

ADDRESS

Sociology, Endogeneity and the Challenge of Transformation

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1. Salutation and Introduction

The Vice-Chancellor, the Vice-Principal, the Registrar, the Dean of Humanities, other Deans, esteemed colleagues, friends and family members with us tonight, fellow students of sociology, ladies and gentlemen; it is with great pleasure that I present the Fifth Inaugural Lecture on behalf of the Department of Sociology.¹ It is a privilege in a triple sense. First, tonight is not about personal achievement. It was grace that brought me this far; it is grace that will lead me on. Second, this is the first inaugural lecture in the tenure of the new Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University. Third, it is an honour for me to speak as a sociologist on behalf of a Department of Sociology, with a sociologist as Vice-Chancellor.

I have chosen for the title of my lecture: Sociology, Endogeneity, and the Challenge of Transformation. Sociology is sometimes described as the ‘master social science’, in the sense of its foundational concerns with ‘sociation’ and its dynamics. In this sense alone, Sociology offers tools for making sense of the transformation challenges that we face. In a second and more important sense, the developments in sociological scholarship in Africa and the global South offer compelling illustrations in addressing the challenges of contents and curriculum transformation. The Lecture addresses these dimensions of critical sociological thinking.

The developments I mentioned earlier mark an exciting new phase in Sociology. They not only go beyond ‘protest scholarship’ but involve critical intellectual affirmation with a distinct flair for epistemic rupture.² I should emphasise that these developments build on the works of older generations of African sociologists, and they point to what can be done if we take our locales seriously. The increased affirmation of the sociologies of the Global South is in the context of what Dipesh Chakrabarty³ calls ‘provincializing Europe’ – in

the sense of acknowledging the idiographic or particularity of western thoughts rather than treat them as universal or nomothetic. Tiyambe Zeleza⁴ has argued that this involves a double logic for African scholars: ‘provincializing Europe’ while opening up the diversity of African libraries – textual, oral, archaeological, etc., – to the wider world. This, to paraphrase Joseph Ki-Zerbo, the Burkinabe historian, requires *endogeneity*.⁵

Mr Vice-Chancellor, permit me to address, briefly, the question of ‘endogeneity’ since it tends to jar the postmodern and the not so postmodern ears. The demand for endogeneity is often met with the charge of nativism or ‘cultural nationalism’. In its place we are invited to embrace the ‘triumph of the West’; to become cosmopolitan. This is strange considering the contents of our education and public discourses. We are asked to take particular ideas of culture, forms of governance, philosophical expositions, rights discourses, patterns of interpersonal relationship, and accounting for history, among others, as universal, when in fact what is presented in the name of universalism and cosmopolitanism is fundamentally a closure. It involved an erasure; a silencing of non-Western voices and knowledge systems. Discourses with their roots in particularistic histories of Europe and North America are presented as human discourse.⁶

As I argued in my 2005 Presidential Address to the South African Sociological Association:⁷

Contrary to the false claims of universalism and unicity of Sociology,⁸ endogeneity is fundamental to the canonical works of what we call western sociology.⁹ ‘Universal knowledge’ as Archie Mafeje notes, ‘can only exist in contradiction’.¹⁰ More importantly, ‘to evolve lasting meanings, we must be “rooted” in something’.¹¹ It is precisely because Marx, Weber, and Durkheim were firmly rooted in their specific contexts that they produced the canonical works that we today consider essential to Sociology. [As] Kwesi Prah reminded us: ‘If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed’.¹²

In earlier works,¹³ I have drawn attention to the global impact of African historiography, starting with Onwuka Dike’s insistence (at the Ibadan School of History) on the oral sources as a valid basis for writing history. The Dar-es-Salaam School asked: ‘Who built the Pyramids?’ Definitely not the Pharaohs; so who writes the stories of the slaves, and workers who cut and bore the stones when building the pyramids? The effect was to draw attention, as Shula Marks noted, to the ‘connection between the crisis of historical representation that came about when historians began to hear the voices of those who had been voiceless and the more general epistemological crisis affecting all the sciences and humanities’.¹⁴

2. What Is Sociology? Extroversion as the nomothetic

Mr Vice-Chancellor, permit me to briefly address the perennial question that we have to answer as sociologists: You meet someone at a reception, s/he pops

the question: 'So, what do you do at the university?' 'Sociology', you reply, 'I teach sociology'. 'What's that?', you are asked. And there goes your evening of relaxation. As with many things in life, there is the short answer and there is the very long one. I will start with the short answer because it provides an orientation to this lecture but and the wider context, which takes us back to the issue of endogeneity.

Sociology is the systematic study of sociational lives or the human society. Period. OK, may be not. Sociology is concerned with how human society coheres and/or dissembles; the place of the individual in the collective and the collective in the individual, and so on. At the level of macro-sociology, we might deal with the sociational bases of the economy or polity. At the level of meso-sociology, concerns might focus on large group entities. Micro-sociological interest would deal with things like the rituals of coffee breaks. Given its remit, sociology is compelled to ask foundational questions about human society and its sociational dynamics. It is in this sense that it is sometimes referred to as 'the central [or the master] social science'. The focus of sociology is the social rather than the psychological or biology. Where the psychological comes into play, it would involve how the individual is located within the wider sociational context. The sociological imagination that C. Wright Mills¹⁵ spoke about – which allows us to link biography and history; private 'troubles' with 'public issues' – cannot simply be one of quantitative increase. When an individual loses her job or a marriage ends in divorce, these are 'private troubles'. When six million are unemployed or three in every five marriages end in divorce, these are 'public issues'. However, what is inadequately theorised in C. Wright Mills's accounts is the sociational context that gives private troubles their names and resonance, and the agency of the collective that makes mass unemployment a 'public issue'. The sociational is what links biography and history; private pains and public issues.

