

# Challenging the teaching of research methodologies in pursuit of epistemic and social justice in South Africa

## Abstract

*Bana ba thari ya Afrika Borwa ba tšeyetšwe mabu a bona. Kamogo ye ya naga yešo ebile ka marumo mola thuto ya bathupi ba naga ba go tšwa moše wa mawatle e be e laetša gabotse gore ntwā ebe ese ya swanela go fegwa. Bathupi ba rile go fenyā ba hlalosa gore ba ithwešitše “tokelo ya phenyo”. Go ya ka bona, tokelo ye e ba fa maatla a bofenyi. Maatla a ba netefatša ka wona gore bafengwa ba tla phela ka mokgwa yo bafenyi ba ratang ka gona. Le ge ba fentšwe, ba bangwe ba bana ba thari ya Afrika Borwa ba sa ganana le “tokelo ya phenyo” moka le ditlamorago kamoka tša yona tšeo di gananago le toka. Ba ema ka la gore; ke bona maganagofengwa gomme ba sa lwela gore mabu a boele matsogong a bona. Ba tšwelapele ka la gore “tokelo ya phenyo” ga e kwane le phedišano magareng ga batho go ya ka mophelelo wa tša setho. Taodišo ye ya rena e mabapi le sebakwa segolo se. Thuta phishegelo-bothlale ke wona motheo wa rena go fetleka sebakwa se. Re netefatša gore, botho bo ema ka la gore lefase le swanetše go boela go beng'mabu gomme “tokelo ya phenyo” le ditlamorago ka moka tša yona tšeo di gananago le toka, di phumulwe ka moka. Se se bolela gore le thuto ya dinyakisiso lefapheng la tsa semoya didibeng tsa thuto ye e phagamego nageng ya Afrika Borwa e tshwanetse go lebelelwa sefsa gomme e fetlekiwe. Phetleko ya rena e ema ka la gore: thuto ya semoya e swanetše go ela tlhoko bongaka bja setšo gore thuto ye e be yona motlhala wa tokologo ya thuto kamoka bokgobeng bja “tokelo ya phenyo”.*

The unjustified violence of colonialism against the indigenous peoples of South Africa is the historical moment inaugurating the affirmation and exercise of the

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## Keywords

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ethically South Africa to date is the subtle refinement – to an extent with the consent of some of the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation – of the affirmation and exercise of this ethically questionable “right of conquest”. By virtue of this putative right, the successors in title to the conquest continue to define and delimit the meaning of experience, knowledge and truth for their benefit. This essay questions this existential condition on ethical grounds. It argues that the prevailing teaching of research methodologies is a reflection of the continued exercise of the questionable “right of conquest”. This situation ought to change for the sake of epistemic and social justice in South Africa. To this end, this essay examines, from the standpoint of philosophy, the teaching of research methods in psychology, in particular, political psychology in South African universities. It argues that the content of this teaching ought to enter into a transformational dialogue with *tsa semoya*, being the psychology of the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation. The aim is to liberate both itself and the conqueror from the injustice of epistemological captivity.

## **Introduction**

The thesis we propose to defend here is that the historical experience in South Africa so far leads ineluctably to the ethical imperative to question the “right of conquest”. Through such questioning shows that durable peace can be attained only if epistemic justice is actually and practically the indispensable complement to the unfolding struggle for social justice. Consonant with this thesis we have presented the abstract in Northern Sotho, one of the vernaculars of the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation (cf Ramose, 2003, 543). Starting with this language first then following it with English translation is not the manifestation of vertical or hierarchical reasoning on our part. On the contrary, it is the affirmation of the history that this language pre-existed the violent arrival of the colonial conqueror in South Africa. In addition, it is an argument for the ontological as well as the axiological visibility of the epistemology of the indigenous peoples, conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation (cf Thésée & Carr, 2012, 171–174).

## **The Philosophy of Research**

Our elaboration on this thesis will follow a historical-philosophical approach. We wish to emphasise right from the outset that a philosophical text should be read precisely from a philosophical perspective. It may not be read from the perspective of the empirical sciences, nor may it be judged according to the criteria of the empirical sciences (cf Oyeshile, 1999, 107–111). Philosophy is definitely different from theology even though the latter has in the past claimed to be the mother of all sciences (cf Sarton, 1927, 5). Philosophy is not an empirical science. It does, however, take cognisance of experience in general and the findings as well as the historical development of the natural and human sciences. Ours then is an essay in

the philosophy of research; a topic that is rarely mentioned explicitly in discourses on research and science. One of the major advantages of the philosophy of research is that it can show that even if research is conducted according to the conventional research methods in the empirical sciences, it can go against the aim of science, namely, the search, finding and announcement of truth. Science can go against this aim either by avoiding certain questions or simply suppressing them. We propose to illustrate this in this essay. The conventional treatment of “qualitative” and “quantitative” research methods in the teaching of research is subsumed under the rubric of the philosophy of research. It will therefore not receive direct and explicit exposition. We turn to a brief elaboration on the philosophy of research in order to lay the foundation for our thesis.

