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رهانات و آفاق

Coloniality of being, imperial reason, and the myth of African futures

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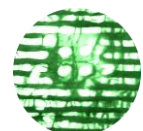
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Abstract

This paper argues that the creation of African futures is a necessity, but then, the present needs to be the fulcrum of decolonial subjectivity. What is contended against is the view that privileges the making of the future while the present is still in the clutches of colonial matrices of power that produces coloniality of being, with its epistemic component of imperial reason. Africa has to be decolonised mainly because subjection is inaugurated and perpetuated by imperial reason from the colonial encounter to the contemporary presence of coloniality of being. This paper argues that the creation of African futures should be left to its own vices since the present is the important existential moment in need of decolonisation. Firstly, the paper argues that Africa is still in the clutches of coloniality by virtue of having colonial states and this cannot bring any making of the African futures. Secondly, it analyses two ontological positions of presence and absence created by imperial reason—the humanitas and the anthropos—thus affirming that the humanitas are present and the anthropos are absent. Thirdly, it critiques the conception imperial reason as it creates subjection specifically focusing on coloniality of being where the humanity of the African subject is questioned, doubted and reduced to the indomitable lack. Fourthly, it submits that epistemic violence denies subjectivity, and African subjects cannot govern themselves and they will always be in need of the tutelage bound by imperial reason. Fifthly, it argue colonial utopic registers are in fact the very anthithesis of the future they propagate, and shows how such registers have compromised African modes of self-definition. Sixth, the paper puts forth that decolonial subjectivity is steadfast in its commitment that it knows what is best for Africa for being in-itself and for-itself and this is the antithesis of imperial reason. The paper then concludes that another Africa is possible and this will be realised through decolonial subjectivity attending to the present as opposed to being preoccupied by the future.

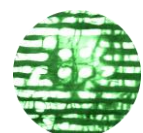


Introduction

Colonialism has been a *redux*. It has never left despite the struggle for decolonization. It remained intact through evasion and guises. It took the form of coloniality. This means the continuity of the colonial infrastructure within the absence of the colonial administration is what plagues Africa. It is coloniality that keeps the colonial state largely intact, and this perpetuates colonial continuities. The notion of the African future foregrounds itself as the paradise, the arrival moment where Africa will be on the optimistic side of history and progress. Africa will be at the better place and that is what the African future is all about. However, it is contended here that this is a fraudulent myth. Nor is it enough to suggest that African futures will only be actualised through decolonial subjectivity.

This paper is premised on two foundational questions: How is the existential category of being colonised? How does the colonised conception of being impacts on the creation of a future? The colonisation of the category of being comes through “a radical questioning or permanent suspicion regarding the humanity of the being in question” (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 245). Being is colonised through what Maldonado-Torres refers to as “Manichean misanthropic scepticism” which is the doubting of the humanity of the African subject—the being that is colonised—through systematic and systemic ways of suspending humanity. In short, the humanity that is brought into question is not only colonised, but ontological suspended. It is through the Cartesian idea, which also inaugurated the colonial relations that Memmi (1965) captures as the coloniser and the colonised, and the daily existence of the colonised being as that of humiliation. Being is colonised in that ontological violence is structured in such a way that it is directed to the being in question. Being is colonised in that the idea of race (the organising principle of the modern colonial world) is the one that determines superiority of the imperial man and inferiority of the being in question. The being of the African subject has been that of the *being without*, for it is coloniality of being *qua* imperial attitude that “promotes a fundamental genocidal attitude in respect to coloni[s]ed and raciali[s]ed people” (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 246). It means, therefore, the existence of the African subject is synonymous with the condition of non-existence. It is, in many respects, the superfluous existence.

Moreover, the Africa being *qua* coloniality of being means the being without a soul, a civilisation, history, ethics, invention, knowledge and all virtues that have to do with the conception of being *qua* imperial man. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 133), “[t]he concept of coloniality of being is important as it captures not only the depersonali[s]ation of black people under colonialism but the constitution of Africans as raciali[s]ed subjects with next to no value placed on their lives”. The imperial man and his imperial attitude led to the creation of the African subject through imperial reason which denies any form of subjectivity that has to do with the African subject, and obviously, the arrogated positionality that no form of future can result from the African



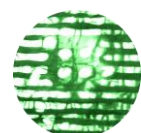
subject. Surely, this is likely to be the case because the subjectivity of the African subject is plagued by coloniality of being. There is no way that the colonised being can create a future—this is the future that does not belong to this very being but that of its exteriority—the imperial man.

It is in the colonial *redux* that Africa futures will not be forthcoming. There cannot be any African futures in the colonial state where being is colonised. The futures that are bound to exist are those which are not in the making of Africa, but that of the imperial man. If the futures of Africa are imagined, contemplated, and actualised in the colonial state, such futures will only be a myth. And for this myth to be dispelled decolonial subjectivities should set in to militate against colonial subjectivities that alienate the African state. This is coloniality at its best which then leaves the colonial infrastructure largely intact. This then creates the colonial subjectivities and colonial subjects.

If everything is caught in the colonial imagination, it therefore follows that its futures will be eclipsed so that they do not create the moment of rupture. Decolonial subjectivities also confront neo-liberalism which argue not only for the end of history, but the *telos* of futures. It is, therefore, necessary to argue that Africa futures do not only rest with myth of good governance, human rights, development, peace and cooperation and so on. The call for this happens within the colonial state and this is also, indeed, the register of coloniality.