But there is a larger context and it brings us back to extroversion and erasure of memory. Two examples will suffice. In his 1996 collection of essays, ironically titled *In Defence of Sociology*, Anthony Giddens argued that 'Sociology is a generalizing discipline that concerns itself above all with modernity – with the character and dynamics of modern or industrialized societies'.¹⁶ The average sociology textbook, like Giddens, will date the emergence of the field to Auguste Comte, the nineteenth century French philosopher, and identify the 'founding-fathers' – Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim.

Giddens's definition makes sense within the spatial division of intellectual labour among European scholars who studied societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. 'Sociologists' are those who stayed at home and studied their societies. 'Anthropologists' are those who went abroad; studied strange peoples and cultures; learnt strange languages, and ate strange foods.¹⁷

The irony of Giddens's circumscription of Sociology is that a systematic study of sociational lives in pre-industrial England becomes impossible. For

one thing, it cannot be sociological because this was not an industrial or modern society. It cannot be anthropological either because, *a priori*, it would not fit the definitional context of the 'inferior Other'; what Mafeje called the epistemology of alterity would not apply. The absurdity of such position should be obvious.

More significant for us is the erasure of memory, and closure of history that is immanent in it. Here Ibn Khaldun may suffice as an example of the erasure in the western historical accounting for Sociology, considering that his works had been available in English since 1967.¹⁸ Other examples abound.

Ibn Khaldun completed his three volume magnum opus, *Kitab Al 'Ibar*, in AD 1378. In the first volume, *Muqaddimah*,¹⁹ not only did Ibn Khaldun set out the conceptual framework and the methodological basis for adjudicating between competing data sources, it was self-consciously sociological. As Sayed Farid Alatas²⁰ noted, Ibn Khaldun outlined his new 'sciences' of human organisation and society ('ilm al-'umran al-bashari and 'ilm al-ijtima 'al-insani). This was 452 years before the first volume of Auguste Comte's six volume *The course of positive philosophy*, was published.

In the same work, Ibn Khaldun articulated the concept of 'asabiyyah' to explain the normative basis of group cohesion; how it decomposes and is reconstituted; the different ways in which it manifests at different levels of social organisation and among different groups.²¹ This was 515 years before Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labour* (1893) and its idea of social norms, was published. But here is the rub; you would hardly find one Sociology textbook available to our students in South Africa that mentions Ibn Khaldun, much less discusses his work.

A second example – and a more widespread one – is found in Steven Bruce's popular *Sociology: a very short introduction* and it relates to the 'science' in sociology as a 'social science'. In explaining what science is not Steve Bruce used the following illustration:

A client comes to a witch doctor with a very bad rash. The witch doctor poisons a chicken, and, from the way the chicken staggers before dropping dead, the witch doctor determines that the rash has been caused by the client's sister-in-law bewitching him. The client is given a charm and told that, if he wears it for a week, the spell will be broken and the rash will clear. But it does not work: a month later the rash is as bad as ever. Instead of concluding that the idea that illness is caused by evil spells is nonsense and the charm is without curative power, the witch doctor explains that the charm did not work because the client did not have enough faith. What appears to be failure is turned into further support for the system of belief.²²

The illustration, Bruce claims, 'is taken from African traditional medicine'.²³ If it is African it has to be mumbo-jumbo, charm-wielding shenanigans; what else? It is an erasure that simultaneously denies systematic knowledge to a whole people and puts them outside of history – in the Hegelian tradition. It might be useful to remember that the phrase 'witch doctor' is part of the

paraphernalia of alterity that includes phrases like ‘tribes’, ‘Bantu Languages’. No African community refers to its healers as ‘witch doctors’!

I wish to contrast Bruce’s claims to the findings of the Nigerian organic chemist, Professor Kayode Adesogan, who retired from University of Ibadan two years ago. In the first twelve years of his post-doctoral work, he added over twenty new compounds to Chemistry, almost all of which derived from his work on traditional medicinal remedies.²⁴ Much of this research was inspired by what he knew growing up in his parents’ villages in South-western Nigeria. Among the new compounds are oruwal, oruwalol, and oruwacin which he named and were extracts from *oruwo*, a medicinal plant used in the treatment of malaria and mental illness! More interesting, for us, is the use of ‘ground earthworm casts with salt to taste’, which is ‘used for curing chronic dysentery’.²⁵ Now fancy the use of earthworm cast to treat dysentery. Who licks earthworm cast or swallows the paste other than ignorant Africans? Professor Adesogan and his research team followed up on the information he received as a young person on the efficacy of the treatment. His conclusion was: ‘We have shown that earthworm casts intact (total water extract) has antibiotic activity against organisms which cause enteric fevers, i.e. dysentery-like diseases. The remedy works... [W]e isolated various chemical compounds... The most interesting of this was a new compound which we named *oxysporone*’.²⁶

In his 1987 Inaugural Lecture, Professor Adesogan had this to say:

My results as well as literature search have led me to respect our forefathers for their fantastic power of observation, correlation and judgement... The shape of leaves, the smell, the taste, the habitat, all have special meanings for them. It is amazing how many of their remedies have been proved right in modern medicine.²⁷

I do not want to substitute erasure for uncritical adulation. The important point is to highlight the immanently ethnocentric (and largely racist) tendencies to create binary opposites: between knowledge and ignorance; science and ‘dubious magic’. Ignorance and ‘dubious magic’ as signifiers of the non-Western Other.

