colonialism when they set their minds to it!

To understand “deficit”, I use the analogy of finance and business – this is the domain from which I borrow the term. Deficit in finance and business is not necessarily evil, especially when the person, group, or state challenged understands exactly what is short, missing, or weak and it is temporary, but more importantly it is recognized as merely a contingency bridge and concerns investment in productive venture capable of generating profit in the future. In this regard, it is critical to have a terminal span within which the shortage will have been eradicated, so that healthy independence can be restored and normal – equilibrium – operations, which saddle the business with no compromising overhead, is emplaced. Liberal economists would urge that there is need often for externally generated resources – Foreign Direct Investment – to propel development and growth, with the ostensible goal of becoming independent and capable of operating on one's steam.

However, when deficit in this sense becomes the new norm and remains the only permanent feature of business; when businesses, individuals, or states persistently live on borrowing, with no end in sight for the liquidation of debt; when the temporary investment or expenditure bridge becomes recurrent, when deficit becomes endemic, when the agency borrows to service interest on a loan, when one receives aid, grant, or other such resource only to be repatriated to the source; then one must understand the vicious poverty cycle that it generates. Thus, when what should be an occasional and one-off event becomes the norm, such that one is hood-winked into the “Rome was not built in a day” syndrome, or into “it is common practice in business to borrow” mentality, then one may only be working or living to facilitate the wealth of the lender, rather than earning to sustain oneself and to generate prosperity. We have seen this in various Ponzi schemes in private organizations and in governments – the end result is bankruptcy, whether in Greece, United States of America, Jamaica, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, or France. It results in the debt trap – and this has meant that states and organizations become pawns in the chess games of their creditors.

Let me itemize the grounds on which I charge African leadership with epistemic deficit, and then synthesize these ideas to explain the

phenomenon and its pernicious consequences for Africana societies, thereby directly and indirectly answering some of the questions indicated above. We listed the features above, but we can now better situate them in context.

First, African knowledge systems, traditions, institutions, metaphysics, cultures, axiology, and modes of being, having been negated, denied, and consigned to flames of racial intellectual nonexistence and inferiority (epistemicide), and these foundations of existence became alien to African peoples, then the curse of intellectual deficit is manifest (Bewaji 2003, 2013). Africans had to struggle for affirmation of their humanity first and what should have been a brief preface to a narrative of being seems to have become the story itself, or put in the language of deficit, what should be a short-lived situation becomes a permanent trap, dissipating energies and consuming resources – for example, African intellectuals first having to show that Africa and Africans had indigenous philosophy or traditions of critical reflection on history, literature, or religion. Karenga represented the desideratum for this effort very clearly in the preface to *The Book of the Dead* as follows:

This volume is another contribution to two ongoing projects – one general, the other specific. First, it is another contribution to the general ongoing historical project of rescuing and reconstructing African culture ... We contended that the key crisis and challenge in African life was one of culture, the challenge to rescue the best of ancient African culture and use it as a paradigm for a renewed modern African culture and community. Only then, we argued, could African people retake control of their destiny and daily lives, shape their world in their own image and interest, and step back on the stage of human history as a free, proud, and productive people. Also in this way could they speak their own special truth to the world and make their unique contribution to the forward flow of human history (Karenga 1990, xi).

What constitutes education in Africa now relates to learning purely to be able to fit into a pre-ordained cadre in the scheme of the European-American world. African leaders were deluded into thinking that having attained political independence and kingdom, all other things will be added unto their societies; this was a pipe dream which the writer of the “Forward” to Claude Ake’s (1996, vii) *Democracy and Development in Africa* represented as follows:

In most of Africa, colonial rule left a legacy of intense commitment to independence, but few ideas regarding appropriate economic policies. Immediately after the new states achieved independence, the political

environment was hostile to development. The internal struggle for power was the absolute focus of attention. But the new leaders soon realized that they needed some new legitimizing theme to replace liberation ideology, and they settled on economic development as a natural alternative. With sparse resources of their own to work with, however, they looked to foreign powers to finance their aspirations and thereby reintroduced in the economic context some of the issues of dependence they had settled in the political context.

