Engaging in African Epistemology as a Form of Epistemic Decolonization

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Abstract
Epistemic decolonization has taken centre stage in academia and everyday life. Epistemic decolonization is a call to dismantle the Western way of thinking and its self-arrogated hegemonic authority. It is also a call to re-centre the knowledge enterprise in Africa from a western-centric orientation to an African-centric one to accommodate African epistemic formations. In this paper, I intend to contribute to the discussions of epistemic decolonization by showing that engaging in African epistemology is a form of epistemic decolonization. My argument is that we are recalibrating the knowledge enterprise when we go outside of the western episteme to engage with knowledge in other traditions, such as African epistemology.
Keywords: Africa, Africans, African epistemology, Colonialism, Epistemic decolonization

Introduction

The colonial experience of African people is characterized by the forceful imposition of Western education and knowledge systems. This resulted in the endorsement of the Western education and knowledge systems as the ultimate form of education and knowledge systems in Africa. This endorsement also resulted in the dismissal of African knowledge systems. Indigenous African knowledge systems, cultures and traditions were downgraded as inferior to the colonizers' and deemed the "incomprehensible magical and idolatrous practices of sub-human savages" (SANTOS 2007, 51). Colonial actors and some Western scholars suppressed and denigrated African knowledge systems and labelled them as local and traditional. They deliberately imposed Western knowledge systems and upheld them as the standard with which other knowledge systems had to comply. Such hegemony continues to date. To this end, African thinkers like Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (1998a, 2002, 2003), Kwasi Wiredu (1980, 1998), Kwame Gyekye (1987) and many others sought to combat Western influence and cultural indoctrination. They also sought to examine, question and contest ideas and identities imposed upon them by the West. These thinkers' arguments and counter arguments against Western influence and cultural indoctrination indelibly mark the beginning of historical and conceptual protests and contestations against Western hegemony of knowledge.

In this paper, I intend to contribute to the discussions of epistemic decolonization by showing that engaging in African epistemology is a form of

epistemic decolonization. In the first section of this paper, I will briefly show how colonialism, race and racism are the major reasons behind the call for epistemic decolonization in Africa. In the second section, I will briefly define African Epistemology and Epistemic Decolonization. In the third section, I will show that engaging in African epistemology is a form of epistemic decolonization. In what follows, I will briefly show how engaging in African epistemology resonates with the decolonial project and how it can serve to decolonize people's minds.

Colonialism, Race and Racism: A Brief Discussion
Colonialism as "the indescribable crisis disproportionately suffered and endured by the African peoples in their tragic encounter with the European world, from the beginning of the fifteenth century through the end of the nineteenth into the twentieth" (EZE 1998a, 213), epitomizes the encounter between Africa and the West. The colonial period was a period "marked by the horror and violence of the transatlantic slave trade, the imperial occupation of most parts of Africa and the forced administrations of its peoples, and the resilient and enduring ideologies and practices of European cultural superiority (ethnocentrism) and "racial" supremacy (racism)" (1998a, 213). This also brought about cultural indoctrination.

African colonial and racial experiences continue to provoke critical analyses. This is because they both negate the humanity of Africans and their knowledge systems. The increase in practical evidence and philosophical writings (books, articles, write-ups, etc.) attest to the fact that colonialism, race and racism are premised on two notions. The first notion is the idea of blacks being some sort of lesser humans. The second notion supports the superiority of one race over the other. Talking about superiority, Immanuel Kant believed in the superiority of the Europeans and the inferiority of the blacks. He classified humans into different classes: "the race of Whites, (2) the Negro race, (3) the Hunnic (Mongolian or Kalmuck) race, (4) the Hindu or Hindustanic race" (1997: 41). Within Kant's classification, from a psychological standpoint, besides the Whites, the other races appear to be incapable of moral maturity because they lack talent—a gift of nature (EZE 2001, 97–98; see also EZE 2003, 438–439). He attributes the supposed classification to the presence or absence of "talent." According to Kant:

> The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praise-worthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in colour. (1997, 55)

In view of the above, it is evident that, for Kant, skin colour is the evidence of rational superiority or inferiority. Ideas such as the above strip black persons of their humanity. Similarly, David Hume, in his infamous footnote asserts that

> I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences . . . Not to mention our colonies, there NEGROE slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of whom none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; tho' low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. (HUME 1882, 252; see also HUME 1997, 33)

The above for Hume is the basis for treating people differently. These views clearly shows how the idea of race, racism and other colonial exploitation degraded and negated the humanity of Africans.