As the saying goes: ‘until lions have their own story-tellers, the tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter’.²⁸

3. Endogeneity and Sociology: from translation to doing sociology with epistemic intent

Mr Vice-Chancellor, permit me to shift my focus to what has been a central intellectual concern of mine over the last seven years, marking my return to the meta-theoretical issues that first engaged my interest when doing my PhD. It concerns how we do sociology which is meaningful to us and our contexts, especially those done with epistemic intent. It is about recording the stories of the lions and lionesses of our savannah plains.

At the heart of the project of valorising endogenous knowledge is the challenge of dealing with what the Beninose philosopher, Paulin Hountondji,²⁹ referred to as the ‘extroversion’ of Africa’s societies and systems of knowledge production.³⁰ He drew a parallel between the extroversion of the economies – export cocoa or gold; import chocolate or jewellery – and knowledge production process, where data is exported and theory imported. Scholarship became little more than proselytising and regurgitating received discourses – left or bourgeois – no matter how poorly they explain our lived experiences.

I take Ibn Khaldun’s works as examples of the classical sociological writings in Africa and the global South. The repudiation of the value of Ibn Khaldun’s work on the ground that it was ridden with religious ‘thinking’³¹ is something I will address shortly.

As I argued in a recent encyclopaedia entry,³² Sociology is, arguably, the social science discipline that benefited most from the ‘nationalist’ project – both as a state-building project and an intellectual endeavour. To offer a minor clarification, ‘nationalist’, as the Tanzanian scholar Issa Shivji reminded us, is anti-colonial or anti-imperialist.³³ For these ‘nationalist’ movements, including the ANC, there is no linguistic or cultural ‘nation’ to construct or reconstruct – the project was and is meta-national.

As a beneficiary of the state-building project, sociology flourished as the number of universities and student enrolments grew exponentially. As an intellectual project, sociology flourished in the wake of the rebellion against alterity. A segment of it took on a radical anti-imperial orientation.³⁴ In making sense of scholarship in the post-colonial, nationalist era, Tiyambe Zeleza distinguished between ‘translation’ and ‘formulation’. Translation involves ‘articulating the tenets of African culture and ideas in western academic terms’; ‘formulation’ involves African intellectuals ‘framing their own theories, interpretation and criticism’.³⁵ Ari Sitas described the latter as involving ‘exemplary ideas’.³⁶ Let me set the content of the sociological enterprise on our continent in a wider frame.

I mentioned ‘scholarship as regurgitation’ (radical or conservative) earlier. Much of this involves the practice of imposing received categories on local conditions; functioning as extensions of Euro-American discourses.³⁷ This type of scholarship is not my concern in this section, neither is translation scholarship. My concern is with scholarship as formulation or what I would call scholarship as affirmative, which may or may not involve epistemic rupture, but it takes its locale seriously enough to challenge received paradigms. Under-scoring it is protest and/or affirmation of one’s space and experience. They often produce exemplary ideas.

Across much of Africa, the first wave of protest scholarship took to task anthropology’s epistemology of alterity, as Archie Mafeje called it.³⁸ In a series of articles published between 1967 and 1971, Bernard Magubane led the charge against the epistemology of alterity. His 1971 paper, ‘A critical look at Indices

used in the study of social change in Colonial Africa',³⁹ acquired a cult image among a new generation of African sociologists. In a 1971 paper, Onoge referred to Magubane, as 'to my mind, the most exciting African [...] sociologist today'.⁴⁰ Magubane's earlier paper on 'The Crisis of African Sociology' refers to colonial scholarship in Southern Africa, rather than what I or Onoge would call 'African sociology'. As Magubane told me during a recent interview, trying to teach urban sociology to Zambian students exposed the futility of using materials that treated the students and their people as subordinate others! He literally threw the books and journal articles out and started writing alternative materials. Omafume Onoge's rejection of the feasibility of being 'a native anthropologist' is set against what he argued must be the 'revolutionary imperatives' of African Sociology – it must break with the epistemology of alterity and proselytising.

In 1971 Archie Mafeje published his 'Ideology of Tribalism'. It was a partial and situational rejection of the viability of the concept of 'tribe', and a substantive rejection of 'tribalism' as a viable concept for explaining political relationships. In 1973 his paper 'The fallacy of "dual economies" revisited' was published – a paper he wrote while head of the Sociology department at the University of Dar-es-Salaam. It represents an important corrective to the careless deployment of the idea of neo-colonialism, which was nonetheless lost on most intellectuals working in the field.⁴¹ That the idea of two economies would resurface in South Africa some 30 years after Mafeje's piece on 'The fallacy of "dual economies"' is an object lesson in how a dubious idea can regain currency when policy-makers and scholars fail to read the progenitors who preceded them!

An important antecedent of Magubane and Mafeje is Amilcar Cabral.⁴² Here I will refer to Cabral's 'Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea' (1964) and 'Weapon of Theory' (1966).⁴³ The former is an exemplar of sociological analysis and product of what we would today call field methods. It served as the source-codes for the 'Weapon of Theory'.

