

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni's 'Epistemic freedom in Africa'

Posted on June 24, 2021 by Martha Gayoye
[vc_row][vc_column][vc_column_text css=""]A term that has gained recent considerable attention in recent years is 'epistemic decolonisation'.

Epistemic decolonisation is defined in different ways, some of which are explored for application in the specific African context. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni sees epistemic decolonisation as 'epistemic freedom' involving a double task of 'provincialising Europe' and 'deprovincialising Africa'. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni writes that

> the processes of 'provincialising' and 'deprovincialising' are inextricably linked as they speak to how what appears on a global scale as European thought could be claimed as human heritage rather than a thought from one geographical centre. 'Provincialising' is a process of 'moving the centre', to borrow a concept from Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993). 'Provincialising Europe' is meant to confront the problem of overrepresentation of

> European thought in knowledge, social theory and education which resulted in what the European historian John M Hedley (2008) celebrated as 'the Europeanisation of the world'. To 'provincialise Europe' is fundamentally to 'de-Europeanise the world'. De-europeanisation of the world entails what Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010: vii) depicted as 'deimperialisation', defined as movement that demanded (ex)imperial powers to genuinely reflect on "their imperial histories and the harmful impacts those have had on the world.

According to Salebo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, deprovincialising Africa is this process of de-Europeanising an intellectual and academic process of centring Africa as a legitimate historical unit of analysis and epistemic site from which to interpret the world while at the same time globalising knowledge from Africa. Such a move constitutes epistemic freedom as that essential pre-requisite for political, cultural, economic and other freedoms.

Members discussed the idea that for both Salebo Ndlobu-Gatsheni and PJ Hountonji, 'the search for epistemic freedom, knowledge cannot be reduced to 'philosophical' and 'scientific' forms only.[/vc_column_text][/vc_column][/vc_row][vc_row][vc_column][vc_separator align="align_left" el_width="50″ css=""]

Editor: CLAIRE FRENCH
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