

A Response to Michael Eze on Decolonising African Political Philosophy

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ft.v14i1.1>

Submission: Jan 2, 2025 Acceptance: Jun 13, 2025

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Abstract

The call to decolonise African political philosophy by Michael Eze is necessitated by the question of rights and common good in the African conception of personhood initiated by Ifeanyi Menkiti and Kwame Gyekye. Eze sees this debate as influenced by Western thought and concerns. Eze points to a manifestation of the influence of Western dualistic categories in the delivery of the Menkiti-Gyekye debate on rights. A Western dualistic methodology is expressed in the Afro-Western bifurcation in Menkiti and Gyekye's analysis, the attention to rights versus common good, and the dichotomy between the individual and community. Eze questioned the relevance, motivation, and necessity of the dichotomy in Menkiti-Gyekye's conception of rights as well as its epistemic values to African present circumstances. As such, he argues we decolonise African political philosophy by freeing its discourses from the intellectual gaze of Western historicity and philosophising on issues relevant to the challenges in our context. I respond that the call to decolonise African political philosophy is a result of a misascription of coloniality to African political philosophy. I argue that the Menkiti versus Gyekye conceptions of persons and its continuity contribute to thought and practices that are of contemporary significance. I further argue that the dualistic methodological approach is neutral in terms of traditions of thought. Lastly, I note that the core feature of a colonial object is a traceable link with erstwhile colonialization and suggest how we can further transform African political philosophy by increasing women's representation in its epistemic syllabus.

Keywords: African political philosophy, transformation, decolonisation, Eze, Gyekye, Menkiti.

Introduction

Eze (2018) expresses concern that the debate on individual rights between Menkiti's radical and Gyekye's moderate communitarianism, which has dominated African political philosophy, is influenced by western frame of thought. Eze's (2018) work is tagged as an invitation to rethink the debate beyond the established paradigm of knowledge in the syllabus of African political philosophy. Menkiti and Gyekye's idea of rights is about which has priority between rights and common good in the conception of personhood, the primacy or otherwise of community over individual, and how that analysis about rights shows the distinction between the African and Western conceptions of rights and person-

hood. Unequivocally, Menkiti states his goal in his article as “to articulate a certain conception of the person found in African traditional thought” (MENKITI 1984, 170). Eze’s analysis points to a manifestation of the influence of western categories of thought; a dualism which divides reality conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects, in the delivery of the Menkiti-Gyekye debate on rights. A Western dualistic methodology is demonstrated by the emphasis on the opposition between Western and African views of rights, the focus on rights versus the common good, and the dichotomy between the individual and community. This methodological influence prompts Menkiti and Gyekye to consider questions that are not driven by the needs and concerns of the contemporary African context, but rather by Western categories of thought and concerns. Eze questioned the relevance (value), motivation, and necessity of the dichotomy in Menkiti-Gyekye’s African conception of rights as well as its epistemic values and analytical framework to African present circumstances (EZE 2018). As such, there is a decolonial need to free discourses in African political philosophy from the intellectual gaze of Western historicity and to philosophise on issues relevant to the challenges in Africa (EZE 2018).

In responding to Eze, I make the following arguments: By rejecting the charge of coloniality of African political philosophy because of its dominant discourse, I argue that the Menkiti-procedural versus Gyekye-noumenal conceptions of persons and their continuity contribute to thought and practices that are of contemporary significance to Africa. I further argue that the dualistic methodology is neutral in terms of traditions of thought. Lastly, I attempt a theoretical understanding of coloniality and decoloniality by drawing from Olufemi Taiwo (2022). I note that the core feature of a colonial object is a traceable link with erstwhile colonisation or the project of colonialism. I propose a way to further transform African political philosophy by increasing women’s representation in the field – in terms of research, discussion of issues related to women, and the inclusion of women’s contributions to teaching African political philosophy.