Marx and Engels proclaimed that the history of humankind is the history of class struggle – something that was the mantra of radical politics at the time. On the basis of analysis and praxis within the Guinean context, Amilcar Cabral argued that 'the true motive force of history is the mode of production' rather than 'class struggle'. To accept the mantra of class struggle as the signifier of history, Cabral argued, not only runs against the grain of observed historical patterns, it produces 'for some human groups in our countries... the sad position of being people without history'.⁴⁴ It negates 'the inalienable right of every people to have its own history'.⁴⁵

If Archie Mafeje's 1971 piece on the 'Ideology of Tribalism' can be classified as protest scholarship, his book *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* represents a work of epistemic significance. The concept of 'tributary modes of production' originally developed by Samir

Amin, the Egyptian/Senegalese scholar, formed the organising hypothesis for making sense of the interlacustrine kingdoms of the Great Lake region. The idea of ‘tributary modes of production’ was itself meant to capture what was ‘outside the purview of European history’ and needed to ‘be understood in their own terms’.⁴⁶ However, what Mafeje produced was a concept of tributary relations that transcended several dimensions of the contents that Amin gave it.

In the sub-field of Political Sociology Ruth First’s *The barrel of a gun* (1970)⁴⁷ was published. It was such a nuanced deployment of the category of class, in explaining coups d’état on the continent that it fundamentally altered the debate. This was against the dominant Africanist explanation where ethnicity explained everything. Peter Ekeh’s ‘Theory of the Two-Publics’ (1975),⁴⁸ represented a similarly profound deployment of grounded scholarship and a resourceful sociological mindset. It is instructive that in spite of Ekeh’s analyses – which continued in later years – the essentialist explanation of political behaviour remains deep-seated in Africanist scholarship.

The most exciting area of scholarship by sociologists anywhere today, I will argue, is in the field of African gender scholarship. The works of Ifi Amadiume and Oyèrónké Oyewùmí are exemplary, representing distinct epistemic ruptures. As Amadiume’s *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* (1987),⁴⁹ and Oyewùmí’s *The Invention of Women* (1997),⁵⁰ demonstrate, ‘gender categories are [not] universal or timeless ... [or] present in every society at all times’.⁵¹ The inscription of gender ordering in the anatomical body or the coincidence of anatomical maleness and anatomical femaleness does not reflect the experience – historically or even contemporarily in the two contexts in which they worked. Not only, unlike English, are Igbo and Yoruba languages gender neutral, the social ordering in both cultural contexts has more to do with age-seniority than body-difference. Seniority within consanguine relationships was the primary marker of social position; ‘the subordination of women [was and is not] universal’. Amadiume and Oyewùmí demonstrated across the spectrum of social, occupational, political, and economic ordering in both contexts that ‘biology [did not and does not] determine social position’.⁵² Both have inspired other studies by African scholars to explore other cultural contexts. While not universal, similar patterns have been found in other contexts.⁵³ Beyond scholarship is the value of these works for women’s rights struggles: much of the androcentric power play and diminution of women that is often claimed in the name of ‘tradition’ are in fact not traditional!

3.1. *African Ontological Narratives as Source-codes for Sociology*

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I wish to end this part of my lecture by looking at the significance of ontological narratives as source codes for Sociology – of an epistemic nature. In my ‘Sociology and Yorùbá Studies’⁵⁴ I explored the feasibility of deriving epistemic frameworks from the Ifá literary corpus among the

Yorùbá. The work and my current interest were inspired by the extensive and seminal works done by Akínsolá Akiwowo.

Akiwowo's works involved distilling sociological categories from the Ifá literary corpus. In a 1999 response to aspects of the debate (supportive and critical) generated by his works, Akiwowo extended some of his earlier propositions using insights from Bart Kosko's works on Fuzzy Logic.⁵⁵ My engagement with Akiwowo is methodological and substantive. I have tried to show that Akiwowo's works was trapped within a functionalist paradigm, when the insights from the Ifá texts and the larger corpus of Yorùbá ontological narratives point in a different direction. While Fuzzy Logic represents an epistemic advance on Aristotelian Logic it does not adequately reflect the epistemic imperatives of the Ifá orature. Rather than 'vague' logic ('everything is a matter of degree', as Kosko puts it) or 'fuzzy set' (i.e., 'a set whose members belong to it to some degree'), I have argued that what the Yoruba ontological discourses yield is the cohering of seemingly contradictory things. I refer to this as the 'mutual self-embeddedness of seemingly contradictory things'. Orúnmilà, I argued, is not a fuzzy logician.

There are three illustrations from the wider corpus of Yoruba ontological narratives on which I wish to draw. The first concerns ideas of life, death, and existence. Central to Yorùbá cosmology is the idea that conception is not when life begins nor does existence terminate at the point of physical 'departure' (or what in English we would call 'death'). Further those in the 'physical plane of existence' (*Ìsàlú Ayé*) and those in 'the other plane of existence' (*Ìsàlú Òrun*), are not completely cut off – interaction exists between both planes of existence. In the Ifá texts, accounts of movements between the two planes are common. This account of the cosmology explains the themes of 'ancestral veneration' (not worship) and the idea that they can adjudicate in disputes. The point here is not whether one believes these accounts to be true or not. My concern is this: relative to Aristotelian Logic and Fuzzy Logic, what are the epistemic implications of these Yorùbá ontological narratives? If we take life as an illustration: conception and death will be two sides of a binary divide in Aristotelian Logic, and two ends of a continuum in fuzzy logic, with 0 as the point of conception and 1 as the point of death. However, in the Yorùbá ontology, 0 is not the beginning of life and 1 is not the end. What more, life and 'death' are mutually embedded.