Arguably, in the absence of actual proof of the superiority of one race over another, factors like skin colour, as shown above, have often been used as markers and as a reason for discrimination. The ensuing consequence of such is that a particular race has been told, trained and made to believe that they are inferior and they too, to a very large extent, believe so. So, the consequence of racism is not just manifested in blatant discrimination against a particular race; it is also deeply ingrained in the psyche of the people. Africans were viewed as culturally naïve, rationally incompetent and intellectually docile. This was accompanied by the idea that whites have high mental capacities, and blacks have low mental capacities. Put differently, "some races have high levels of mental capacities that others do not" (EZE 2002, 66), and some races are inferior to others.

Given the above, colonization, race and racism are among the central reasons for the introduction and call for (epistemic) decolonization in Africa. Thus, it is evident that the history of the current knowledge systems in Africa is tied to a bitter colonial past founded on colonialism, race and racism that negates African humanity. This has had a psycho-social effect on Africans and has caused the disregard for African knowledge systems. And as such, one can understand the basis of decolonization as seeking to affirm the humanity and knowledge systems of the African people that have been systematically negated over time. This is why engaging in African epistemology as a form of epistemic decolonization is of utmost importance. This is because it will help restore the humanity of Africans and their knowledge systems. After all, African epistemology "exists first and foremost as a 'counter colonial practice' since it is in part the response by the colonized to the negative effects of colonialism" (OYOWE 2013, 209). Thus, by engaging in African epistemology as a form of epistemic decolonization, Africans will fight against the negative effects of colonialism, race and racism.

Definitions of African Epistemology and Epistemic Decolonization
The term African epistemology is generally understood as the study of the way in which "the African conceptualizes, interprets and apprehends reality within the context of African cultural or collective experience" (UDEFI 2014, 108; see also ANYANWU 1983, 60). According to Anselm Kole Jimoh and John Thomas, "African epistemology deals with what the African means and understands when

he makes a knowledge claim. This consists of how the African sees or talks about reality" (2015, 55). Godfrey O. Ozumba in his book, *A Concise Introduction to Epistemology*, defines African Epistemology as "Africa's way of carrying out its inquiries into the nature, scope, and limits of knowledge" (2001, 171; see CHIMAKONAM AND OGBONNAYA 2021, 179). Egbeke Aja asserts that African epistemology is concerned mostly with the possibility of ascertaining whether or not what is claimed as knowledge is knowledge rather than mistaken opinion on the one hand, and the means or sources of acquiring knowledge, on the other hand (1993, 75). In line with this, Elijah Okon John defined African epistemology "as the unique and peculiar way employed by the African in his investigation of the origin, nature, scope, and limits or knowledge" (2009, 163).

Although epistemology as the study of knowledge is universal, the ways of attaining knowledge vary based on the socio-cultural contexts within which knowledge claims are formulated and articulated. From this view, one can answer the question of what does it mean to regard epistemology as African? It would be reasonable to speak of an epistemology by considering its socio-cultural contexts. Within this context, we become aware that knowledge in African epistemology is embedded in African ontology, culture, tradition and religion, and the understanding of the nature of forces and their interaction with the cosmic. It is said that we cannot separate a community's culture, tradition and religion and experiences, because they are part of their reality. For example, ontologically, in an attempt to know a certain aspect of reality, Africans treat the divide between the object and subject as two aspects of the same reality. This means that Africans do not detach themselves from the object to be known, but rather fuse themselves with the object in a co-operative relationship. By this fusion, the knowing subject and the known object become one.