The colonial custom has always been that the coloniser rules and the colonised should obey. The African state is the colonial state because it exists under global imperial designs. These global imperial designs discipline African states to follow colonial futures which are registered on the template of coloniality. That is why the initiatives of the Africa states in creating their own futures, but they inevitably serve the colonial infrastructure they are supposed to resist. African states are reduced to a colonial repository and outposts—that is, they are made to be alienated from themselves. There is nothing that can come out of alienated subjectivity except to say that what will come out is a derailed subjectivity. That which is derailed cannot be destined to a greater future, but a bleak one. The future is bleak not because the present is both murky and mysterious (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013).

If the present is the continuity of the past, then the future will not be the liberated. What prevails is the eclipse of imagination which denies any sense of thinking outside the bounds of the colonial infrastructure. Africa is made to freeze and with no chance to move at all. In need to break this mould, Africa must decolonise its futures by deepening the subjectivities that march towards liberation. If there is one thing that Africa needs is liberation. It is the liberation from the colonial plague that the Africa can realise its futures—but then, this does not mean that futures are frozen existential states with all things positive. It is the present which needs to be liberated and the future will take care



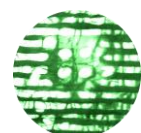
of itself. For the African future to be realised, Africa should be present and this can be realised through decoloniality.

Mignolo (2007: 155) defines decoloniality as “critical thoughts emerging in the colonies and ex-colonies”. Decoloniality makes visible the underside of modernity – it is the critique of criticism. It means that it criticises theories, paradigms and approaches that are also critical of modernity, but which are within the bounds of modernity like post-structuralism, postmodernism and postcolonialism. This is the thought that responds and critiques modernity in its mutating form – that is, coloniality as it hides its locus of enunciation by claiming to be objective, totalising and universal. As a particular kind of critical thought, it unpacks critical theory and its genealogy of thought and opposes fundamentalist position of comparing, measuring, evaluating and judging human experiences (Mignolo 2007). Decoloniality is not a theoretical dead-end but the “search for other possible knowledges and worlds” (Walsh 2007: 234).

Decoloniality is rooted deeply in genealogies of understanding which examine coloniality as long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism and which define social, economic and cultural conditions in absence of the colonial administration (Maldonado-Torres 2008). Coloniality, therefore, is the survival, metamorphosis, continuity and maintenance of subjection thus making it necessary for decoloniality to be grounded in histories and lived experiences of the African subject. Decoloniality aims to break away from coloniality which ratifies colonial subjection. For this to be possible, decoloniality which is informed by praxis of a different kind confronts the hidden and cobwebbed asymmetrical relations of the colonial *redux* that promises the African future—a myth.

Africa's *humanitas* presence as *anthropos* absence

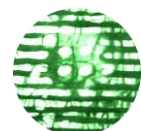
It is the myth of the African futures that Africa's presence is its absence. The latter is because of African's vulnerability in the whims of colonial violence the metaphysical and psychic level. The marginality, suffering and vulnerability of the African subject is structured in such a way that it is in a form of banality—that is, it is institutionalised, naturalised and normalised. This saturates the African subject into colonial subjection in the normal ways of life (which is contradictory because it is survival) that becomes meaningless. The ontological absence of the African subject provides a signature that solidifies the existence of African subject at the level of dispensability. The valuable human life of the African subject is the entity that is akin to nothingness—a lifeless form. If ontology is something that is established, when it comes to the African subject it not only collapses, but it becomes absent. The ontological absence essentially means the absence of the African subject. The being of the African subject is that of the fallen race. The African subject is outside the domain of humanity, the very irreconcilability with the very thing that makes life a form of essence. Life for African subject is not living but surviving. This has been structurally created through colonial subjection that positions the Africa subject in the marginality of life.



To make articulate the ontological absence of the African subject, it is essential to make the existential distinction between the *humanitas* and the *anthropos*. The *humanitas* are beings (civilised, modern, intelligent, virtuous and so on) and the *anthropos* are non-beings (barbaric, primitive, uncivilized, idle, oversexed and so on). In short, the figure of the human and on that note the *humanitas* is the human while the *anthropos* is not (Mignolo 2011). Of course, what is the human is what take the centre stage in the colonial subjection and it is the humanity of the *humanitas*. The point of focus here is to understand colonial subjection from the ontological absence of the *anthropos*. The figure of the *anthropos* is the one excluded from the world, and of course, the world being that of the *humanitas*. The world is the thought of the *humanitas* and the one which is articulated in such terms and operating in such a world they are susceptible to perpetuate the very tendencies of such a world, the myth of the African futures being one.

The *humanitas* and the *anthropos* do not co-existence symmetrically in the modern colonial world. Only the *humanitas* exists while the *anthropos* are erased from the domain of existence. If the *anthropos* are at the receiving end of the ontological erasure, it therefore means that the presentation of colonial subjection has nothing to do with the *anthropos* but to lump the *anthropos* in the *humanitas* existential zone. In this ontological absence, the African subject becomes the *anthropos*—the being that is outside the domain of the human. This existential problematic that cannot be conceptually solved through treaties and conventions predicated on peace, but it is the field of structures of antagonisms where the creation of the *anthropos* by the *humanitas* is the phenomenon predicated by gratuitous violence (Wilderson 2010). The existence of the *anthropos* is a violated existence, and such existence simply means absence. The *anthropos* are made by colonial subjection as entities that are redeemed from falling into perpetuity of self-destruction. Thus, the *anthropos* struggle to have a future because of the traces of this perpetuity, and they need the *humanitas* again to extract them from this existential abyss and to realise a future.