Science as a historical experience and concept may be defined as systematised positive knowledge (Sarton, 1927). It is generally divided into the natural (physical), the social and the human sciences. The last two mentioned have to a large extent extrapolated the method of the natural sciences, namely, observation, experimentation, hypothesisation, establishment of laws and prediction of future events or conduct based on the discovered laws. Some trends in philosophy and theology, for example, “scientific socialism” and Latin American liberation theology have to some extent adopted some of the elements of the method of the natural sciences. Acknowledging these tendencies and, indeed, tensions in science, what we would like to underline is that fundamentally science is the quest for truth. Truth is the recognition that things in their nature and, in their relation to one another stand in a balanced and proper way. Discernment and insight are crucial to this conception of truth because they suggest that “truth” is not given in advance and subsisting as immutable and eternal. Understood in this way, truth is intricately related to justice, peace and beauty.

Accordingly, it must be recognised always that: Above all we must remember that science could not progress along certain lines without traversing vested interests and prejudices and without hurting the feelings of the community. To proceed in the face of such opposition has always required a great deal of intellectual courage. ... In the whole sweep of history there is nothing more impressive than the spectacle of noble men who had the spirit to fight unreason and ignorance and who did not hesitate, not only to renounce material advantages, but even to jeopardize life and happiness in order to increase the amount of beauty, of justice, and of truth which is the essential part of our patrimony (cf Sarton, 1927, 20–21). The “truth” of science, like the “truth” of the human existential condition is always provisional remaining open to the possibility that it may either be changed or discarded completely, not on the ground of falsehood only, but precisely on the recognition that it endured only as a partial reflection of reality. The greatest conquest of science, philosophically speaking, is the notion of

the relativity of knowledge; that is, our trust in science, though steadily increasing, is always qualified and limited ... the principles and even the aims of science are not immovable (cf Sarton, 1927, 6).

It follows then that the spirit of science is: the continual alternation of experimental research, of mathematical elaboration (if possible), of theoretical deduction and discussion suggesting new experiments.

*“the continual alternation of analysis and synthesis – analytic investigations without synthetic attempts must necessarily degenerate into crude empiricism and into superstition; synthetic constructions without periodic experimental contact must necessarily degenerate into a sterile dogmatism”.* (Sarton, 1927: 24)

The philosophy of research that we propose to undertake here takes into account the above definition of science and its characteristics as mentioned and subjects them to critical analysis and interpretation revealing either explicitly or implicitly the possibilities of the active advancement towards new or alternative experiences. The aim of the undertaking here is to show that there is an ethical imperative for epistemic and social justice in South Africa even in the area of the teaching of research.

Bearing in mind the contestations concerning the scientific character of the his-story of South Africa, we will start with a critical examination of some specific issues in this regard. We will then focus attention on the apologists of the his-story of South Africa. Our critique of these apologists will show that there is an ethical imperative for the psychology of liberation. We will then describe the context, in the sense of a critique of the prevailing psychology curricula, in which the psychology of liberation should operate. Cumulatively, these three interrelated sections will form the basis for a brief argument for the transformation of the teaching of research methodologies in psychology. This will be followed by the conclusion.

## **The Scientific Character of the His-Story of South Africa**

Science, in the Western perspective, is defined according to its aim as well as its difference from common-sense (cf Nagel, 1961, 1–11).

*“Science has the goal of bringing its knowledge under a small unified set of postulates. Thus it differs from common-sense knowledge in being systematic, and from the systems of the metaphysicians in that its unifying postulates can, albeit with difficulty, be brought under empirical scrutiny. It is this striving for a logically consistent unified set of postulates, which can be judged for their predictive success or otherwise, which leads us to say that science is ‘a search for the Truth’.”* (Powers, 1982: 171)

“The Truth” of “science” understood in this way is claimed to have “universal” validity and application with regard to the specific cases it refers to (cf Levi, 1969, p 92).

The his-story of South Africa cannot successfully rebut the criticism that it has been and, to a large extent, continues to be tainted with subjectivity despite its scientific claim to be “objective”. It has been shown to be an “interested” history: a his-story bent on safeguarding the pursuit and protection of the political and economic interests of the colonial conqueror and its posterity by either subordinating or discarding the hallowed criterion of “objectivity” in “science”. This is not a particularly South African conqueror position.