The term 'decolonization', roughly means getting rid of colonial influences, while epistemic decolonization refers to the idea of 'decolonising knowledge'. Decolonization, according to Jonathan O. Chimakonam and Uchenna L. Ogbonnaya

> is not a war of sides, a conflict of interests, or a dual duel between protagonists and antagonists… It is an intellectual program aimed at rolling back the mechanisms of coloniality that highlighted borders, made it significant and weaponized it, such that physical borders translated to intellectual borders, dividing not only the north and the south as widely presumed, but the haves and the have-nots, and, indeed, all subjective dichotomies such as sex, religion, class, race, gender and so forth. (Chimakonam and Obonnaya 2021, 1)

Recently, the discussion on decolonization of knowledge or epistemic decolonization has dominated the academic conversation in the Global South. There has been a call to dismantle the Western way of thinking and its self-arrogated hegemonic authority. But the practical ways to approach it have been the locus of debate in our everyday life and academia. This is crucial because Africans need to divest their epistemologies and knowledge (systems) of any undue colonial influence. Africans must take on board the epistemology and knowledge system that is African. This should be done critically. It should also be carefully carried out with a critical standard to clearly ascertain an epistemology and knowledge

system that is purely African. I will like to underscore that I am not signalling a knowledge exclusivity. Rather, by decolonizing knowledge, African epistemologies and knowledge systems should be recognized first in the continent and institutions for its worth, vastness, and richness before welcoming other epistemologies and knowledge systems. Africa needs to first decolonize the hegemonic Western epistemology and knowledge systems by recognizing, embracing and appreciating her epistemology and knowledge systems.

In view of the above, epistemic decolonization seeks to address the epistemic wrongs of colonization. The epistemic effects of colonialism are perhaps the "most damaging, far-reaching, and least understood" (ALCOFF 2007, 82). According to Veli Mitova (2020, 191), epistemic decolonization is a call to dismantle the Western way of thinking and its self-arrogated hegemonic authority. Epistemic decolonization is a call to re-centre the knowledge enterprise onto our geo-historical here and now. Paulin Hountondji sees epistemic decolonization

> as an autonomous, self-reliant process of knowledge production and capitalisation that enables us to answer our own questions and meet both the intellectual and the material needs of African societies. (2009, 128)

In line with this, epistemic decolonization is essential to make possible moves to re-centre our knowledge systems. Epistemic decolonization must take African knowledge systems seriously to dismantle hegemonic Western knowledge systems. African knowledge systems should be embraced to counter this hegemonic Western knowledge systems. The current experience in Africa must be resolved through dismantling Western hegemony.

One kind of epistemic decolonization—the decolonisation of African philosophy, according to Wiredu, means "divesting African philosophical thinking of all undue influences emanating from our colonial past" (1998, 17). He states that the important word to note in the definition is "undue". According to him, the reason for this is that it would not be rational if we try to reject everything of colonial ancestry (1998, 17). What he suggests we should do is that we must carefully carry out what is Western and African withcritical stance. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) sees the idea of decolonization as freedom. This freedom constitutes epistemic, political, cultural, economic and other freedoms. Also, Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh note that decoloniality "endeavors to delink from the theoretical tenets and conceptual instruments of Western thought… transcending rather than dismantling Western ideas through building our own houses of thought" (2018, 7). Thus, it is evident from the definitions that epistemic decolonization is at the core of decolonization.