The second concerns an aspect of Yoruba world-sense, and it relates to the idea of *àyànmó* – the choice of life chances before coming to *Ìsàlú Ayé* – is often wrongly translated as 'predestination' – in the Yorùbá cosmology, this is not an immutable destiny. Read with humility, generosity of spirit, and acts of propitiation can make the huge difference. Contingency and your agency are critical elements in how you live your life, both at the individual and collective levels.

The third illustration concerns an encounter between Orúnmilà and Ògún.⁵⁶ Ògún was visiting Orúnmilà, who asked Ògún to get an item from his reception

room. While in the room Ògún noticed a beautiful young woman. He returned to Orúnmilà and wondered who the beautiful young woman was. Orúnmilà said she was his child. After a while, Orúnmilà asked Ògún to return the item to the room. This time, Ògún noticed an old, wrinkled woman. Ògún returned and asked Orúnmilà who the woman was. Orúnmilà replied that it was the same person Ògún saw earlier. How could it be Ògún asked? Orúnmilà said, 'But it is obvious. Marriage is not only about youth and beauty; it is also about frailty and old age. The two mutually cohere: the one who marries the young beautiful bride also marries the frail, old maid of the future'.

I have used the phrase '*Ti'bi-Ti're Logic*' as an integrative description of the ontological narratives described above. 'T'ibi Ti're' refers to the Yorùbá saying that 't'ibi t'ire l'adá 'lé ayé', or 'the world was made in the cohering of [seemingly] contradictory things'. I believe that the implications for sociological analysis are significant.

First, an affirmation of contingent co-existence of what people might consider 'opposites' provides the basis for a distinct sociological paradigm: one that stresses nuanced discourse rather than binary opposites. It allows a sociological orientation to sociational life that embraces the coexistence of 'opposites' and the open-endedness of outcome in social interaction or between contending social forces. It suggests an analytical framework devoid of teleology or historicism. The cultural, for instance, is embedded with 'contradictory' forces. For instance, when we confront class, ethnic, religious, gender (etc.) our sociological instinct should not be to look for alternative and competing identities. Rather it is in their interpenetration and mutual embeddedness that we understand real, lived existence as multi-layered, 'contradictory' and context-situated. We are not 'either/or'; we are many things embedded in one. The negotiation of multiple identities – sometimes 'contradictory', sometimes not – is something we do everyday. Unlike functionalist discourse, this is not about 'role play'. The salience of one particular identity in one terrain of sociational engagement will not exclude the other identities. Unlike the anarchic posturing of postmodernism, there is epistemology and we have the foundational basis for adjudication among competing claims.

Second is the methodological aspect of *Ti'bi-Ti're Logic*. The currents in western discourse make the distinction between knowledge derived from three sources: senses and experience (Empiricists), reason (Rationalists), and Inspiration or Illumination (Mysticism). The sharpest distinction is drawn between the material (senses and reason) and the non-material (faith/inspiration/illumination) sources of knowledge. Positivistic-empiricist reasoning would discard illumination as metaphysical nonsense: if it is not verifiable it does not exist. To put a Popperian spin on it; if it is not falsifiable it does not qualify for science. We know that this, in fact, is not a useful or an accurate description of actual practice even in the natural sciences. I have used the cases of the discovery of the DNA and the first description of the Haley's Comet to demonstrate the

absurdity of the positivistic claims. While the Aristotelian logic will privilege one or the other, *Ti'bi-Ti're* Logic will argue that the three sources of epistemic vocation are mutually inclusive and interpenetrating. Most scientists will talk about the role of 'serendipity', 'happenstance', or an imaginative 'leap of faith' in explaining their discoveries. Is that not what we would call 'inspiration' or 'illumination'?

The idea of 'the religious' as something hostile to and distinct from 'scientific knowledge' is again a product of the nineteenth century European positivistic modernity. In the case of Sociology, much of this is rooted in Auguste Comte's positivistic pretensions; of sociology as 'social physics'. We should recollect that Comte's anti-clerical position did not lead to the absence of 'religion' – only that it is a religion without God.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I have focussed on epistemic extracts from the Yorùbá ontological discourses only as an illustration of what is feasible when we take our social contexts seriously enough to derive epistemic analysis from them. I am concerned mainly to illustrate the value of endogeneity and a more foundational engagement with global Sociology. A major research project that we will be launching under the African Sociological Association involves diverse ontological discourses across Africa.⁵⁷ The conceptual and methodological aspects of that project could be the subject of another lecture.⁵⁸

The capacity for the sociological insights derived from non-western sources to 'talk back to the west' is something that James Spickard⁵⁹ demonstrated using classical Confucianism as source codes for an alternative sociology of religion. For instance, not only did Max Weber's typology of power⁶⁰ fail to account for China's experience, Weber's sociology of religion fails to account for what is evident in the Western context. Regarding the typology of power, Spickard noted that the Confucian society was 'traditional':

Not because it adhered to established patterns but because it placed great emphasis on nurturing the web of relationships that constitute both social life and individuals. Weber, with his individualistic bias, did not see this.⁶¹

Regarding Weber's sociology of religion, Spickard argued that:

The same theoretical failings that prevented us from seeing the religions of other societies also prevent us from seeing the religions of our own. A Confucian sociology of religion throws light on underappreciated aspects of Western religious life. At the very least, its focus on popular religion and its more collectivist orientation provide a needed corrective to established methods.⁶²

4. Sociology and the Challenge of Transformation

Mr Vice-Chancellor, permit me, in the few minutes that I have left, to address two aspects of the challenges of transformation that we face at Rhodes University, and how the sociological enterprise may illuminate our under-

standing. The first concerns institutional culture. The second concerns curriculum transformation.