*“white South Africans, like their American counterparts, are not unique in their ability to create a world adorned in ‘emperor’s new clothes’ that conceal the naked power of oppression and exploitation of others, while preserving a sense of innocence.” (Magubane, 1998: 55)*

Indeed, Civilizations may in fact be characterized in terms of the dominant defence mechanisms that they use to suppress the memory of an inconvenient past and the guilty conscience they suffer from because of having done what a new value apprehension tells them that they ought not to have done in the past.

*“The whole task of colonialism, ..., or of the ‘immorality’ of conquest and war, or of the enslavement of peoples other than one’s own which are such a dominant feature of contemporary consciousness have radically transformed the perception of their past on the part of many of the contemporary cultures and civilizations.” (Krishna, 2005: 29–30)*

It must be noted that the problem of “guilt” of the past in the light of the present does require an in-depth psychological investigation: an investigation in political psychology aimed at the liberation of the critics of guilty conscience and those who suffer from it.

The problem of “objectivity” in “science” applies to mathematics as well. In the case of mathematics its special status as the supreme exemplar of objectivity in knowledge is a little curious. The truths and proofs of mathematics do not depend on the evidence of the senses, and in consequence some have postulated that they depend on ‘transcendent objects’, accessible only to Reason. But, as in the case of moral and political authority, invoking a transcendent realm to underpin a set of social institutions and practice may be simply a way of disguising the fact that they are grounded on a social consensus. Mathematics, after all, is a human invention (cf Powers, 1982, 168).

It follows then that from the perspective of truthfulness, (cf Williams, 2002, 1) “the Truth” of “science” can escape neither scepticism nor criticism. From the perspective of the conquered, “science” is defined unilaterally by the colonial conqueror in the exercise of the questionable “right of conquest”. The challenging of this right will proceed in the light of the his-story of South Africa with particular reference to epistemicide especially, in the domain of education and, in particular the teaching of research. It is significant that the struggle for epistemic and social justice persists despite the inauguration of the “new” South Africa since 27 April 1994. The inauguration was supposed to be a watershed laying a solid foundation for lasting justice and peace in South Africa. An integral part of our thesis is that truthfulness (cf Küng, 1968, 36; Sheridan, 1980, p 176) – in contrast to “the truth” (cf Williams, 2002, 1–2) – is ethically necessary in the struggle for epistemic and social justice in South Africa. This demands a reading of the “history” of South Africa with fidelity to the real especially, the everyday lived experiences as well as the memories of the past. In the light of this, we prefer the terminology of conqueror and conquered in our critique of the his-story of South Africa. We now turn to consider the arguments of the adversaries to our preference.

### **Against the Apologists of the His-Story of South Africa**

In this section we give reasons, against the apologists of the his-story of South Africa, why our use of the conquered and conqueror terminology is justified. The point we wish to underline is that the reasons show the continuation of the initial violence of the sword deployed into the epistemological domain by the colonial conqueror. The ethical imperative arising from this is that there is the necessity for a psychology of liberation; a psychology aimed at the discontinuation of the epistemicide perpetrated by the colonial conqueror for the sake of epistemic justice to all. This in turn implies the necessity for a re-examination of the content of the teaching of research methodologies across the entire educational spectrum and, in psychology in particular. We turn to the following to illustrate these points.

We know that a “British woman, ... Lugard’s girl-friend ... christened us Nigeria” (cf Achebe, 1984, 6). Thus the name “Nigeria” is not the product of a collective democratic decision by the indigenous peoples inhabiting that geographic region. The fact that the indigenous peoples appear not to have been consulted at all in the naming of the political construct called Nigeria raises the question whether or not Lugard and his girl-friend considered them human beings equal in dignity to themselves. The disregard of the human inhabitants of that geographical space in naming their country is not simply a question of discourtesy (cf Taylor, 2013, 33). Fundamentally, it is the calling into question of the humanity of those inhabitants, casting doubt as to whether or not they are human beings. The history of colonisation attests to this doubt being ultimately

removed but primarily in theory by *Sublimis Deus*, declaring unequivocally that “all men are rational animals” (cf Ramose, 1999, 20). In practice however, the experience of those conquered through the violence of colonialism continues even after the grant of political independence to be largely the affirmation that only “some men are rational animals”. Our point then is that the teaching of research should be conducted in such a way that even the origin and reason for the naming of countries become part and parcel of the content and teaching of research methodologies. Searching for the truth about this is consistent with the aim of science as the quest for truth.