African Epistemology as a Form of Epistemic of Decolonization
Engaging in African epistemology is a form of epistemic decolonization. It is a form of epistemic decolonization because it requires the need to reflect critically on African knowledge systems that help in the decolonization project. It is a form of epistemic decolonization because it helps Africans conceptualize, interpret and apprehend reality within the context of Africans' cultural or collective experiences (ANYANWU 1983, 60). As a form of epistemic decolonization, it shows how Africans acquire and justify their knowledge claim about reality and their experiences. For example, Barry Hallen and J. O. Sodipo (1986) argue that the

Yorubas make a distinction between knowledge and belief. They went further to explicate the difference between knowledge and belief. According to them, on the one hand, *imo* (knowledge) is gotten through first-hand information, observation and sense-experience. *Imo* can be subjected to verification, confirmation and falsification. *Igbagbo* (belief) on the other hand is obtained through second-hand information, but could later become *imo* after some empirical testing. Also, in some cases, Jimoh argues that "the traditional African would rather ask for the testimony of a third party to settle the difference" (2017, 129). This is to further verify and settle the difference. Talking about *Imo,* Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya notes that: "*Imo* as true knowledge is both subjective and objective. It is subjective in that it is known by an individual, but objective inasmuch as it can be confirmed or verified by others, who can also have direct observation of it (this is what is meant by 'to know'—*mo*)" (2021, 186).

Similarly, the divination process is a unique African (and Global-South) source of knowledge and justification. According to Philip, M. Peek, divination (systems) plays a pivotal role in African cultures… and it is the "means (as well as the premise) of knowing which underpin and validate all else" (1991a, 173). Traditional Africans believe in divination. They try to find the solutions and answers to different questions about the realities of life through divination. In the search for knowledge, divination helps illuminate an individual's path in his/her quest. Divination is employed in African societies when knowledge is seldom obtainable through mundane means of inquiry, and this is "why divination continues to provide a trusted means of decision making, a basic source of vital knowledge" (PEEK 1991b, 1; see also PEEK 1998, 171). This is to ensure all pertinent information needed is availed before an action may be taken. For some traditional Africans, divination remains the highest means of seeking information and truth (NWOSIMIRI 2020, 89), and it "is a standardized process deriving from a learned discipline based on an extensive body of knowledge" (PEEK 1991b, 1; see also PEEK 1998, 171). Let us use the *Ifá* Divination process as an example.

Ifá Divination process is a legitimate approach to understanding reality and the quest for an indubitable truth or information. The Yoruba believe that through divination, one can or is able to know what the future holds, to find anything that is lost and to offer the cure for an illness, etc. According to Eze (1998b), the starting point of knowledge in *Ifá* is not an abstract idea, but rather a fundamental experience of life itself and a practice of deep understanding – the process of seeking knowledge about human life and actions. Generally, what human beings experience and see daily spurs them onto the search for a deeper understanding of human life and action. It is also for this and other issues that many consult *Ifá* for answers. The process of seeking answers from *Ifá* is interactive in ways that help give a proper solution to what is being requested. Through the divination process, the client becomes fully aware of his or her problems and the steps to solving them. During the consultation, the *Ifá* does not speak directly to the client; the Ifá priest must be interposed between the two (TAIWO 2004, 306). It is important to note that the client expresses a wish to 'talk with the divinity' during the consultation. This is a critical component in *Ifá* epistemology. "In not talking directly with the Babalawo, the client underscores the intermediary role of the Babalawo and the process simultaneously denies the

Babalawo any ambition to play god or play seer" (TAIWO 2004, 307). This is because what is being sought by the client is *Ifá*, not the *Ifá* priest (babalawo).

In what follows the client whispers her problem to a coin or a cowry shell presented to her. At this stage, the *Ifá* priest is not allowed to over-hear or listen in on what the client whispers. The coin or cowry will then be dropped on the instruments of *Ifá*. Taiwo explains that in doing so two ends are served. Firstly "a physical connection is established between the client and Ifá as symbolized by the instruments" (TAIWO 2004, 307). Secondly, "given that the client's 'scent' is on the coin or cowry shell that she whispered her problem on, Ifá is by that token personalized for her" (TAIWO 2004, 307). With these two ends, *Ifá* will know that the destiny is specifically that of the client's and not just anyone's. After these steps, the *Ifá* priest will have to use the divining chain. When the divining chain is used, the *Ifá* priest holds the divining chain (the chain has four half-nuts of the opele tree tied to each side, and each one of these half-nuts has a concave and convex surface) in the middle and throws it in front of him (ABIMBOLA 1976, 29). The *Ifá* priest "quickly reads and pronounces the name of Odu whose signature he has seen. The answer to the client's problem will be found only in this Odu" (ABIMBOLA 1977, 9–10). When the divining chain is thrown forward, an Odu (i.e., "books" or "chapters") would appear. Each Odu contains between 600 and 800 poems.