In the first section, I will discuss the Menkiti-Gyekye views of rights and the accompanying ideas of personhood and community/individual primacy debate as the dominant discourse in African political philosophy. I show why the call for the decolonisation of African political philosophy rests on the description of Menkiti-Gyekye’s views of right as what is motivated by non-African concerns and thought. I begin my response in the second section by demonstrating that the rights/common good debate remains a vital framework for rights as a pressing issue in contemporary African societies. In the third section, I discuss what it means to claim that a thing is colonised and challenge the description of dualism as essentially a Western, non-African way of thinking. I conclude by suggesting how we can further improve conversations and the content of African political philosophy.

Eze's Interpretation of the Menkiti-Gyekye Rights/Common Good Debate in African Political Philosophy

African political philosophy, as an intersection of African philosophy and political philosophy, is preoccupied with the state of the individual in relation to the

collective and how to justly structure or pattern collective existence in the African context. While it responds to historical social systems and human experiences of a political nature, such as slavery and colonialism, it has mainly been concerned with theoretical formulations and the analysis of contemporary issues faced by Africans. One of the key issues in contemporary life is human agency, which has gained significant attention through the articulations of the notion of individual rights. African philosophers such as Menkiti (1984) and Gyekye (1997) hold the view that individual rights indeed have a place in a robust interpretation of African cultures and can be located in the idea of personhood. However, there is disagreement about the status of individual rights in relation to the significance of the duty to the common good in African traditions of thought. As Eze points out, a classic dichotomy has become assumed as the litmus test for the debate on African conception of rights, what may be termed procedural versus noumenal conceptions of person and community (EZE 2018).

Eze (2018) notes that Menkiti, taking insights from indigenous value systems to ground his idea of rights, articulates a theory of political philosophy that would come to define contemporary rights/common good debate in African political philosophy. Menkiti believes that rights are secondary to individuals' duties to their community. He states that "in the African understanding, priority is given to the duties which individuals owe to the collective and their rights, whatever these may be, are secondary to their exercise of their duties" (MENKITI 1984, 180). This view of rights is grounded on the claim that the community is primary over the affairs of the individual. Menkiti's notion of rights is based on the view that an ideal individual, understood as someone who has attained the status of personhood, defends the norms and seeks the interests of the community rather than individual interests and rights. Maintaining a procedural conception of personhood, Menkiti argues that personhood is neither absolute nor an *unconditional* given but rather a "*being-in-process*" (EZE 2018, 2). Menkiti sees personhood as what an individual gradually enters through communion with the norms and standards of the community and through fulfilling the responsibility assigned to them by their community.

Contra Menkiti, Gyekye takes a noumenal description, according to which personhood is an automatic quality. To Gyekye, a person is not a being-in-process but unconditionally given at birth. "Humanity is a "notional-given", not something to be acquired or lost. A person is not a *being-in-process* but unconditionally given at birth. An assumed philosophical temperament which differentiates it from the procedural argument is that personhood is an automatic quality" (EZE 2018, 3). The community is recognised as an ontological necessity but only insofar as the individual's autonomy is neither suppressed to a homogenous entity nor sacrificed for the common good. In Gyekye's view, rights hold the same status as fulfilling duty and responsibility to the community. As such, persons are defined by their equal responsibilities towards both the community interests and their self-interest (ADEATE 2023).

Eze disagrees with this ontological dualism. According to him, the dualist structure of the Menkiti-Gyekye debate is a misrecognition of the core philosophical issues at stake in the current context of African political thought. "It is a position that essentializes the dichotomy by abstracting subjectivity outside

a cultural community and vice versa (EZE 2018, 6). Elsewhere, Eze (2008) notes the need to transcend the dualistic posture and tension on which is prior to the other, between community or individual, and rights or common good in the conception of personhood. He argues that both community and individual should be seen as contemporaneous. According to Eze (2008), each component has its unique subjectivity but shares a kind of interdependence. The existence of both community and individual is one of intersubjectivity. Each has its identity resting on a dialogic relationship, as either communal primacy or individual primacy would threaten the identity of the other. Put succinctly, neither the community nor the individual should be prioritised over the other, and neither rights nor common good ought to be prior for subjective equality to take place or societal progress (EZE 2008).

