

Editorial: Afrikan-Centred Psychology: Illuminating the Human Spirit – Spirit(nesss), *Skh Djr, Moya*

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Introduction

Proponents of the Eurocentric psychological paradigm, which is often touted as universal, albeit in the absence of evidence, deny the existence of a Pan-African metaphysical epistemology and ontology (Martin 2008) that form the foundations of an Afrikan-centred psychology. Colonial conquest did not only lead to the loss of land, livelihoods, and fragmentation of being; it was accompanied by a concerted effort to deny the historical contributions of continental Africans and those in the Diaspora, to world knowledge. This special edition on Afrikan Psychology is aptly titled, ‘Illuminating the Human Spirit’. This is not only in an attempt to return to the source in order to map a way forward, in the Sankofa tradition; it also marks a conscious effort to re-claim and re-insert the wholistic metaphysical epistemology and ontology, which is characteristic of the Afrocentric paradigm, into psychology. In the Afrocentric paradigm, illumination of the Human Spirit, or Spirit-ness, is the quintessential aspect of our being-ness. Given the psychological effect that the ideology of White supremacy and European imperialism, in the form of slavery and colonialism, have had on Africa and her people worldwide, this scientific discourse should have never been possible. The resultant consequence, if not the intent, of enslavement and colonization to create a shattered African consciousness and fractured Black identity wherein African people globally have no value and a distorted sense

of well-being was thought to be irrevocable. However, the psychological effect of colonization and enslavement was (is) not a *fait accompli*. It is important to frame this discussion in its proper historical context as an ongoing contribution to the liberation of the African mind and well-being.

The importance of Black Psychologists from around the world, meeting at the 30th International Congress of Psychologists in Cape Town, South Africa in 2012, reconvening at the ABPsi meeting in New Orleans in 2013, and then again at the 1st International Congress of the Forum of Afrikan Psychology in 2014, cannot be understated. Starting with the Pan African discourse in the Special Issue of the *Journal of Black Psychology* (2013), and continuing to *Alternation's* special edition focusing on *African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) in Mental Health, African Literature, and Education* (2016) to *Journal of Black Psychology's Psychology in the Caribbean: Broadening Our Knowledge Base* (2019) through this *Alternation* special Edition, *Afrikan-Centred Psychology: Illuminating the Human Spirit* (2020), these ongoing discussions may very well represent evidence of the indestructible vitality of our collective pre-colonial/enslavement Ancestral mindset that serves as the springboard and moral justification for the collective restoration of the African mind.

Demonstrative of this reality, we have intentionally organized this issue to show the common experience and perspectives shared by both continental and diasporan Pan African psychologists.



This special edition comprises thirteen articles. Wade W. Nobles and Nhlanhla Mkhize's article interrogates the Kmt-Nubia/ Bantu-Kongo grand narrative from which they advance the Science of the Spirit. The Afrocentric paradigm, which poses that all reality is Spirit, is explored. The authors conclude with a call for the development of Pan African textbooks and terminology that reflect this paradigm.

Continuing on the same theme, namely that the essence of all reality is Spirit, and drawing from the spiritual traditions of the BaKongo, Dogon, Akan and Yoruba, Taylor D. Duckett investigates the African-American Christian tradition of speaking in tongues in relation to the invocation of Spirit within indigenous African spiritual systems. She argues that Spirit talk can bypass colonized linguistic systems, thereby facilitating the recognition

of oneself and others. Vera L. Nobles and Roberta M. Federico recognize the importance of honouring the retention of African languages as acts of retention and resistance. They seek to show how the recognition of Ebonics and Bantu Portuguese can serve as important tools for the restoration of wellness for Africans on the continent and the diaspora.

Julia Simango and Puleng Segalo argue that the violence that was unleashed against Africans, in the form of enslavement, genocide, oppression, colonialism and exploitation, remains deeply entrenched in the colonial education system, amongst others. Psychology was used as a tool to justify the dehumanization and oppression of Africans. Their article seeks to draw from African spirituality and African knowledge systems in general, to resist the mental onslaught and other challenges that Africans encounter in the education system and in communities. Derek Wilson discusses the cultural perspective in Psychology, with a focus on the cultural connections between African and African-American people. The discussion explores the alien Western episteme, African episteme and cosmology, African psychological functioning, and cultural psychology for the people of African descent. The relevance of the cultural psychological perspective for the expression of thought and emotion and other behaviors, is highlighted.

