SPECIAL ISSUE ON

GENERATION OF AFRICAN SCHOLARS
AND THEIR INTELLECTUAL LEGACIES

Guest edited by Dr. Babalola Joseph Balogun and Prof. Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis
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The University of Johannesburg acquired *The Thinker* in April 2019 from Dr Essop Pahad. Over the last decade, *The Thinker* has gained a reputation as a journal that explores Pan-African issues across fields and times. Ronit Frenkel, as the incoming editor, plans on maintaining the pan-African scope of the journal while increasing its coverage into fields such as books, art, literature and popular cultures. *The Thinker* is a ‘hybrid’ journal, publishing both journalistic pieces with more academic articles and contributors can now opt to have their submissions peer reviewed. We welcome Africa-centred articles from diverse perspectives, in order to enrich both knowledge of the continent and of issues impacting the continent.

Nedine Moonsamy is an associate professor in the English department at the University of Johannesburg. She is currently writing a monograph on contemporary South African Fiction and otherwise conducts research on science fiction in Africa. Her debut novel, *The Unfamous Five* (Modjaji Books, 2019) was shortlisted for the HSS Fiction Award (2021), and her poetry was shortlisted for the inaugural New Contrast National Poetry Award (2021).

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All contributing analysts write in their personal capacity

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Dr. Babalola J. Balogun obtained his PhD in Philosophy from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, where he teaches philosophy. His area of doctoral research is Philosophy of Mind, with special interest in the problem of other minds. His other areas of interest include epistemology, African philosophy, existentialism, social and political philosophy, and in recent time, philosophy of education and the decolonisation discourse. Dr. Balogun has well over twenty (20) publications in journals and edited volumes. His research outputs have appeared in reputable journals both locally and internationally. Some of his recent publications include Balogun, B. J. (2023). “In Search for Authentic Personhood: An Existentialist Reading of Femi Osofisan’s Tegonni: An African

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Dr. Phefumula Nyoni is an anthropologist and sociologist currently teaching at the University of the Witwatersrand where he completed his Ph.D. on Economic Anthropology. His research interests are multidisciplinary and include higher education transformation amid the Covid-19 pandemic, policy, quality assurance and curriculum design in tertiary institutions, particularly from a culture-centric perspective, reconfiguration of urban spaces, and access to socio-economic amenities for marginalised communities, poverty alleviation and human rights, community development, urban artisanal mining, gender and entrepreneurship.

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Nkululeko Motha is a doctoral student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College) in English Studies. He is a lecturer in the Department of African Languages, Linguistics and Development. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA), B.A Honours, and a Masters degree in English Studies. He is a student and an academic activist working particularly in distributive and social justice. His research focus includes African literature, African-Black identities, African and Black diasporic literary history, the girl-child, and Childrenism (moral voices and agencies of children).
The articles in this Special Issue were selected from responses to a call for abstracts on the theme “Generation of African Scholars and the Intellectual Legacies”. The idea was originally conceived by the late Professor Michael Cross, pioneer Director of the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies (AMCHES), University of Johannesburg, South Africa, to be a flagship project of the budding centre. It aimed to bring together, outstanding scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and perspectives to critically investigate, analyse and document the intellectual legacies of African scholars, leaders, and institutions. Its central objective was to analyse the nature of African scholars’ contributions to knowledge production with the specific goal of influencing and/or shaping the higher education landscape, discourses, policies, and practices in Africa. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the Special Issue critically probes and document the main dimensions of African intellectual legacy such as the processes of emergence and development of African scholars within the broader national and international contexts; the biographies, identities and the knowledge contribution (e.g., epistemological, theoretical, policy-related and methodological) made by African scholars; critical institutional spaces within or outside universities that have significantly contributed to the production of African scholars, African scholarship and knowledge; and the leadership role played by African scholars in politics, policy-making process, academia, and society at large.

Within this broad interdisciplinary spectrum, the Special Issue focuses on the academic, intellectual, cultural and leadership legacies in higher education produced by the different generations of African scholars and institutions. The project...
hopes thereby to pioneer the academic culture of
documenting the historic past of generations of
African scholars as well as the need to preserve
the legacies of their intellectual capital, reviving
the culture of scholarship legacy in African universities.

In contradistinction to the African reality, Europe
and North America have both systematically
documented their intellectual histories and
succeeded in placing them, at global stage, as
knowledge and experience reservoir, meant for
addressing global educational, developmental,
and socio-cultural challenges. Despite the
rhetoric of ‘reform’, ‘transition’, ‘transformation’,
‘decolonisation’ or other change claims spread
across the continent, Africa is still in the process
of developing epistemological and theoretical
foundations that are uniquely African and
recognised as such, globally. While many efforts
have been, and are still being, undertaken on the
continent, no systematic and comprehensive
project has taken place to address the gap opened
by lack of adequate and intentional documentation
of progress in African intellectual history.