Eze (2018) referenced scholars such as Molefe Kete Asante, who have challenged the fundamental necessity of the dichotomy. To Asante (2018), a person is not merely an abstract number; to be is already to exist within a community. Community constitutes a lineage, admissible to the dead, the living, and even the unborn. The dualism becomes unnecessary for the very idea of a community is ontologically inclusive. Thus, the very question of individual and community becomes redundant since the idea of community in this Africanist mindset is constitutive of both individual right and common good (EZE 2018).

Asante points out how Menkiti and Gyekye's conceptions of rights and personhood takes the turn of making the difference between the African and Western conceptions. Expressing the dualistic orientation of the discourse, Menkiti sees the prioritisation of community over individual and the primacy of common good over rights as what distinguish the African conceptions of rights and personhood from the Western conceptions. As Menkiti presents, the Western conception of persons is defined by cognitive capacity, while the norms and standards of the community define the African conception. Asante describes this claim as what is informed by the Western orientation of thought.

The pursuit of Afro-Western bifurcation prompts Menkiti and Gyekye to consider questions dictated by Western categories of thought and concerns. That is, the discussion of rights is not motivated by needs and concerns from the contemporary African context, but the need to establish the African difference on the subject. As such, the relevance of African political philosophy is questioned because of subject that that has dominated its syllabus.

For Asante (2018), the African self-imaging on issues of rights or ethics to be authentic would have to be grounded in the sociology of knowledge of Africa's historical experiences. As Eze explains, Asante points African thinkers to the need to rethink the basic approach to this current debate. We are challenged to distance ourselves from the received epistemic tradition. We do not remain engaged in an alienating epistemic tradition if we are serious about articulating critical discourses contemporaneous to challenges in Africa. Asante (2018) tasks Menkiti and Gyekye to "take a step outside the pre-existing circle; normatively *looking outside the circle* for both seems to be engaged with 'wrestling with how to best place African people within the constructs of Western philosophical ideas'" (EZE 2018, 12).

Eze identifies with the colonisation charge of African political philosophy. According to him, the need to make a substantive contribution not couched as a residual narrative of Western philosophy foregrounds the proposal for the decolonisation of African political thought. First, African discourses need to be freed from the intellectual gaze of Western historicity. Secondly, African scholars must philosophise on issues relevant to the challenges in our context (EZE 2018, 8). According to Eze, “for decolonisation to take place, the canon of truth or the paradigm does not need to shift or change, it has to be overhauled and, if possible, rejected. On this point, we are speaking both in terms of content (epistemology) and methodology (delivery) – a shift from residual knowledge” (EZE 2018, 11). In the following sections, I will respond to Eze’s charge. I will begin with a discussion on the context relevance of the rights/common good debate.

Addressing the Question of Context Relevance

Eze notes the following critical points: The Gyekye-Menkiti debate has become a dominant feature of the epistemic syllabus of African political philosophy. According to him, the question then is, what new contribution is African political thought bringing to the table? Why are we having this debate? How does debate on rights and common good respond to current sociopolitical and economic challenges in contemporary Africa? (EZE 2019, 8).

According to Eze, the decolonisation of African political philosophy involves commitments to developing context-sensitive, fresh propositions. That is, propositions motivated by our present circumstances and not a recycling of old knowledge systems which have failed to hear the cries of poverty, failures and agony (EZE 2018). I share Eze’s view on context significance because contributions to political philosophy must speak to practical concerns and current needs. However, historical ideas cannot be separated from what we do in political philosophy in the contemporary era. Historical ideas are also the product of historical events. Nonetheless, engaging historical ideas would not be about exercising memories of past intellectual concepts but about discovering how those ideas shape our current experience. Propositions that emerge from engaging with historical political ideas will still demonstrate that political philosophers’ basic duty and agenda are set by the pressing political issues of the day.