The register of fungibility, as Wilderson (2010) notes, is the absence of the African subject in the realm of life structured by ontological violence. To amplify this, Bogues (2012) argues that the *humanitas* assume the status where they dominate the *anthropos* and enact violence against them. For Bogues and Wilderson alike, the *anthropos*, as a result of ontological violence, assumes the ontological status of a living corpse. This status is the symptomatic of what Patterson (1982) refers to as “social death”—that is, the natal alienation and general dishonour of the African subject. This violence *à la* social death puts the *anthropos* in the existential state of precariousness. There is no ontological density to the existential condition that is precarious and it is clear having had this ontological erasure that no Africa futures exist. Ontology is, as Fanon (1967) states, thrown off on the wayside and this state of absence will leave the entity of *being without*. Ontology is that which is not constitutive and foundational to the *anthropos*—the very existential being for Africa and its supposed future. Absence is the major component of the African subject’s subjectivity and what is brought to bare is that the

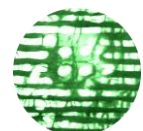


African subject is both absent metaphysically and epistemologically—the very reason why the *anthropos* becomes the subject structured inside ontological violence. The existence of the African subject is mute and nameless in the face of structurally relational violence in the form of coloniality of being. For this to be combated, decoloniality needs to set in as the very ontological grammar of the *anthropos*.

For decolonial subjectivity to set in where Africa will speak for itself, this would mean that it affirms its presence by means of its own self-definition. The presence of Africa in the world is absence makes Africa to be alienated and its subjects—the *anthropos*—do not have anything to account for in so far as presence is concerned. How can there be Africa's futures if there is no Africa's presence? It is on the basis of self-definition that decolonial subjectivity will be in the making to affirm the existential condition of presence. It is in absence, which is the present colonial subjectivity, that Africa's future is oblique. No futures can be created if there is no present that is fundamentally changed. For the mere fact that the present is not changed, that essentially means that there is no African presence. The future is determined by the present, but it still remains a fact that future is not absolutist in that it is fraught with uncertainty. In short, no one knows the future, except for the future knowing itself. The absence of Africa means that futures do not belong to Africa. The coming of colonialism and its continued operation meant that Africa will not feature in any way—that is, Africa is nothing of its own—for, it belongs to the realm of absence.

The coupling of the *humanitas* and the *anthropos* in the realm of absence (the very aberration of presence) brings the conception of African futures into crisis. Not only African futures are the lost object in the realm of the *anthropos*—the very condition of the absence collapses the future—foundational to this it is key to ask: how can those who are absent create the future? It is clear that African futures should be created, and this should be done by combatively engaging the present. The latter is the foundational base of the future, and there has to be Africa's presence. The absence of Africa in the world has been systematic and systemic in that this absence is not self-inflicted but something that is caused *exteriori*. The marginalisation, exclusion and inferiorisation of Africa in the so-called “world affairs” is well established to the point of normalisation.

The culmination of subjectivity of the Anthropos—for it has been relegated to the realm of absence—if it is articulated as full speech, it will inaugurate conversational impossibility where to enact presence is the very act that exposes a scandal in that the lived experience of the *anthropos* has been what Bogue (2012) refers to a “historical catastrophe” and its “repetitive traumas”. Africa is an entity that is acted upon and decisions are made in such a way that Africa is not there whereas it is there. No will is demanded, for that will not counter those decisions that are made for Africa. If Africa occupies the realm of absence, it cannot be invited in to be present, nor can there be the creation of the future. African should, by all means necessary *qua* decolonial subjectivity, make itself present but that can only be realised if the ontological realm of



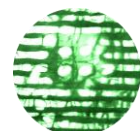
the *humanitas* is attained. It means, therefore, that the construction of the future (the figure of time as uncertainty of course) will largely depend on reconstructing the present by tracing the traumatic colonial history and its aftermath (the present) and to make the humanity that is superfluous to bear witness to their absence as they ensure to be present.

Imperial reason is coloniality of being

The myth of African futures, the phenomenon in the clutches of imperial reason signifies nothing else but coloniality of being. It means, therefore, that the imperial man is the one who not only creates its Other, but rather, it is the colonial subjection that dehumanises the Other. If there is something that imperial reason is armoured with is what Maldonado-Torres (2008) refers to as the “paradigm of war” which is the central *leitmotif* that perpetuates the existential condition that creates coloniality of being. Imperial reason determined the state of being alive or that of survival, of having subjectivity or having none of it. If there is no thorough understanding of imperial reason there will be a complicated understanding of the African futures. The African subject is regarded as the entity that is outside the realm of being, and as such, there cannot be any expectations for there to be anything that will come out of that subject. It is the imperial reason which questions the humanity of the black subject, and that being something that really questions the subjectivity of African subjects in creating Africa’s futures. Imperial reason *qua* coloniality of being emerged as Maldonado-Torres (2004) points out from the reflections of coloniality and the conception of the modern and colonial world.