4.1. *'Institutional culture'*⁶³

How does Sociology shed light on what we often call 'institutional culture'? A sociological approach will highlight two dimensions of organisations. The first concerns activities and behaviour that derive from an organisation's core mandate. Take away these values and activities and the organisation ceases to belong to that genre. The second aspect concerns the sociational dimensions of organisational life. These constitute the 'protective belt' around the core aspects of an institution's culture; as products of sociational dynamics, within specific spatial and temporal contexts, they mark the organisation out within its genre but they are mutable. It is important to keep in mind that the 'core' is also a product of human agency and that both core and the more mutable sociational practices exist in a dynamic relationship.

Applied to our context, often our discussions on 'institutional culture' are about the 'protective belt'; and are more mutable and disposable than the inertia of memory and tradition suggest. Holding on to the legacy of Rhodes University's origin and the continued embracing of the settler identity have little to do with our core mandate. The claims of having a sub-culture that is 'white and middle class' immanently excludes; it is subliminally hostile to those who are either 'outsiders', recent arrivals, or people of European descent who want nothing to do with such a legacy or are not of middle-class background; it facilitates the continued flourishing of racism among too many of our students and staff. Singing the university anthem in English and Latin has more to do with the inertia of memory than what a university in twenty-first century South Africa should be. Singing the same anthem in English and Xhosa will not threaten our 'credibility' or 'brand' – whatever that means in reality! Critical sociological thinking allows us to separate the chaffs of institutional culture from its sorghum.

4.2. *'Curriculum Transformation'*

Concerning the contents of our curriculum, I have highlighted several areas of erasure of memory and closure in what we teach and how we understand knowledge production. A pedagogy that privileges one spatial zone in the globe as the source of knowledge production not only fails in the task of adequately educating our students; it creates schizophrenia in the majority of them – especially those whose progenitors do not derive from Europe or those who find no value in an imperial legacy. It reproduces a form of erasure, in which the non-western collective memories that such students bring to the university are declared as non-knowledge. I do not suggest that we substitute one erasure for another. Weber will be no less relevant to our Sociological education, nor will

Hegel to Philosophy, but there is a world out there that is much more than these, and our students and us, deserve to be exposed to all these knowledge systems.

I have highlighted what can be gleaned from ontological narratives because the foundation of epistemology and philosophy is ontology (descriptive or formal), and every culture, every group of people has its ontological narratives. The task of a curriculum that is fit for post-1994 South Africa is to open the space for diverse ontological narratives, not to insist on erasure or a Euro-ethnic mono-discourse. The works of Julian Cobbing, at the time when it was assumed that you could not do African history, and Dan Wylie's contemporary historical works are important object lessons in what is feasible. We are surrounded by a sea of Xhosa ontological narratives; isn't it time we started treating these as potential source codes for our scholarship?

Notes

1. The first Inaugural Lecture from what is now the Department of Sociology was delivered in 1949 by Professor James Irving. The Fourth and most recent one was delivered by Professor Fred Hendricks. In between the two were Professor Edward Higgins and Professor Jan K. Coetzee.
2. 'Doing sociology' which finds the source codes for its epistemologies in local ontological narratives takes us beyond scholarship as 'translation' or data-gathering for others in a global division of intellectual labour.
3. Dipesh Chakrabarty, 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press.
4. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, 2006. 'The Disciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Global Dimensions of African Studies', Keynote Address, *The National Conference on the Strengthening of African Studies in Africa and South Africa*. Department of Education, 26-28 February. CARS, Pretoria.
5. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, 1990. *Educate or Perish: Africa's Impasse and Prospects*. Paris: UNESCO.
6. As Oyewùmí noted in the context of Anthony Kwame Appiah's railing against African scholars who demand endogeneity, what Appiah claims as plurality is the privileging of Euro-nativism. Cf. Oyeronke Oyewùmí, 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.24. For an in-depth discussion of the erasure and colonising epistemology at the heart of Appiah's disguised tirade against Akan matriliney, on which he sought to impose the patriliney of his own English *abusua* see Nkiru Nzegwu, 2005. 'Questions of Identity and Inheritance: A Critical Review of Kwame Anthony Appiah's *In My Father's House*'. In Oyeronke Oyewùmí (ed.), 2005, *African Gender Studies: A Reader*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, originally published in *Hypatia* 11 (1): 175-200, Winter, 1996.
7. Jimi Adesina, 2005. 'Sociology Beyond Despair: recovery of nerve, endogeneity, and epistemic intervention', Presidential Address, 2005 SASA Congress. Polokwane, University of Limpopo.