I argue that the epistemic values and analytical framework of historical conversations like the Menkiti-procedural and Gyekye-noumenal conceptions of persons contribute to thought and practices that are of contemporary significance. The debate on African conceptions of rights opens the way for practical questions about social relations, human rights, women’s agency, and other related issues. A continuous conversation on how best to ground personhood – that is, the conception of the individual as a moral and political agent- is a commitment to reimagining how we can situate the individual within the collective human existence. It is also about how to justly structure or pattern society in the African context in a way that allows individual’s benefits, such as honour, rights, autonomy, and freedom to be maximised.

The challenge of organising collective life in Africa effectively leaves us with a commitment to discuss individual rights and freedom, and to define the

individual in a manner that encompasses a comprehensive view of rights. How can one person ever justifiably claim the authority to govern another person? How does a group of people possess the right to make laws binding on the social life, economic life, and well-being of others? To what extent can an individual surrender to the collective? Whether the collective has the right to govern my body and dictate the affairs of others' lives has been a question for which no single answer can be sought. The above political questions will attract different answers if placed within the divergent Menkiti and Gyekye framework of persons and rights. Having a non-linear perspective on critical social and political questions offers a robust perspective on those issues. The dualistic shape on the question of rights in African political philosophy leaves us with the claim that African thought has not always been spoken in a unitary language and in unanimity. There have always been diverse interpretations to issues and concerns in the African thought system.

The epistemic value of the Menkiti-Gyekye dualism is expressed in the development of a robust account of human rights that has developed in contemporary African political philosophy and is shaped by the distinction in Menkiti and Gyekye's theories. For instance, the (moral) status theory of rights by Thaddeus Metz, which grounds human rights on the basis of human dignity and personhood gotten because of the possession of certain value-endowing ontological features, specifically, the capacity for friendliness (METZ 2010, 2011, 2012), and the personhood-based theory of rights by Polycarp Ikuenobe, which ground human rights on moral dignity earned through the evaluative judgment about the moral quality of a persons' character, achievement, comportment, or behaviour (IKUENOBE 2017, 2018). In different ways, Metz and Ikuenobe continued the view established by classical (Menkiti-Gyekye) rights theorists in African philosophy. The ideas of personhood remain the established tradition on which the discussion of human rights in African philosophy rests.

The motivation for the Afro-Western dichotomy created by the dualistic orientation in Menkiti-Gyekye's debate is to make a statement that rights have a place in a robust interpretation of African cultures and can be located in the idea of personhood. The dualistic thinking provides a platform for the insertion of the African contribution in the global debate on rights. The move may be interpreted as an instrumental good towards transforming the syllabus of the global political philosophy - the focus of which is to provide alternatives to Western views of political theories and structure or increase available options. The concern is geared towards the deconstruction of hegemonic tendencies and the inclusion of different voices in its discourses. No matter how we interpret the quest for African difference, we can identify its significance through Menkiti-Gyekye tension as a way of showing the different forms and perspectives that have shaped global political philosophy. As David Miller rightly points, "political philosophy has been practiced for as long as human beings have regarded their collective arrangements not as immutable and part of the natural order but as potentially open to change, and therefore as needing philosophical justification. It can be found in many different cultures and has taken a wide variety of forms" (MILLER 1998, 1). The African difference contributes to the expansion and diversification in political philosophy as a discipline that can be spoken in different languages and has been

shaped by different cultures and histories.

An idea or discussion is not context irrelevant because of its external source. Being informed or awakened by discourses from elsewhere, or getting involved in a current or dominant discussion in Western space, and making an African reflection of it is not the problem. Scholars should be able to participate in diverse conversations that affect humanity, irrespective of where the discourse originates. What may differ is context-dependent analysis and the appreciation and interrogation of such a concept or issue from within that internally generated thought. The use of internally generated thought patterns stems from our disagreement with the absoluteness of the mode of reflecting on or interpreting realities that accompany the discourse. While we engage in these universal conversations, we must be wary of logic that presents itself as absolute. Our reflections must be open to a variety of reasoning and epistemologies.