Second, not having been properly schooled in the heritage of Africa, the leadership that inherited a well-fought independence then mortgaged the independence through various actions emanating from their epistemic deficit. They bought into the idea that what will make Africa developed is not derivable from Africa, as they thought that it was the superiority of the European culture that accounted for the colonization of Africa, rather than the opposite. They abandoned all things African, including the traditions of ethical existence, humanity of African relations, and commitment to community and careful protection of the weak and vulnerable in society. Embracing an invidious form of individualism, they began to study the various subjects, without appreciating the cultural foundations of these subjects, while the goal was not so much for enriching society but the self; they thereby facilitated the various schisms that have proven very debilitating to the progress of society.

Third, African leaders were now without proper cultural foundations, being “roast bread fruits”, “coconuts”, or “Oreos”, exhibiting the *Black skin, white mask* syndrome which Fanon so ably discussed, or “Bhutus in Benzes” as Nettleford described them. Thus, African leaders would rather employ white technicians to provide solutions to technological challenges in Africa than African engineers with superior intellectual and technical capacity; they would rather be dressed in three piece suits even when the temperature is 40 degrees Celsius and there is no air-conditioning in the location, sweating like Christmas he-goats; and they would rather go to Europe for holidays than travel to another African country to know what their neighborhood was like.

Fourth, since the success of epistemicide was total, many of our youths are more knowledgeable about foreign heroes and classical authors and foreign indigenous art and culture, while African schools teach next to nothing about African heroes, intellectual heritage, African religions, African cultures, and African modes of existence. Even more curious is the total manner in which Africa now imports foreign goods and ideas, technologies, educational systems, religions, values, beliefs, and practices, even when these ideas are worthless and only lead to pernicious

consequences for Africana societies. The result is that epistemic deficit then leads to financial and business deficit for Africa, thereby becoming developmental deficit.

Fifth, Africana societies now embrace a minimalist conception of education which only emphasizes certification and which fails either to approximate the etymology or the evolution of what one can call the equivalent of the concept in Yoruba language, *eko*. There is poor appreciation of Western understanding of education (in the way in which Western society makes sure that the foundations of their society are taught to their young). We have not tried to underline in our African context, the social, spiritual, and cultural aspects of a meaningfully rounder education, to make the individual male or female member of society an *Omoluabi* – a well cultured, humane, and civilized person, not just a trained, skilled, academic, intellectual, or certificated person whose only business is taking his/her society to ransom for perceived wages. Those of our intellectuals who have canvassed a deliberate attention to our indigenous ideas, beliefs, cultures, and intellectual traditions are then given bad names and called traditionalists, or reverse racists, or some other even more odious nomenclature. Without any attention to our own cultures, we expect the foundations of the cultures of other peoples to provide solutions to African problems.

Sixth, having been intellectually emasculated, we have no compass in determining how to be human. Dispossessed of values that derived from the original ancestors of humanity who first traversed the whole world, before the migrations which led to the population of the furthest extremes of the globe and the racial differentiations occasioned by this, Africans cannot now resist the definitions of civilizations and advancement derived from Euro-American cultures. This leads to circumstances where certain preferences are regarded as normal, while others are not and societies which live on the fringes of sanity, being heavily inveigled by drugs and all other forms of sexual orientations and perversions, simply because these produce temporary pleasure and do not lead to immediate death, they are now foisted on Africans who cannot reject these fiats because of economic mendicancy, which a leadership that suffers epistemic deficit has imposed on their societies. Where anyone dares to challenge the validity of these new orientations and lifestyles, the usual fare is name-calling and denunciations at decibels that border on hysteria and irrationality.