There is currently no systematic analysis and
documentation of the intellectual contributions
and impacts of the legacy of the African scholars
as capable collaborators in the business of global
knowledge production. Currently, little or nothing
is known and taught in African universities about
the intellectual legacies of African scholars. This
Special Issue was originally conceived to address
this omission in African intellectual history.

The Special Issue covers the main dimensions
of the African intellectual legacy such as
institutional impacts on African scholarship,
individual contributions by African scholars, and
leadership role in higher education with the aim
of producing cutting-edge knowledge relevant to
the future of the universities and other domains
in the continent. In all, the Special Issue features
eleven well-researched, clearly articulated articles
by scholars with a wide disciplinary spread, and
thematically structured to reflect the multiplicity
of perspectives in African intellectual discourse.

The conversation is opened by Juliet Munyaradzi’s
very insightful article titled “A Historical Review
of African Scholarship and the Decolonial
Discourse: Challenges and Prospects” in which
she thematically dissects the history of African
scholarship from the half of the last century till
date. In the article, she explores the diverse realities
that have characterised African scholarship drive
within the timeframe of her focus, and in the
light of developments, challenges and prospects
experienced by African scholars in their pursuits
of African knowledges and the decolonisation
discourse in the higher education sector. This is
an important contribution because, as a historical
exercise, it acquaints scholars with the reality and
contours of African scholarship, and will definitely
stimulate further research geared towards covering
yet uncovered terrain and strengthening areas in
which African scholarship has thrived. The second
article is titled “Exploring the Intellectual Legacies
of Patrice Lumumba: An Analysis of his Contributions
to the Decolonisation and Liberation of Africa”. In
the article, Kennedy Monari critically examines the
contributions of one of the loudest African voices
on decolonisation discourse through the analysis
of his political and leadership roles, ideas and
writings. By delving into Lumumba’s thoughts on
decolonisation, liberation of Africa, Pan-Africanism,
African unity and other sundry issues, the author
concludes that Lumumba’s intellectual legacies
transcend national boundaries and can be said to
have continent-wide appeal in its application and
implication.

In the third article titled “The Politics of Knowledge
and Decolonisation: An Appraisal of Mahmood
Mamdani’s Contribution”, Sifiso Ndlovu recounts
the much-talked about effects of colonialism on
African intellectual landscape. Hidden behind the
facades of universality, neutrality and objectivity
of knowledge production, colonialism continues
to dictate the direction of the African intellect,
unabatedly. The author examines the theme of
colonialism in the thoughts of Mahmood Mamdani,
noting his contributions to African scholarship
through the latter’s use of historical analysis in
underscoring the role of colonial consciousness
in African knowledge production, consumption
and economy. The article is a causal analysis of
the seeming African intellectual despondency;
hence, it provides a rich research resource for
scholars interested in understanding the origin of
dependence of African intellectuals on the model
established in the colonial regime.

David Oyedola, in his “Rethinking Moses Oke on
the Recolonisation Project” reconsiders the whole
gamut of decolonisation discourse in African scholarship with the view to making sense of Oke’s thought-provoking position that “a people that continually looks back to its past that failed then, and could not sustain them for present salvation, must change their perception and attitude to that past or hold themselves ready for eventual recolonization.” The author defends Oke in the light of possible misinterpretation of his thesis by arguing that Oke’s attitude to decolonisation project does not imply a complete mockery of the phenomenon. However, as the author argues, rather than constituting a threat to the African decolonisation agitations, Oke’s recolonisation project is a warning against the unhelpful interpretation of decolonisation as an act of going back to the African pre-colonial existence. This is not only because the much talked about African past is forever and irretrievably gone, but whatever feature of the past that Africans intend to go back to, cannot be institutionally sufficient to meet the vagaries of contemporary global realities.

“Afrika’s Cause must Triumph: Towards the Hegemony of Lembede’s “Afrika for Afrikans as a Political Philosophy of National Liberation in South Africa”, authored by Masilo Lepuru, examines Lembede’s political notion of Afrikanism, a sort of nationalist philosophy which prioritises Africa and Africans in its scheme of political affairs. In the specific context of South African liberation struggles, the article compares Lembede’s ‘Afrikanism’ and Mda’s ‘broad nationalism’ in pursuit of a central objective that the political and intellectual relationship between Lembede and Mda has eventuated in the epochal emergence of antagonism between two broad political philosophies, namely, Afrikanism and broad nationalism. Lamenting the marginalisation of Lembede’s studies in South African scholarship, the author opines that Mda’s idea of Afrika must triumph has contributed to the disastrous dominance of nonracialism in South Africa at the expense of the racial nationalism of Lembede. In conclusion, the author calls for the replacement of Mda’s naïve and dangerous forms of nonracialism with the uncompromising racial nationalism of Lembede.