Coloniality, the methodological challenge and the transformation of African political philosophy

In this section, I attempt a conceptual analysis of coloniality and decoloniality to further establish the claim that the charge of colonisation of African political philosophy by Eze is inaccurate. I also address the methodological tension that informs the colonial description of the theme of rights in African political philosophy. While I point to the need for transformation in the epistemic syllabus of African political philosophy, I argue that decoloniality does not inform such an agenda.

The transformation of a subject or discipline can respond to different questions. Some of these questions include the question of class, gender, race, among others. Transformation addresses how these issues have shaped the structure of society, knowledge production and consumption. In the African experience, education has mostly been affected by the issue of race, racial hierarchies, and racial power relations introduced by the machinery of colonialism. Colonialism in Africa as an event influenced by racism, leaves behind it a system of Western European dominance on the erstwhile colonised through the educational system designed to promote western intellectual legacy. Scholars have responded to the different dimension of the effects of colonialism in Africa, with particular attention to its effects on education and pedagogy and the need to transform the curriculum for the dignity of the African

people.¹ As such, the transformation of curriculum has been dominated by the need to respond to the colonial dimension of the curriculum of African education. Eze might have been influenced in making the request to decolonize African political philosophy because he erroneously thinks that it is dominated by the Western ideas of good/rights debate and a guiding Western colonial logic. In Eze's point of view, this idea is seen as informing the epistemic syllabus of African political philosophy. However, the charge of colonisation of the syllabus does not describe African political philosophy. But to understand the task ahead of African political thinkers, it is essential to discuss or rethink how the coloniality of

¹African scholars have argued for curriculum transformation using the ideas of decolonisation and Africanisation (LEBAKENG 2004, ETIEYIBO 2016, CHIMAKONAM 2019). In the opinion of Edwin Etieyibo, curriculum transformation entails the Africanisation of the curriculum. According to this view, a curriculum is Africanised if it is decolonised (ETIEYIBO 2016). For a curriculum to be Africanised, argues Etieyibo, it must reflect and represent the perspectives and experiences of Africans, appropriating and incorporating their values, beliefs, and practices (ETIEYIBO 2016: 405). Jonathan Chimakonam differs slightly from Etieyibo in understanding curriculum transformation. According to his view, a curriculum is transformed if decolonised and Africanised. Curriculum transformation in Africa begins with decolonising the curriculum to Africanising it. He says, "While the phase of decolonisation focuses on content, the phase of Africanisation focuses on background logic" (CHIMAKONAM 2019, 183). While we decolonise by removing colonial contents such as aspects of European education curriculum that denigrate and subordinate the African and his culture, the task is only complete with introducing a strategy of operation for the new curriculum. This operation must be founded on African logic. This African logic must replace the Western logic (CHIMAKONAM 2019). As such, an Africanised curriculum that fulfils the transformation task includes relevant Western and African ideas, and an African logical framework must drive the curriculum. While Chimakonam's view is commendable for drawing attention to logic, the concern that remains with it is the idea of Africanisation. First, what Chimakonam calls Africanisation is best tagged decolonisation, given what he described as the problem Africanisation respond to, that is, the replacement of a logic introduced by colonisation. The struggle to ground the transformed curriculum in Africa on African logic was only necessary with the colonial design of the African curriculum based on Western logic. As such, decolonising involves removing both content and background logic. The truth of my position is that it is implied in Chimakonam that we can only think about Africanisation with decolonisation; that is, it is impossible to think about Africanisation without colonisation. Chimakonam needs to see the task of removing Western humiliating content about Africa and Western logic from the curriculum as decolonising and then see the result of decolonisation in the African context as the transformation of the curriculum. In this way, decolonisation becomes a tool for achieving it. Secondly, while diversifying and including different worldviews and traditions in the African education curriculum is laudable, the outcome need not be described as the Africanisation of the curriculum. If Africanisation entails collecting non-African ideas with African ideas, then such a curriculum cannot be solely driven by African strategy for reasoning, as Chimakonam suggests. Since every idea is grounded in logic, ideas taken from Europe and Asia may have their accompanying logic.

curriculum is to be understood.