The article by Zethu Cakata calls upon us to re-imagine education by interrogating African languages in order to understand the psychological concepts and epistemological realities embedded in them. Two *isiXhosa* concepts, *ukuphalaza imbilini* and *ukuzityanda igila*, are used to illustrate the epistemology that is carried in and through language. Lesiba Baloyi continues this theme, with particular reference to the training of psychologists in South Africa. He calls for the inclusion of African epistemology in the psychology curriculum and the use of African languages in the training of psychologists. Huberta Jackson-Lowman argues that the United States of America's housing policies have been identified as one of the disruptive influences in Black communities, in the same way that colonial violence disconnected African-Americans from their histories, their land, cultures and traditions. She calls for 'The development of cultural standards that prescribe cultural policies which are designed to restore *Ubuntu* in Black communities as a ... palliative for ameliorating the dehumanizing environment created by serial forced displacements'.

Cheryl Tawede Grills, Enola G. Aird and Patrick G. Frierson devote their attention to describing an Afrocentric intervention method that is aimed

at healing the trauma caused by the ‘lie’ of White superiority and Black inferiority. This community-based method, known as the Emotional Emancipation Circle, is described in detail. The Pan African relevance of the methodology is emphasized. Molebogeng Kalija Makobe-Rabothata begins her article by calling into question the existence of an ‘African university’ since colonization. Evidently, she is drawing from the debate that seeks to distinguish ‘universities in Africa’ from ‘African universities’. She uses the African idea of *lekgotla*, an open-ended discourse or dialogue aimed at consensus building, to demonstrate how educational transformation (‘decolonization’) in South African education, can be attained. It is important to note that Afrikan-centred psychology draws from many sources, including the written as well as oral sources. Indeed, orality, the Spoken Word, *Izwi*, is as important as written discourse (if not more). Lawford L. Goddard, Daryl M. Rowe, Erica M. McInnis and Chante DeLoach explore the role of proverbs in Afrikan-centred Psychology. The authors show how proverbs represent people’s orientation towards the world and their ways of dealing with life’s challenges.

Discourses of Black inferiority or deficiency abound in the Euro-centric psychological literature – the Deficit Model. Patricia Nunley explores how these narratives, which constitute ‘Psychic Terrorism’, undermine the normal development of Black children. Using the idea of *Ngolo*, the ‘energy of self-healing and power’, Nunley highlights the need for African-American children to function in wholeness. This incorporates the understanding of oneself as Spirit, and the recognition that being unfolds in three realms: the being, been and will be (future). In the concluding article, Mogobe Bernard Ramose problematizes Grosfuguel’s ‘The Epistemic Decolonial Turn’. Rather than assimilating the idea of the decolonial, Ramose argues, an Afrocentric critical discourse needs to focus on the re-humanization of human relations, in line with the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which is premised on mutual recognition and equality.

Conclusion

The articles in this special edition do not only signal an advancement in the development of a Pan African Psychology that is based on the idea of Spirit(ness), they also constitute a historic milestone in the cooperation between the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) and the Forum of

Afrikan Psychology (FAP). The articles cover a range of theoretical and conceptual issues and also point towards the urgent need to unearth the psychological concepts that are embedded in African languages. The development of Afrocentric-based psychological interventions, and curriculum development, are highlighted. It is recommended that future editions should focus more on the intervention and methodological considerations in Afrikan-centred Psychology.

Finally, the articles affirm the common philosophical underpinnings of Afrikan-centred Psychology and collectively invite the ‘community intelligence’ to courageously examine the idea of *Skh Djr*, illuminating the Spirit(ness), as the accurate and appropriate classification of the science.

Reference

Martin, D. 2008. Pan African Metaphysical Epistemology: A Pentagonal Introduction. *Journal of Pan African Studies* 2,3: 209 - 227.

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