Sunday L. Oladipupo’s article titled “Wither Individualism? A Rereading of Segun Ogungbemi’s Scholarship on Individuality-Community Debate in African Philosophy” and B. J. Balogun and A. A. Ajiboro’s article titled “Obscuring Our Sense of Morality: Barry Hallen’s Moral Epistemology and the Problem of Character Indeterminacy” are written by philosophers. In the former, the author re-examines the individualist-communitarian debate in the light of the scholarship of a Nigeria-born African philosopher, Segun Ogungbemi. The scholarship of Ogungbemi is worth rereading because of its denial, contrary to the prevalent opinion on the matter, that African are communalsistic in social orientation. In his article, Oladipupo rejects this radical individualist position of Ogungbemi, arguing that such position is unsustainable within the
African cultural milieu, and demonstrating that it can only be attributed to the Western influence on Ogungbemi’s scholarship.

On their own, Balogun and Ajiboro critically assess Yoruba theory of propositional knowledge using Hallen’s Yoruba moral epistemology prism. Justifying the inclusion of Hallen (an American by birth) in African intellectual legacies on the ground of his quality contributions to African philosophical scholarship, the authors argue that Hallen’s representation of knowledge acquired through secondhand means does not adequately capture the Yoruba view on the matter. With arguments ranging from a simple observation that Hallen’s thesis is founded on a wrong assumption, to a, perhaps, more sophisticated metaphysical argument that the thesis suffers the problem of other minds, the article concluded that “although it is flawed, Hallen’s Yoruba moral epistemology thesis is an important contribution to African philosophy as it stimulates fruitful discussions around the subject matters of epistemology and ethics, and the connection between them within a traditional intellectual discourse of the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria.”

Phefumula Nyoni and Otillia Chiramba’s paper with the title “Embracing Plural Curricula amid Neoliberalism in Contemporary Universities in Africa: Asante’s Afrocentric Idea Revisited” focuses on how Asante’s idea of Afrocentricity could assist in the understanding of the main challenges and opportunities associated with curricula in Africa’s post-colonial universities.” In achieving this central aim, the authors, using a combination of an extensive review of empirical cases and the authors’ experiences of the extended curriculum programmes in diverse South African universities, explore the complex nature of pedagogic transformation mainly due to the persistence of Western ideals under a resurgent neoliberal philosophy that shapes practices in contemporary university spaces. Hence, the aim of revisiting the Asante’s idea of Afrocentricity is to show how it constitutes a decolonial force for resisting the onslaught of western hegemony against identities, ideals, aspirations, and values of African students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Given the centrality of inclusiveness to Afrocentricity, the article concludes that it presents a better option of curricular development for the post-colonial African universities that the existing neoliberal tradition based on power and privileges of one group over another.

The last but not the least is an article titled “In Comes the New Black: The Ghetto-Rural Black versus Blacksurbian Identities”, written by Nkululeko Motha. In the article, the author identifies two groups of black people, namely, the Ghetto-Rural Blacks and the Blacksurbians, the former being black people in rural spaces while the latter are black people in the urban spaces. These two groups were created by the consciousness of colonial hierarchisation or inequalities prevalent in contemporary urban spaces, especially in South Africa and the United States of America. Such perceived inequalities, argues the author, has the tendencies of destroying the unity that should ideally exist among black people by polarising them along spurious lines of dichotomy created by colonial history. The article raises fundamental and troubling questions about races, identities, power, privileges, and perceptions among blacks. The author concludes the article by noting the unsustainability of the Blacksurbians black identity on the ground that it helps to further the exploitative or oppressive regime of colonialism in Africa’s post-colonial era.

In all, the eleven articles that make up this Special Issue are highly ambitious, and promise to make a strong impression on those interested in African scholarship, for a long time. Each of the articles has the capacity to inspire further conversation not only on the subject matter of its discussions, but also on other allied matters that may arise as fall-outs of the current discourse. Hopefully, the academic community will find this compendium of ideas useful for further research and for the purpose of personal edification. This is besides its ultimate aim of historicizing, documenting and appreciating the contributions of African scholars and properly situating their intellectual legacies in the scheme of global intellectual affairs.