The next stage of the divination process begins when the *Ifá* priest starts chanting the verses from the Odu to the client while he/she looks on and listens (*ibid*). Abimbola explains that the *Ifá* priest would chant poems from the Odu until the client chooses/selects a poem which tells a story containing a problem similar to the client's own. The client may stop the *Ifá* priest at this stage for further explanation and clarification of that poem (*ibid*). In this sense, the client is required to be an active participant in the process of finding a solution to her problem. The client is the only one that can decide that the poem reflects a problem akin to his/her own, after which the explanation needed will be given and the client's problem will be discussed (TAIWO 2004, 308). The *Ifá* priest could help the client by further analyzing and interpreting the different *ese* he has chanted. In this way, the client is made to understand the prediction of *Ifá* about his/her problem. "If the divination is a successful one, both the Ifá priest and his client feel quite satisfied at the end of the long process of divination" (ABIMBOLA 1976, 35). I will not go into the details of how the Ifá priest identifies the Odu and some parts of the divination process, because the above explanation captures the essential parts of the divination. It is worth noting that some divination processes may take several hours or days to complete.

The above shows how the Yoruba acquire knowledge through divination system. *Ifá* divination system, which rests on the cognitive resources of an all-knowing entity, namely, *Ifá*, suggests that the knowledge generated in the system itself does not only depend on empirical inference. The implication is that rationalism and empiricism are involved in the *Ifá* divination system. In other words, both reasoning [the mind] and experience [the physical connection between *Ifá* priest and *Ifá*, divination apparatus, and also physical connection established between the client and *Ifá* as symbolized by the instruments] has a big role to play in divination system. In view of this, the mind of the *Ifá* priest "is construed as a

type of mental state or entity [internalism], which is fundamentally characterized by its casual and functional roles or efficacy. Such functional or causal manifestations are actualized in material entities—things, events, and states [externalism]" (IKUENOBE 2000, 133). The mind conceived as an active thing helps in the manifestation of activities in physical and material entities. Both the mind (rationality) and the body (empirical) of the *Ifá* priest, even that of the client, helps with the outcome which the client seeks. The client's credence in *Ifá* yields certain expected outcomes, which may help him/her manage his/her life. Thus, it is important to emphasize that during the divination process, the *Ifa* priest further helps the client to conceptualize, interpret, and apprehend it within the context of their experience. And these are the core features of African epistemology (NWOSIMIRI 2020, 93).

Different from the Western ways of knowing, mystical knowledge (like *Ifá* Divination) in Africa responds to serious issues beyond the comprehension of human minds (GYEKYE 1987, 15); and "there is no African society which does not hold a belief in mystical power of one type or another. It shows itself, or it is experienced, in many ways" (MBITI 1990, 192). (*Ifá*) Divination system is an example of it. In *Ifá* divination, as already shown, knowledge can be accessed at a level beyond rational deliberation. This knowledge is the solution between the diviner and the god [*Ifa*], which the diviner conveys to his/her clients. This kind of knowledge is beyond ordinary human cognitive capacity. Reality comprises the observable and the unobservable, the observable is comprehensible through rational deliberation, and the unobservable is comprehensible through divination. Iniobong D. Umontong notes that among the Annang people of Nigeria, mystical knowledge is the major determinant of truth that is beyond ordinary man's comprehension (2002, 34). Besides attaining truth for mystical knowledge, one could also employ it for healing. Denise Martin (2008, 221) notes that Yoruba's "diagnosis of illness (*arun*), would include divination to inquire whether any potential spiritual causes are responsible for the ailment" so that they can be addressed, and a solution provided (the treatment and healing processes). This approach is Africans' way of attaining knowledge of realities ordinarily hidden from them, and it is different from that of the West.