8. Cf: Martin Albrow, 1987. 'Editorial: Sociology for one world', *International Sociology*, Vol. 2, No.1; Margaret Archer, 1991. 'Sociology for one world: unity and diversity – Presidential Address', *International Sociology*, Vol. 6, No.2.
9. Jimi Adesina, 2002. 'Sociology and Yorùbá Studies: epistemic intervention or doing sociology in the vernacular', *African Sociological Review*, Vol. 5, No.2. For the extended version of the paper see J Adesina, 2000. 'Sociology and Yoruba Studies', *Annals of the Social Science Academy of Nigeria*, No.13.
10. Archie Mafeje, 2000. 'Africinity: A Combative Ontology', *CODESRIA Bulletin* No. 1, p.67.
11. Mafeje, *ibid*, p. 66.
12. Cited in Mafeje, op cit., p. 67.
13. Jimi Adesina, 2005. 'Realising the Vision: the discursive and institutional challenges of becoming an African University', *African Sociological Review*, Vol.9 No.2, 23-39; Adesina, op cit., 'Sociology Beyond Despair'.
14. Shula Marks, 2000. 'The Role of the Humanities in Higher Education in South Africa', Lecture 1: *Higher Education Lecture Series 2000*. Pretoria: Ministry of Education.
15. C. Wright Mills, 1959/1970. *The Sociological Imagination*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
16. Anthony Giddens, 1996. *In Defence of Sociology: essays, interpretations and rejoinder*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 3.
17. Giddens, op cit. See chapter 6 of the book on 'The Future of Anthropology'.
18. Ibn Khaldûn, 'Adb al-Rahmân, 1378/1981. *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldûn*. Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, trans. Franz Rosenthal. Ibn Khaldûn, 'Adb al-Rahmân, 1967. *Ibn Khaldûn: The Muqaddimah – An Introduction to History*, 3 Vols, trans. Franz Rosenthal. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul. (credit: Sayed Farid Alatas [2006]).
19. *Muqaddimah li al-Kitâb al- 'Ibar*.
20. Sayed Farid Alatas, 2006. 'A Khaldunian Exemplar for a Historical Sociology for the South', *Current Sociology* Vol.54, No.3. (May): 397-411.
21. Mahmoud Dhaouadi, 1990. 'Ibn Khaldun: the founding father of Eastern Sociology', *International Sociology*, Vol.5 No.3: 319-335.
22. Steve Bruce, 1999. *Sociology: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 3.
23. Bruce, op cit. p. 4.
24. Personal communication (e-mail), Adesogan: 9 Jan 2006; 23 Jan 2006; 13 July 2006; 23 July 2006.
25. E. Kayode Adesogan, 1987. *Illumination, Wisdom and Development Through Chemistry*. Inaugural Lecture 1987. Ibadan: University of Ibadan, p. 15.
26. Adesogan, *ibidem*.
27. E. Kayode Adesogan, 1987. *Illumination, Wisdom and Development Through Chemistry*. Inaugural Lecture 1987. Ibadan: University of Ibadan.

28. Shepi Mati, 2005. 'Who Was Alfred? A native gazing at Rhodes University from Makana's kop', *African Sociological Review*. Vol.9 No.1: 196-210, p. 205.
29. Paulin Hountondji, ed.,1997. *Endogenous Knowledge: research trails*. Dakar: CODESRIA Books.
30. Extroversion, Hountondji argued, must be understood as immanent in colonial conquest and current location of Africa in the global economy and knowledge production systems.
31. Cf. F.T. Hendricks, 2003. *Does the South African Constitution legitimise Colonial Land Alienation? A Sociology of Nation and Identity: an inaugural lecture delivered at Rhodes University on Wednesday 17 September 2003*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.
32. Jimi O. Adesina, 'African Sociology', *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (2nd edition), Macmillan Reference (forthcoming, 2007).
33. Issa Shivji, 2005. *Pan-Africanism or Imperialism: Unity and Struggle towards a New Democratic Africa*. 2nd Billy Dudley Memorial Lecture, University of Nsukka, 27th July.
The conceptual confusion is evident in contemporary South African debate that mistakes the African National Congress (ANC), for the vehicle of a *nationalist* project similar to the English and Afrikaner nationalism that underpinned colonialism and apartheid.
34. Most those involved were originally trained as *anthropologists* – what else? One of the few exceptions to this rule was N. A Fadipe, whose PhD thesis was submitted in 1939 at the University of London. Cf. N. A. Fadipe, 1939/1970. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. [ed., with introduction by F. O. Okediji and O. O. Okediji], Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press.
35. Zeleza, op cit.
36. Ari Sitas, 2006. 'The African Renaissance Challenge and Sociological Reclamations in the South', *Current Sociology*, Vol.54 No.3: 357-380.
37. I have pointed at the rapid uptake of the idea of 'Public Sociology' in our community as the latest example of this type of scholarship, even when it should be obvious that it represents a refraction of global sociological practices through the prism and historical experience of American sociology. In South Africa, public sociology was policy sociology, and the claims for Professional Sociology against Policy, Critical or Public Sociologies not only misrepresent the US experience – where much of the classical Industrial Sociology texts were policy studies done for US firms – have the potential of undermining efforts at democratising the intellectual space within our universities.
38. Archie Mafeje, 1997. 'Who are the makers and objects of Anthropology? A critical comment on Sally Falk Moore's *Anthropology and Africa*', *African Sociological Review* Vol.1, No.1: 1-15. See Vol.2, No.1 edition of *ASR* for the firestorm that Mafeje's critique evoked.
39. Bernard Magubane, 1971. 'A critical look at the indices used in the study of social change in Colonial Africa', *Current Anthropology*, XII, 4-5, pp.419-445.