The question of coloniality of being in this perspective can only be understood on the basis of exploration and the discursive interventions that questions power relations and the logic and the configuration of the world. Also in addition to understand the structural positionality of the African subject in that process of subjection. The notion of being is that of racial invention where the notion of race is used as the organising principle through the combination of power and knowledge, the very constitutive parts of subjection. These were the arsenals used to create the Other, the Other of Europe, the aberration of the norm, the non-being whom there will be no penalty or justice is such a human figure is dehumanised.

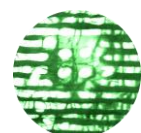
It is imperial reason that created exaggeration of difference. Difference is the very cause of Africa’s problems. This is because, as Bogue (2012: 35) notes, “the figure of the human was constructed through the conceptions of human difference already classified into hierarchical schema”. The conception of human differences—the very figure of exaggeration—is racialised. Nor deracialisation is necessary, but rather, the end of imperial reason in totality because it is the one that solidifies the foundation of exaggerated difference. This, in addition, solidifies injustices that befall Africa and this is what makes African subject to be the *damne* or “wretched” or the condemned of the earth who are rendered otherwise, as they are indeed the other (Maldonado-Torres



2004). The damned of the earth are those who are excluded and they are considered the aberration from the norm. In this form, they are found in the outskirts and wastelands of the empire, the geography that is seen as devoid of any content of being and notion can come out of it. In this logic of modernity, there is what Maldonado-Torres (2004) refers to as “forgetfulness of coloniality”, that is simply that, imperial reason tends to forget that it is the sole creator of the damned of the earth who are trapped in the abyss of violence. The damned of the earth also exists in the condition that are designed, maintained and decorated by the configuration of power—that is, the colonial matrix of power.

The colonial matrix of power create the typology of ontological difference with Africa as a doormat of the world, its humanity as the signifier of a fallen race amongst many other races, the *exteriori* of things *humanitas*, the figure of excess, and the existential state of things negative as it is a Conradian ‘dark continent’ gives the justificatory solidity that there is no future for the continent. Coloniality of being in relation to the African subject means that this subject is a non-being—an ontologically void subject. “Coloniality of [b]eing suggests that [b]eing in some way militates against one’s own existence” (Maldonado-Torres 2004: 43). The fundamental point is that the structural positionality of the African subject is that of being racialised, implicated, criminalised and persecuted. The African subject is the aberration from the norm and for it to be dealt with it has to be eliminated and excluded in the anti-black world. The stereotypes that inform the invention of African subject are still alive to the state of attaining some form of conical truth that then put the majority of African subject in their own place—exclusion and marginalisation of the hellish conditions. The colonial matrix of power signifies Africa judgementally by relegating it to the state of abyss. It is the form of power that negates Africa from the realm of presence. For, this difference is the aberration in so far as Africa stands for nothing that is in the realm of humanity. To be in the realm of difference (and the exaggerated one of course) means that imperial reason stands for the dehumanisation of Africa and it would be naïve to expect the navigation of the futures from imperial reason.

The African subject can become human by the very basis of destructing coloniality of their own being. Coloniality of being carries with it the logic of violence that creates pathologies, the very things that make sure that the African subject is the sole target of colonial subjection. Imperial reason affirms the imperial fraternity of what Maldonado-Torres (2008) refers to as the “community of masters”. The notion of community of masters valorises ethics of power needed to maintain the pathos of domination and self-control that keep the structure of coloniality of being intact (Maldonado-Torres 2008). This means, the notion of community of masters is the master morality that is constitutive of modernity, from its beginning, its changing faces and to the present. The interests of civilisation was and is only benefiting the community of masters, and the very opposite of what they claim to serve.

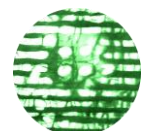


On epistemic violence

Tied to imperial reason is epistemic violence where the making of African future is something colonised, and erased from the making of knowledge. The *modus operandi* of epistemic violence is that which excludes, marginalises, demonises and even eliminates forms of episteme that differ from modernity (Grosfoguel 2007). It presents itself as the world *in toto*, its conception of truth being universally valid and with the pretence that all socio-historical experiences are the same. Yet still, this sameness means that everything stems from the particularity of imperial reason. Moreover, colonisation is casted as the event that has resulted in sameness. This arrogated stance is epistemic violence. It reduces Africa to the embodiment of lacks and deficits. Imperial reason is mostly found in the discourse that propagates the notion of development, which is seen as a panacea to all problems that plague Africa. Development is often positioned and couched as the positive, and that it effects change to the better position. Of interest is the fact that development is not a call for Africa themselves, but the call from outside Africa and if the rhetoric of development were to be located, for example, on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), the template of development is not that of Africans. The World Bank and IMF are the hegemons of development in that they provide intellectual and financial hegemony.

So, whatever form of development there is, it is subjected to the dictates of these institutions which have shown not to have the interests of African development at heart, and they should, of course, not expected to have them. Their hegemonic position still maintains the colonial relations and this is a clear signification of epistemic violence. The World Bank and IMF as development apparatus dictate the nature, form and content of development, and African development is made to operate under the capture and gaze of this apparatus. The reality of development is the institutionally created one – safe to say the least, it is the rhetoric of development. As Escobar (1995: 222) warns, “there are no grand alternatives that can be applied to all places or all situations”.