Olufemi Taiwo argues that we can only talk about decolonialization with colonization, which is defined as political or territory taking over (TAIWO 2022). Taiwo's understanding of colonisation implies that colonisation must be external to the object of colonisation. Taiwo warns that decolonisation must not be overstretched beyond a colony achieving self-governing and having control over its politics and resources (TAIWO 2022). Decolonisation is achieving sovereignty. While I agree with Taiwo on the external source of colonisation, responding to the taking over of territories is not a sufficient reaction to the entire project of colonialism. The reaction must include resistance to immaterial factors such as the conquering of thought and the desecration of African intellectual resources that aided empire conquest. These immaterial factors outlive the regaining of territory and continue to influence postcolonial human experiences. It is commonplace that the colonisation of territory was largely successful with the conquering of thought and mind, which happened simultaneously with it. While the political dominance was fought and won, the mental and epistemic coloniality is yet to be over. The commitment to challenging continued epistemic domination, the clean-up of colonial experience by reversing colonial epistemic leftovers and gains, restoring those intellectual resources, and achieving mental emancipation in formerly colonised territories, is decolonising. This struggle, that is, addressing the consequences of colonisation and combating the continued mental hegemony through developing decolonising methodologies for knowledge production is an ongoing event and a process. It is what is referred as decoloniality (HUNDLE 2019; MIGNOLO 2018). Decoloniality is different from decolonisation and as such, Taiwo is right that the regaining of empire ends the task of decolonisation. However, it needs to be said that decoloniality is a decolonising process, and it is meaningless without a link to colonisation.

To do a proper decoloniality involves an understanding and awareness of the dynamics that shape colonisation.² While dismantling colonial regimes in their physical form is the task of decolonisation, the dismantling of their mental forms is the task of decoloniality.

While Eze used the word 'decolonisation' in the title of his work, it is clear from the above discussion that decoloniality and not decolonisation captures Eze's concern with African political philosophy. However, the necessary link to external forces in colonisation and coloniality is why I conclude African political philosophy cannot be accused of coloniality. Given that coloniality must be seen as external dominance of the thought and epistemologies, there is no justification that the idea and method that Eze claimed dominated African political philosophy are non-African in nature.

² As Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni adds, "decoloniality was and is aimed at setting afoot a new humanity free from racial hierarchization and asymmetrical power relations in place since conquest" (NDLOVU-GATSHENI 2015, 488 in MATOLINO 2020, 5). As Bernard Matolino explains, to develop any concept that is described as decolonial, one must have a firm grasp of world events of colonialism, philosophies and histories of racism, as well as reasons behind these commitments (MATOLINO 2020, 5).

Accusing African political philosophy of a colonial charge because of the dualistic posture of its dominant debate presuppose that dualism is un-African. It also presupposes that there is a specific African way of reasoning. The charge may be linked to Jonathan Chimakonam's position that non-binary opposition, tripartite logic best describes African reasoning and experience (CHIMAKONAM 2017, 2018, 2019, see also CHIMAKONAM AND OGBONNAYA 2021). While I agree that the tripartite way of knowing and reasoning helps articulate alternative theories that do not stick to the "either this or that" intellectual framework, I think African ways of reasoning have not always been trivalent. There is a possibility of a binary opposition form of reasoning in thought and practices in Africa. For instance, the dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical world, slaves and slaveowners, good and evil, subject and objects, among others. While in most cases, a complementary understanding that emphasises the point of intersection and interconnectedness between these realities exists, there are some, such as the dichotomy between the slave and slave-owners, that confirms the presence of bivalent reasoning in African thought and practices. The struggle between males and females in African culture, which reveals the distribution of power in patriarchal African societies, illustrates the self and others, self and subjects, superior and inferior, within a binary, other-regarding logic. It suggests a strict opposition between binaries. As such, the two-valued reasoning might not be inherently Western (ADEATE 2022). However, the dualistic, binary opposition reasoning persuasion in the Menkiti and Gyekye does not weaken the Africanist view of their positions. It does not endanger the position as Eze thinks. It does not warrant a colonial charge. While the presence of a dualistic reasoning is found in African practices, it does not rule out the possibility of frameworks that seek multiple alternatives or a middle point in the way Africans conduct themselves.