Seventh, in the political domain, the twin gridlock of neo-imperialism which makes independent African states maintain their treasuries in colonial Europe and the virtual colonial policies imposed on members of

the same geographical domains where two European languages are used by different geographical sections of an African country are a perfect demonstration of the fruits of epistemic deficit that we discuss in this paper. In the first instance, the collusion and acquiescence of the so-called civilized west to the imposition of destructive taxation on Haiti after the latter had defeated the allied forces of Europe and America to gain its independence, leading to the total resource denudation of Haiti, is a case in point. In the second instance, the fact that the ex-colonial African countries of a particular language stock have no control over the resources accruing to their countries, because they have no independent banking arrangement or currency (Francophone Africa), means that these countries are being raped openly without any so-called civilized Western society raising a finger in objection. And in the third and final instance, the fact that Africans who used to live amicably together but who have now been colonized by different European countries now see each other as less than human (as in the case of Anglophone and Francophone Cameroons), in terms of inferiority and superiority, speaks volumes to the success of epistemicide and the consequent intellectual epistemic deficit which pervades the corridors of power in African countries.

Last but not the least, the difficulties that African governments have had over the last half century in putting together a pan-African governance mechanism is evidence of the problems we are talking about. Even when the transition was made from OAU to AU, the endemic differences and polarizations have ensured that a United African Federation Government was impossible, because each time policies and programmes are fashioned in Addis Ababa, the different African governments have to consult with the colonial masters as to the expediency of carrying through with such programmes, and once they are told to demure, that is the end of everything. Any African government which disobeys must face the music – Patrice Lumumba, Julius Nyerere, Amilcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, Muammar Gadhafi, Obafemi Awolowo, M. K. O. Abiola, and many others have been made examples of, so as to discourage recalcitrance and insubordination.

What the above shows is that Africana leadership is totally off-base in its erroneous equation of education with literacy, acquisition of technical skills, attainment of various forms of certification, and attendance at Western format tertiary educational institutions for an extended period of time to all that is required to be educated and to become a decent human being in society. Thus, the sorry states of Africana societies cannot be otherwise, when we bear in mind the degree of epistemic deficit that is currently prevalent in Africana leadership corridors.

I will conjecture that “culture”, properly understood, can be regarded as the embodiment of the ways of life of human beings within the collective that society enshrines, as evolved through their interaction with each other and with nature (Bewaji 2003, 2013). Historically, the culture of each society has shaped the modes of existence and interaction of members of society, both with those who are regarded as belonging to the society and those who are outsiders, and the various educational theory, system, process, content, tools, and practice have been instruments for the transmission and propagation of these ephemeral cultural dynamics – in changing, modifying, or perpetuating the culture.

Based on the analysis we have undertaken here, Africana peoples have a serious challenge, which relates to the ways in which institutions, structures, practices, and belief systems foisted on their societies have concretized and become defining elements of existence, reality understanding, and moulding in these societies. What is the solution?

Liberation Humanities

In order to appreciate what we call for here, we would first look at a comparative intellectual experience in Latin America. Ironically, this experience is purloined through the prism of religion, but what is significant is that the purveyors of this development were migrants from Europe, who disdain the intolerable encroachments of their homeland on their existence in the new spaces in which they have situated themselves. This is **liberation theology**: it was a Catholic insider insurrection against established conservative dogma which kept the poor in their ordained places in the schema of existence, and preaches that their poverty was a result of their sins. Added to this was the contention that truth, divinity, and salvation emanate from Rome and Europe and from nowhere else, and obedience is enjoined to the dictates of the Ecclesiastical authorities in Rome. Liberation theology attempted to challenge this orthodoxy.

By definition, liberation theology contended that the church should derive its legitimacy and theology by growing out of the circumstances of the poor; the theologians who canvassed this view advocated that the Bible should be read and experienced from the perspective of the poor. The church should be a movement for those who were denied their rights and plunged into such poverty that they were deprived of their full status as human beings. The poor should take the example of Jesus and use it to bring about a just society. They interpret the Trinity as a model for cooperative and non-hierarchical relationships among humans. But the more contentious of their claims had to do with the claim that the church