Development is seen as “catching up” by Mkandawire (2011) who scathingly criticises it as a repressive meta-narrative that privileges certain forms of knowledge while denigrating local ones. It means that if Africa works towards building its futures, its subjectivity will be discounted if not disciplined to adhere to colonial futures. This adherence would mean that Africa must catch up to the colonial path of development. Colonial futures are plagued with the pretensions of progress, change and transformation. These futures are pretentious in that they offer nothing but only plain elusiveness. This is even clear in the discourses of development which are a repressive meta-narrative that regards the colonial episteme as the only basis and the only reservoir that is essential for development. Therefore, anything outside it is nothing that can lead to development. Development in Africa is predicated on the virtuous, the ideal and the fix of ruins, and yet, it is still a scandal as it is infected by coloniality. Escobar (1995) argues that development has been a disaster: instead of the kingdom of abundance

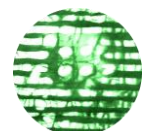


promised by theorists and politicians in the 1950s, the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitations and oppression.

The most astute critic of developmentalism as stated in Mkandawire focuses its attention on Truman version of development (development involved both geopolitical considerations and humanitarianism) so that much of the criticism of development efforts and the so-called impasse development was about the idea that Euro-North America was entrusted with the task of developing Africa in its image. Given the analysis of the global politics of knowledge that has been naturalised through coloniality, the hegemony of knowledge, advantageous to Europe and North America is a deliberate act whose intent is to continue the betterment of Euro-North America at the expense of the other worlds. The development discourse which is driven by the very same context of geopolitics of knowledge will indeed bring nothing desirable.

The epistemological project of development has been that of Euro-North American canon which is in need of transplants and appendages which reproduce such knowledge, and of course, development turning into the decadence of what Chinweizu (1987) coins as “maldevelopment”. This canon, in its epistemological project of development, “has created an efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power over, the Third World” (Escobar 1995: 9). “Knowledge-making in the modern/colonial world is at once knowledge in which the very concept of ‘modernity’ rests and the judge and warrantor of legitimate and sustainable knowledge” (Mignolo 2009). For Mignolo, knowledge-making of development is entrenched in modernity with its imperialist purposes largely informed by maldevelopment. The epistemic decolonial shift of development which is the movement of the geography of reason clearly indicates that knowledge about Africa’s development should be looked through the locus of enunciation of Africa not that of the Euro-North American empire which is in control of imperial global designs which are the constitutive parts of modernity. Modernity is informed by the expansionism of western civilisation which is seen as the absolute civilisation which is the only process than other forms of civilisations, hence there is a colonialist argument that Africa is not developed due to its absence of civilisation and modernity.

Development as identity can be understood in relation to what Escobar (1995) regards as the regime of representation. This mean that the geography is laid out in which parts of the worlds are considered developed and those who are said to be developing—and the very regime of representation being the manner in which the Euro-North American empire constructs other parts of the worlds, and of course, writing them off from worldliness. They are, in effect, the other, that is, that which needs development from the Euro-North American empire. This regime of representation, as Escobar points out, forms itself in the form of order and truth where in which the paternalistic attitude towards the other parts of the world remain so profound, and for them to come into



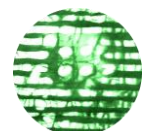
worldliness they will need the assistance and dependence of the Euro-North American empire.

Development has only relied exclusively on one knowledge system, namely, the modern Western one. The dominance of this knowledge system has dictated the marginalisation and disqualification of non-Western knowledge systems. (Escobar 1995: 13)

The knowledge system propagates itself as rational and objective. It serves as a blueprint of development which does not differences of contexts into account. Epistemic violence ensures that there is no contextual reflection, and the project of development in Africa is the transplant from the Euro-North American context. Epistemic violence creates colonised minds, and if minds are colonised how can there be decolonial futures? The starting point should be that African minds are colonised and African subjects having to admit that because they exist in coloniality of being. Chinweizu (1987) and wa Thiong'o (1986) call for the decolonisation of the African mind and this call serves as the standpoint that defies epistemic violence. It is this violence that hinders the efforts to think Africa outside its own frames of imagination, aspirations and practices of freedoms.

Decolonisation of the mind is the restoration, affirmation and reparation of the African episteme and for Africa to create its present. The creation of the present is epistemologically important in that it is the rectification of the present that will lend, if possible, a promising future. The decolonisation of the African mind, if anything that it is, it is what African subjects are rather what than what they should become. It is the urgency to deal with the present, in that what is at stake is the livelihood of Africa itself. The African mind needs to be decolonised in the present and not in the future. The present has been haunted by the colonial past, and this continues to be the bane in the practices of the present which are maligned as they are obsessed about creating better futures without having to deal with the actual present. In short, the African mind, which is in need of decolonisation, is not able to confront and combat what haunts it. What haunts in the form of epistemic violence is interpellation of African subjectivity in order to decapitate it to be an alienated subjectivity, with no standpoint and with no sense of itself.