Despite the inaccuracy of the colonial charge, I did not rule out the possibility of further transforming African political philosophy. The transformation I seek here is to allow African political philosophy to resist other forms of dominance of voices and contents, especially those within its circle. Addressing parochial hegemony in scholarship is a pursuit of truth. Whether it is a dominance within or without, dealing with domination is to enable the world to benefit from a wider representation of voices and worldviews. Deconstructing hegemonic tendencies and including different voices in the discourses, particularly in Africa, is combating the challenge of dominance such as the male dominance over female, heterogeneity over homogeneity and any form of the supremacy of self over the other. Our task is to reflect on needs that warrant transformation apart from colonisation.

Dissatisfaction with the status quo is what triggers the need for transformation. The exclusion of critical aspects and the non-recognition of important ideas and voices that should form the full realisation of a phenomenon can lead to the quest for change in operation and form. For transformation to take place, there must be questioning of the status quo, highlighting the danger of its continuity and the quest and plans to change it. One way to look inward is by examining how the concept of personhood, which dominates the analysis of rights and the common good in African moral and political philosophy, is gendered.

Motsamai Molefe, citing Eze (2018) as well as Oritsegbubemi Oyowe (2013, 2014) and Nompumelelo Manzini (2018), points out that there is a complaint that the idea of personhood is male-centred, that is, sexist or patriarchal. The idea of personhood is denounced for reducing women to a secondary status (MOLEFE2019). One way to correct the status of women is for more scholars to raise their voices about the hegemonic nature of political theory in Africa, compelling its discourses to account for the contributions of women to the history of political ideas in Africa.

Beyond the gendered framing of personhood, a denial of personhood and the dignity of women is an outcome of the level of representation of women's voices in African philosophy. Dimpho Maponya notes that underrepresenting women's voices and experiences engenders a lack of recognition. Among other things, Maponya claims, "the lack of recognition of women in African philosophy is detrimental to the personhood of women, as it may be read as, in extreme cases, the denial of personhood for African women" (MAPONYA 2024, 71). Maponya's submission is grounded on an African view of personhood that is based on the community's recognition and affirmation.

Considering African political philosophy from the perspective of its contextual significance, it becomes clear that the discussion of women is particularly relevant to the current situation in Africa. It also deconstructs the parochial hegemony of thought, which is a critical aspect of thinking about decoloniality and transformation. However, the hegemony of males in the African philosophical context and the context of political philosophy is, by nature, internal and not external. The hegemony does not involve the dominance of ideas and categories of thought emanating from the consequence or effect of external invasion. It does not involve using ideas foreign to us as a standard for being, a characteristic of colonisation. This is crucial to what we attribute to colonisation and advocate for decolonisation. The reform in African political philosophy is to change the gendered form. Internal transformation is what is needed, or better captures the intention rather, than the call for decolonising African political philosophy.

Conclusion

In responding to Eze's argument that African political philosophy is implicated in coloniality because of the question of contextual relevance and methodological approach of its dominant discourse – the Menkiti-Gyekye debate on rights, I made reference to a concept analysis of decolonialisation to show why the debate does not mirror a colonial, non-African philosophical framework of thought. I further showed that the dualistic thinking, however apparent in Western thinking, also informs some practices in African tradition. One major implication of Eze's defence of the colonial charge is that it assumes the non-existence of non-dualistic thinking, such as monism, in Western philosophy. The article is significant because it speaks to the importance of appropriating the right labels to human conditions. While human experience in Africa has been distorted by a series of imperialism, such as slavery and colonialism, not all our quest for social transformation has a strong link to colonial experiences. Clarity on the source of the problem is essential to getting a required solution. I invite other scholars to

to pay attention to the internal causation of the challenges of the epistemic syllabus of African political philosophy and other subjects.

Declaration

*The author declares no conflict of interest or ethical issues for this work.

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