Engaging in African epistemology is a form of epistemic decolonization because it is unique to Africa. I do not deny that there are substantial disparities among the many cultures in Africa, but suffice to say that the one amongst other methods of justifying epistemic claims in Africa is one's socio-cultural interaction with others. In other words, knowledge is determined by the socio-cultural milieu, environmental background, and the specific period of time and space in which people live in. And in African culture, "knowledge is not produced… it is given to you by tradition, the ancestors, as a heritage. So, knowledge acquisition is a purely social matter, a matter of teaching, of being told, "uploaded" (by living, dead or spiritual powers) only" (HAMMINGA 2005, 76). Thus, as a form of epistemic decolonization, African epistemology will help Africans reclaim "the right to think and theorise from our point of view rather than from the one unjustly imposed on us" (MITOVA 2019, 3) by colonialism. It will help Africans fully recognize and accept their knowledge system and in so doing, "acknowledge more than one kind of knowledge system as epistemically authoritative" (MITOVA 2019, 3).

Given the discussion thus far, my aim in this section has been to show that engaging in African epistemology is a form of epistemic decolonization, because it reflects more on African epistemology and knowledge systems, and it shows how Africans acquire and justify their knowledge claims. And all of these are aimed at re-centring the knowledge enterprise, which is also part of the aim of epistemic decolonization.

How African Epistemology Resonates with the Decolonial Project and how it can serve to Decolonise People's Minds

African epistemology resonates with the decolonial project in the sense that it tries to re-centre the knowledge enterprise in Africa. By engaging in African epistemology we are dismantling the Western ways of thinking and its self-arrogated hegemonic authority. Western epistemology separates the knowing subject from the object of knowledge. This means that the knowing subject (*Human*), that is not connected to the object, the thing known, is like a by-stander of sorts, bearing no affective closeness or relation to the object of knowledge. The subject views the object as a separate being. The subject in this process is free to subjugate the object to his/her interests. This process renders the object inadequate, completely silences it, and reduces it as an implement of the knower (HEADLEY 2019, 104). By engaging in African epistemology we become aware in the process that "man and nature are not two separate independent and opposing realities but the one inseparable continuum of a hierarchical order" (RUCH and ANYANWU 1984, 87). In other words, Human being (subject) and nature (object), in traditional African epistemology, are seen as [one] an inseparable continuum. This means that there is an existing close relationship between man and nature. Man and nature are united, and in their unity, both co-operate and partake in the same locus without being opposites (JIMOH and THOMAS 2015, 56). This is why Anyanwu asserts that there is knowledge in this co-operation. According to him:

> Knowledge, therefore, comes from the co-operation of all human faculties and experiences. He sees, feels, imagines, reasons or thinks and intuits all at the same time. Only through this method does he claim to have the knowledge of the other. So, the method through which the African arrives at trustworthy knowledge of reality…is intuitive and personal experience. (RUCH and ANYANWU 1984, 94)

There cannot be knowledge of reality if the subject detaches itself from the object. The subject is continuously involved. Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya refers to this as "the philosophy of intergration". "The philosophy of integration reflects the conception of reality from an African viewpoint" (2021, 144). In this knowing process, the subject is not only seeing and thinking, but also experiencing and discovering the object. There can be no knowledge of the object without the subject entering into experience with the object. Subairi B Nasseem captures this better when he explains that "the cognitive process is not complete without the experiential. The self of the subject and the objective world outside of the self are really one" (2003, 265). The former (subject) 'vivifies or animates' the latter (object), as Nasseem puts it. Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya corroborate this when

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they assert that "knowledge involves the duality of subject and object. Without either of these two, there can be no knowledge in the African context" (2021, 144).