The decolonisation of the African mind that Chinweizu and wa Thiong'o refer to is the one that marshals African subjectivity not to the future, but rather, the subjectivity that deals with the present which is haunted by the past. It is not only a form of cleansing, but also, a form of exorcising the spectre of hauntology. In no way can this be done without any form of decolonial subjectivity. This in particular, is necessary as it is a form of subjectivity that confronts and combats epistemic violence and by so doing, the colonised minds will be foundationally changed to be decolonised minds with decolonial subjectivity. For coloniality of being to come to an end qua epistemic violence, the African subject should come to itself by taking African epistemic systems seriously and



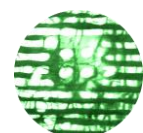
to think Africa from where it is located as opposed to thinking Africa from the colonial episteme. Doing so does not mean with obsessing with solutions and the rush to create futures. There is no use of providing solutions for the problems that are not understood in terms of their genealogy and trajectory.

There must be the concerted effort to epistemologically wrestle with the present in order to make the present the key foci. To make the present the starting point that should undergo fundamental change. That is to say, the present should be the sole basis to decolonise the mind for the purpose of the present itself and not obsessing (through projection, prediction and scenario immolating) the future, for the latter is the existential state of uncertainty. Nor is it logical to hold the assumption that such a future will come without overhauling the present *in toto*. There is nothing important about the future if the mind is not prepared for it—thus, as it will be demonstrated—the future should not be the *telos*. Epistemic violence even delegitimises the criticism of development to the point of its criminalisation, more so if it comes from Africans themselves. So, it means, Africa must always be grateful when its future is determined without it. Decolonial subjectivity debunks this gesture, and refers to the acts of coloniality of being qua epistemic violence as the outposts of colonial utopic registers which offer nothing but the elusiveness of hope.

Colonial utopic registers

The conception of colonial utopic registers determines Africa's futures which are not futures but, in paradox, the continuities of the colonial pasts. Africa is not on the definition of itself in the modern colonial world. This is not to suggest that there have not been political moves that are Africa's self-definition. For example, it is essential to point to self-definition political practices such as Pan Africanism, Negritude, African Humanism, African personality, Ujamaa, Nyawo, and African Renaissance to name just few. These political practices of self-definition were fuelled by African subjectivity and claiming Africa from the clutches of subjection. The challenge has always been that these modes of self-definition have been muted if not frustrated. The impediments to self-definition are therefore the very structures of colonial matrices of power which are foundational and constitutive to the modern colonial world. They are structures that put Africa at the position that is devoid of any sense of subjectivity. Largely, in the postcolonial context the self-definition of Africa has been about the national projects as opposed to the continental project. With the exception, of course, of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance which were continental in scope. But then there has not been the overall continental support to them due to the colonial border divisions and the regional political fault lines that do continue to exist. This is to simply demonstrate that there has not been the overall rallying point of African positionality.

Self-definition comes in the context where political projects are undertaken and they serve as a vehicle to realise the betterment of the continent. With mixed results, of course, due to differences in scope and aims of each, and the contextual socio-historical

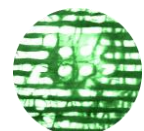


factors being responded to, the self-definition of African political projects has been about a better future. They were infused with the utopic registers. Some did not even respond to the major challenges that haunt the present and that would be the important starting point. With good intentions they had, the thing that was not realised was that these political practices of modes of African self-definition articulated themselves within the colonial utopic register.

The colonial utopic register has made Africa captive in the articulation the future through the gridlock of *ad infinitum* postponement. This creates the opium of the mind for the colonised being. The colonised being is trapped in the illusion of hope and the myth of the future in the colonial utopic register creates the impression that the present does not matter, only the future does. The African modes of self-definition are complicit in this in that they create this illusion of hope without having to solve the precariousness of the politics of the present. The escape from the present to the future is what informs the colonial utopic register. It is the register of denial, in that it creates the condition where the problem of the present are denied, and as a way of aversion, problems and solution are put in the era that African subjects are not situated in. What has been of interest is how African subjectivity has fallen prey to this gridlock of *ad infinitum* postponement which is designed in projector scenario makings.

It is naïve for the being that is colonised to have the illusion that the future will be better than the past and the present. The future is not always good. To have the illusion that the future will be better is to be trapped in colonial subjectivity. Philosophically, there is no evidence that that the future will be better. The assumptive logic that creates the impression that the future will be better is coloniality. Coloniality of being *qua* colonial utopic register signifies nothing but the opium of the mind. It is important to go back to the Millennium Developmental Goals (MDG) which includes the achievement of the following eight targets: eradication of poverty, universal primary education, gender equality and women empowerment, reduction of child mortality, improved maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development. These goals are indeed important in that they inform some of the political interventions to be made and also highlighting some of the problems that plague Africa. Indeed, it is clear that their prognosis is still caught in the colonial utopic register in that they are not focused on diagnosing the present. The colonial matrices of power continue to act as disciplinary forces in that Africa is still indebted in excess to the World Bank and IMF. In addition, donor funding has been one of the external revenue to realise some of these goals. It still means, if African futures are on the making, colonial matrices of power should serve as the source.