40. O. Onoge, 1971/1977. 'Revolutionary imperatives in African Sociology', in P. C. W. Gutkind & Peter Waterman, eds., *African Social Studies: a Radical Reader*. London: Heinemann, fn.27, p. 43.
41. 'While neo-colonialism can be rightly regarded as a revision of forms and methods of control to maintain the old dependency relations, it is equally important to bear in mind that it is *within the competence* of independent governments to counteract such manoeuvres', Archie Mafeje, 1973/1977. 'Neo-colonialism, state capitalism, or revolution', in Gutkind & Waterman, op cit. p. 412.
42. 'Amilcar Cabral? Wasn't he an agronomist?', I hear you say. As I argued in my *2005 Presidential Address* to SASA, Cabral was not a professional sociologist but neither was Karl Marx or even Max Weber except for a very brief period of nine months. Cabral's works, as with Frantz Fanon – a psychiatrist – are profoundly sociological.
43. Amilcar Cabral, 1964/1969. 'Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea', in *Revolution in Guinea: an African People's Struggle (Selected texts by Amilcar Cabral)*. London: Stage 1, pp. 46-61. Amilcar Cabral, 1966/1979. 'The Weapon of Theory: presuppositions and objectives of national liberation in relation to social structure', in Amilcar Cabral, 1979. *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings (texts selected by the PAIGC); trans. Michael Wolfers*, New York: Monthly Review Press, pp. 119-137.
44. Cabral (1966/1979), op cit. p. 125.
45. Cabral, *ibidem*.
46. Archie Mafeje, 1991. *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations: the case of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms*. Dakar: CODESRIA Books, p. iii.
47. Ruth First, 1970. *The barrel of a gun: the politics of coup d'etat in Africa*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
48. Ekeh, P. P., 1975, 'Colonialism and the two Publics in Africa: a theoretical statement', *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, Vol.17, No.1.
49. Ifi Amadiume, 1987. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: gender and sex in an African Society*. London: Zed Books.
50. Oyeronke Oyewùmí, 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
51. Oyewùmí, op cit. p. xi.
52. Oyewùmí, op cit., p. 17.
53. Cf. Oyèronké Oyewùmí, ed., 2003. *African Women & Feminism*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, and Oyèronké Oyewùmí, ed., 2005. *African Gender Studies: A Reader*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. I witnessed, first hand, the shock and incredulity that followed Oyewùmí's solo evening session at the SASA Congress in Polokwane in 2005. It was so disruptive of received wisdom that some thought it was an invention of its own, yet both her book and Amadiume's won several international awards and was widely acclaimed to be extremely well-researched. In spite of what I would consider my depth of understanding of Yoruba cultural

milieu, I find Oyewùmí's work astonishingly brilliant, well-researched, and theoretically rigorous.

54. Jimi Adesina, 2001, op cit.
55. Bart Kosko, 1994. *Fuzzy Thinking: the new science of Fuzzy Logic*. London: Flamingo.
56. Orúnmìlà is the mythical founding figure of the Ifá divinity. Ògún is the òrìsà of hunters and metalworkers. I would argue that òrìsà does not adequately translate into 'god' in English. In Yoruba cosmology, *Olódùmarè* is the supreme diety. It affirms monotheism. Òrìsà by contrast are often human-beings whose 'super-human' deeds mark them out after they pass on to or return to *Ìsàlú Òrún*. They are closer to the concept of 'patron-saints,' more *messenger beings* than 'gods', and serve as intermediating agents between humans and *Olódùmarè*. A more dramatic erroneous translation, involving the imposing of an alien cosmology on the Yorùbá world-sense is *Èsù-Elégbèra* which early Christian missionaries and Bible translations substituted for 'Satan'. Yet *Èsù* is more a companion and interlocutor for other òrìsà, a trickster, than 'evil' or satanic. More recent versions of the Yorùbá translation of the Bible have corrected this by using 'Satani' to indicate 'Satan' rather than *Èsù*. Unfortunately, 200 years of mis-representation has left the messenger-being with a reputation that is completely devoid of what one can discern from *Odù Ifá* or any other Yorùbá ontological discourse (or orature).
57. An important methodological issue regarding oral sources concerns their reliability – cf. J.F. Ade-Ajayi, 2000. 'The Ibadan School of History', in Toyin Falola, ed., 2000. *Tradition and Change in Africa: the Essays of J. F. Ade-Ajayi*. (Ch. 24). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, and Ari Sitas, 2006. op cit. These concerns are far less onerous when we approach oral sources as aspects of *ontological narratives*, rather than sources for history-writing or historiography. In the case of *Odù Ifá* the concerns are even less so – see Wande Abimbola, 1976. *Ifá: an exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus*. Ibadan: OUP Nigeria – for the intensity and length of the training of Ifá priest-scholars, and the emphasis on accuracy in reciting the verses. We are also able to check on the accuracy by comparing their rendering in different sites – from Brazil to different sites in West Africa. Hountondji used 'endogenous knowledge' rather than 'indigenous knowledge' to account for the extent to which these knowledge systems would have changed in response to external (non-indigenous) influences.
58. Further research, since the publication of the work I cited above, suggests that Kosko's claim that Buddhist ontology is the premise of fuzzy logic is misplaced. From the Cherokee and Sioux of the North American plains to Korea, the nineteenth century 'scientist' thinking, which denigrates the non-sensual bases of knowledge, is in fact the aberration. From Chinese notions of Yin-Yang to the ontological narratives in the Nguni contexts, a common thread is much closer to what I outlined in the Yorùbá ontological discourses, and very distinct from what is normally ascribed to Aristotelian logic of binary discourse or Cartesian dualism.
59. James V. Spickard, 1998. 'Ethnocentrism, Social Theory and Non-Western Sociologies of Religion', *International Sociology*, Vol. 13 (2): 173-194.

60. Traditional, Charismatic, and the Rational-Legal.
61. Spickard, op cit., p. 188.
62. Spickard, ibidem.
63. This section benefits from the version of my paper 'Realising the Vision', that was presented at *Reinventing Higher Education* Conference held at Rhodes University (6-9 December 2004).