African epistemology must be put into perspective as something ideal to be contrasted with the knowledge acquired from the Western world. As a form of epistemic decolonization, it will help African people eliminate and dismantle colonial influences in their systems. This is crucial because Africans need to divest their knowledge (systems) of any undue colonial influence. African epistemology is peculiar to Africans in that it makes much sense to African people because it stems from their culture and way of life. African epistemology takes note of the important role that Africans played in establishing and justifying what they deemed as knowledge.

As a form of epistemic decolonization, African epistemology can serve to decolonize people's minds. African epistemology will help unshackle the minds of Africans in various ways by giving them insight into what it means to know as an African. In Africa, there is always that urge to know more by consulting diviners for answers from the gods, as explained in the previous section. Regarding the gods, Tempels notes that God, whom he considers as wisdom and knowledge, bequeaths human beings with the power to know. Here, divined beings are actively engaged in the epistemic experience of humans as they directly or indirectly reveal things to human beings in their experiences (dreams and life experiences) (1959, 48; see also ANI 2013, 309). Similarly, Mbiti explains that diviners and specialists "tell that the mystical power which they tap and use, comes ultimately from God; and as we have seen, part of their profession involves praying to God, directly or through the intermediary of the living-dead and spirits, to solicit His help" (1990, 194). Wiredu also notes that "the ubiquity of references to gods and all sorts of spirits in traditional African explanations of things" perplexes Western epistemological thinkers (1980, 38; ANI 2013, 309).

African epistemology is a theoretical framework that would make epistemic decoloniality a success. At the practical level, African epistemology as a form can help in the broader goals of epistemic decolonization by equipping African people with knowledge directed towards obtaining tangible outcomes that will help in reversing the damage caused by colonialism, as well as attaining a future that bears testimony to the success of invested efforts at decolonizing. At the conceptual level, it will equip African people with the knowledge, tools and methods for determining and investigating what has been presented to them as true (knowledge and beliefs) beyond common-sense. It will also give them the awareness that Africans have their unique way of conceptualizing reality and that African epistemology is a context-dependent theory of knowledge that takes note of the important role that humans and social factors play in establishing and justifying a knowledge claim.

Engaging in African epistemology can help African people understand how they can create new forms of agency through a new form of thinking that will enable them to reinvent themselves in the new global order. It will enable them to think beyond the epistemology imposed on them by their former colonial powers. The process of thinking beyond the epistemology imposed on them, I think, "would involve thinking of our situations as requiring more than theorizing about our colonial histories and memories" (MATOLINO 2020, 225). Hence, engaging in African epistemology will help Africans break the epistemic bondage and think

their way out of their current situation into becoming globally competitive. To this, African epistemology is essential because it will cause a shift from Western epistemology to African epistemology.

Conclusion
In place of the usual method of conclusion that seeks to summarise what has been done in the paper, I wish to motivate that African epistemology is taken seriously in Africa. African epistemology remains omitted from the global arena and discourses. This has been further exacerbated by the dearth of attention given by Africans and some institutions in Africa. Most of the educational curriculums in Africa on epistemology are Western-based. It gives little attention and acknowledgement to the fact that epistemologies are culturally based. In other words, epistemologies are primarily based on indigenous epistemology. Given the educational systems in Africa, it would not be false to say that Africa's educational system moulds itself in line with Western epistemology, so as to parade herself as an internationally competitive continent. This, on its own, clearly side-lines the presence of African epistemology and its contribution. Therefore, in the meantime, since it is impossible to go back in time and undo colonialism, a possible way to decolonize entails a strengthened focus on African epistemology. It would be a good idea for Africans to (re)acknowledge, (re)introduce and (re) develop African epistemology in order to offer African people a paradigm that fundamentally breaks Africans away from any vestige of colonialism and (re)introduce other decolonial tools that co-exist along with "other paradigms, such as the western one, without seeking to limit itself to it" (MAIANGWA and ESSOMBE 2021).

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