African states have engaged in the drudgery of finding solutions to their underdevelopment and economic stagnation since they took over the mantle of leadership and governance since the dawn of independence in the 1960s. The



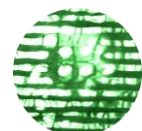
failed and protracted trial and errors, political navigations, economic algorithms for poverty alleviation to reach sustainable development now submit to the MGDs as the *de facto* tool that promises lasting solutions. (Nwonwu 2008: 3)

Nwonwu also registers the fact that MDGs are also systematic in that they diagnose the problems and not symptoms. Indeed, this is plausible and what is important to register, in paradox, is the fact that MDGs were and are still disciplined by the colonial matrices of power and the colonial utopic register in the form of targets to be met by the year 2015 is bound to be postponed again. Thus, there has not even been much noise about MDGs in the recent years. Another interesting initiative is the one of food security which is something that will be solved in the year 2020—earmarked as a target to respond to food demand—the baseline assumption of this projection being that the present problem of food insecurity will be addressed in the realm of the future. That is, the problem of malnutrition will be reduced by 2020. In point of fact, it is not whether these projections are received in the spirit of optimism or pessimism. Rather, these are projections that are earmarked on the future as if the future holds plausible prospects of the scenario of optimism. In addition, putting 2020 as the year is something that is bound to be postponed in that these projects are the colonial utopic registers that do not concern themselves with decolonising Africa's present. Recently, African futures are placed on the panoptic projection of Africa 2063 as a point of departure.

The myth of structural change—the social, political and economic change—is caught in the colonial utopic register in that the form of change is cosmetic rather than genuine. This creates the condition where African subjectivity is stuck between policies and their realisations. The ultimate end seems to be progress and development as rallying points. If this rallying point is the end, then nothing seems to effect change. Words like comprehensive, integrated, innovative and so on are deployed but they still produces the very same gridlock. African subjectivity is stuck in the register of trial and error with the same result of failure because the interventions are not formed from the root core of African subjectivity itself. That is why Africa is disciplined by colonial matrices of power to adjust and adapt to the dictates of the 'international best practices'. What is put as new thinking is the very recycling of new ideas.

What is registered therefore is the fact that Africa will be a better place in the world since the 21st Century belongs to Africa. It is a time where Africa will own itself and having a better place in the world. In a form of prognosis of the African futures, what is not highlighted is whether the modern colonial world would have ended. It is clear that African futures, even in the target of 2063 will still be caught in the colonial utopic registers. It is important for African subjectivity not to be clouded in optimism, since this is the opium of the mind. Ndlovu-Gatsheni warns:

This optimism must also be careful not to minimize the structural straitjacket of colonial matrix of power that continues to maintain the hierarchical hegemonies of domination between the South and the North. Africa cannot maintain a good



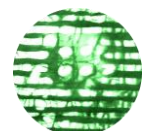
policy space at the global economic and political high table as long as the realities of neocolonialism are not completely broken and swept away in every area of life, such as culture, epistemology, discourse, language and images. What can be said with confidence is that Africa has a long battle to fight before it can claim the 21st century as its own. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 242)

Nothing is made in this continuum of projections to deal with the colonial problem in that they do suggest that coloniality is not insight, and whatever that has to do with colonialism is the relic of the past. Africa should fight against coloniality, since the existential reality of the continent is not the one where victories can be claimed. The colonial utopic registers should be combated through decolonial subjectivity in that the African subject is still, even in these future projections, clutched in colonial matrices of power that perpetuates the existential crisis of the coloniality of being. The preoccupation with the future will not do anything if Africa is to be better in the present. This preoccupation is nothing else but the myths of African futures. The future is the existential plane that must be left to its own devices, more so if the present is the one that is not favourable to those who occupy the existential plane of coloniality of being.

The future *in-itself* and *for-itself*

To re-assert Africa's future in its own terms and by Africa subjects *themselves* and *for themselves* in service of the broader interests of the continent. This might sound sentimental if the political imagination is hesitant to take seriously the horizons and futures that Africa's future ought be—the very political possibility to bring Africa to *itself*. This is the militancy against coloniality of being because alienation becomes the thing that is no longer the embodiment of the African subject. It is important to hasten the fact that the future should be left to itself—that is, let the future take care of itself while the present being the moment that is fundamentally changed. There will be no future without the present.

It will be contended that the future of Africa should be *in-itself* and *for-itself* because decolonial subjectivity requires that Africa be not acted upon, thus having no preoccupation with the future they know nothing of. The future is the existential plane that is unknown and it is that of uncertainty. It is in this uncertainty that decolonial subjectivity sets in, and not with the intention of seeking alternatives to project the future in the realm of optimism to have certainty. The intervention here is not to plunge African subjectivity in the realm of pessimism of the future, nor the optimism of the future. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), “uncertainty has always coexisted with both pessimism and optimism”. These two extremes of subjectivity are not the point of focus here. What is fundamental is to decentre the future as the point of departure because the present itself is realm of uncertainty. Uncertainty cannot solidly construct certainty. It is the present where African subjectivity means mastery of its own destiny, but this destiny being not the preoccupation with the future, but the present. It is the



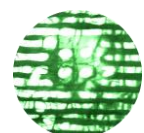
latter moment that calls Africa to act, and not the distant future which is clutched in uncertainty.

It is clear that no easy victories should be claimed simply because the battle against coloniality is yet to start. This battle is not only about correcting the present, but to restoration and reparation the African self will mean the re-humanisation of the subject that has been dehumanised. The meaning of the future *in-itself* and *for-itself* serves as the clear indictment to the fact that all proposition that are made in terms of the prognosis of the African future can be wrong and they might even lose credibility. If African future is the state of uncertainty, it is because the present is the state of uncertainty in which no further scenarios can be drawn. If these scenarios get it wrong (as they have in the continuum) it is clear that the future should be left to prophets. To be preoccupied with the future is the eschatological thought which can breed illusive hope and its attended—fatalism. It is the future of Africa and Africa should be in its own making. Chinweizu articulates the decolonial subjectivity thus:

It is too late for us, the imperiali[s]ed, to weep upon the shoulders of those who have brought about our oppression for sympathy toward our plight. We need, rather, to understand our past defeats if we want to avoid the deadly shocks our future seems to be holding in ambush for us. (Chinweizu 1975: xi)

What is taken by Chinweizu here is positionality – that is, the composure of articulating the grammar of existence to marshal demands of the African subject in other to create the present. The present is the important moment to be attended to and the one in need of urgent decolonisation. It is in the present where coloniality of being is the existential injustice. If African futures are claimed to be in the mould of giving existential justice to those who are existentially wronged, then this, in paradox is the contradiction in terms, for, this is a feat of injustice. The idea of existential justice is aimed at registering the fact that African subjects (the *anthropos*) must determine, in the moment of the present what kind of existential justice they want and how they will engage in the political acts of realising it. Existential justice in these terms does not mean that justice will be given to the *anthropos*. To existentially struggle is to militate against coloniality of being and to become the *humanitas*. This cannot be realised through the invitation of the *anthropos* by the *humanitas* to the human fraternity. This is because the *humanitas* through the infrastructure of exaggerated difference wants existential injustices that create coloniality of being to remain. That is why the anti-systemic efforts of the *anthropos* to resurrect to the realm of the *humanitas* are disciplined through colonial matrices of power.

Those how are at the receiving end of existential injustice should not expect justice while coloniality of being is definitive to their existence as the damned and the wretched of the earth. Any gesture of justice that is articulated through imperial reason, structurally positioned through colonial matrices of power and executes itself through



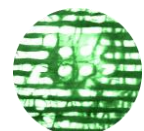
ontological violence of coloniality of being is injustice proper. African futures are a myth in that Africa the *anthropos* are in the belly of existential injustice. The change that is said to be the agenda of the modern colonial world is injustice in that it bastardises African subjectivity. To move further, as a stretch, the *anthropos* should rearticulate and act on its own insatiable demands as they will not be met by the modern colonial world. These demands are foregrounded in decolonial subjectivity to bring to an end racism, exploitation, inferiorisation, structural and ontological violence which are the very basis that sustains the existence of the modern colonial world. Decoloniality is Africa *for-itself* and *in-itself* in the moment of the present and the future will take care of itself if the present is in this existential mode of justice.

Coda: Another world is possible

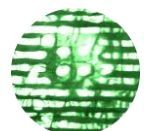
By concluding, this paper affirms the positionality that another Africa is possible. Another world is possible. This possibility is informed by the fact that there is no nihilism in the *anthropos* by the political advocacy of decolonising futures. This means another world where many other worlds fit is possible. The possibility of another Africa cannot be rooted from the juridical independence as the starting point, but rather, the making of decolonial present. This is the present that originates from subjectivities that take Africa seriously to the point of defending the continent from the colonial matrices of power and takes its subjectivity to be outside of coloniality.

The challenges that are facing the continent are too numerous to demand a fixed solution with its nature being exclusionary to African subjectivities. For the mere fact that Africa has been monolithised as something reducible to an entity, has made the Euro-North American hegemon to see itself as the only paragon of virtue, and the future of Africa depending on it. In this scheme of things, Africa is not allowed to develop its subjectivity on its own terms, but then, decolonial subjectivity requires no permission for this possibility since what is at stake is of necessity. The Africa that is possible is the Africa that will radically change the present for the better. Yet still, Africa as it is—Africa in the clutches of Euro-North American dictates—will need to be ended in totality for it is not Africa for itself, but Africa for the modern colonial world. The solutions and prescriptions that are offered are not the ones embedded in African subjectivities but those of Euro-North America. Another Africa is something that is not mention, except to say that it needs to be fixed.

Is it not important to imagine another Africa? Well, this is always on the affirmative with a high dose of optimism. This means, African subjectivity needs to decolonise itself and not be clouded by pessimism and naïve optimism predicated on the expectation that Africa will be rescued externally instead of it starting again. Another reality has to come into being where the horizon and futures will enable another Africa to be possible. The importance of the horizon and futures of Africa cannot be understated in that the epistemic exclusion and the existential precariousness of the present. The struggle has been waged to proceed further in the futures of Africa, with gains and losses along the

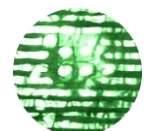


way. What is interesting, however, is the continuing tenacity to see another Africa outside the yoke of oppression, erasure, distortion and inferiorisation. Even though the future seems to be discounted here, this does not mean they are impossible to realise and they should be put aside since it is the present which needs to be decolonised. The decolonisation of the present arises from the need to break the mould of coloniality and to chart the terrain of decoloniality—that is, the unmaking of the world as it is in order to make the world where many other worlds fit. That is another Africa, the one that is possible only if it is decolonised from the existential fulcrum of the present.



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