What is known in general is that the name “Africa” appears to be an imposition from the Western conquerors of the Northern region of the continent known as Africa today (cf Ramose, 2003, 114–115). Did the name giving involve the voluntary consent of the original inhabitants or was it an imposition in the exercise of the ethically questionable “right of conquest”? This question applies to both the names, Nigeria and South Africa. What the name South Africa shares in common with Nigeria is that both have been given as if there were no human beings inhabiting the regions. Thus the name South Africa is one of the initial acts of epistemic violence committed against the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation. It is odd that the scientific searchlight of the apologists of the his-story of South Africa cannot, even in daylight, clear the darkness that the continued use of this name is the perpetuation of epistemic violence. Political psychology must apply the necessary therapy to release the apologists of the his-story of South Africa from their self-imposed blindness. This can be achieved through the injection of the marginalised reality, the voice of the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation, into the content of the teaching of research methodologies.

One of the arguments of the apologists of the his-story of South Africa is the claim that in the course of history much has happened to the extent that it rendered the categorisation conquered and conqueror obsolete and irrelevant to the reality of present day South Africa (cf Esterhuyse, 2012, 277). Their list of what has happened includes, for example, the establishment of the Union of South Africa, the inauguration of the Republic of South Africa, the revocation of the 1983 constitution as well as the abolition of the Bantustans. The cherry on this list of delicacies of epistemic violence and social injustice is the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act No 108 of 1996 that brought about the “new” South Africa. Against them we argue that a change of name accompanied by apparent change in existential conditions is neither equal to nor synonymous with the renunciation of the original philosophy allowing the injustice of the unjustified resort to violence to stand as the basis for “justice”. The will to sustain such deception is tantamount to crude empiricism and

superstition. It is epistemic violence continuing the dogmatism that preserves the separation between the conquered and the conqueror. The preservation in turn sustains the ensuing tension that is manifest in the multiple spheres of resistance, for example, the formation of the Economic Freedom Fighters political party, the “Rhodes must fall” and the “Fees must fall” movements as well as the startling claim by the then President Jacob Zuma of South Africa that the constitution of the country is not “god” and can therefore not be holy (cf ‘Grondwet nie heilig’, 2011, 1). This situation speaks to the ethical imperative for the rethinking of the teaching of research methodologies especially in political psychology. There is no doubt that the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa provided fertile ground for the full-blown germination of political psychology. To all appearances, this was a missed opportunity. It is evident then that our use of the conquered and conqueror categories is, in the circumstances, justified.

### **Where is Ubuntu?**

It is salutary to note that within Western legal philosophy Hobbes’ Leviathan, the devil of envy according to the demonology of his time, (cf Robbins, 1959, 127) is nonetheless a “mortal god”. It is simply unsustainable to claim that a “god” created by human beings through a democratically constructed social contract for their own benefit suddenly becomes the eternal dictator determining unilaterally what is good for those who created the “god”. From the perspective of the rheomodic reasoning of *ubuntu*, the notion of an immutable and eternal “God” is paradoxical. It is problematical when it is applied to a politics which claims precedence over ethics. It is a delusion to claim the authority of a transcendent “God” with regard to morality and politics when it is plain that these are based on consensus among human beings. Insistence upon this delusion is yet another call to political psychology to give the appropriate therapy. Deliberate focus upon this tension between Western legal philosophy and the legal philosophy of *ubuntu* ought to become an integral part of the teaching of research methods in psychology, especially political psychology. This is an ethical imperative for the overcoming of epistemic injustice against the conquered.

From the point of view of psychology, the omission of *ubuntu* from Act No. 108 of 1996 raises the question whether or not such an omission was simply a matter of collective amnesia. *Ubuntu* is present – albeit as a curious after thought – in the transitional constitution of 1993. Is it so that *ubuntu* is excluded from the 1996 constitution not because of obliviousness but because its inclusion would constitute epistemological dissonance? In an apparent and, probably an inadvertent affirmation of epistemic violence against the conquered, Kroeze gives us a clue as to how we should search for an answer to this question. She avers that:



*“ubuntu was rendered ineffective as a constitutional value because it did not fit within the discourse of traditional legal thinking. By trying to force it into the mould required, the court has effectively destroyed its uniqueness and, as a result, its usefulness”.* (Kroeze, 2002: 261)

It is not crystal clear whose “traditional legal thinking” Kroeze refers to here. However, in context and in the light of the his-story of South Africa, it seems safe to assume that it is a reference to the “legal thinking” of the colonial conqueror. It is hardly surprising therefore that in almost all the court judgments where *ubuntu* is invoked, it has the status of only an *obiter dictum*; an aside with no particular significance to the reasoning and the final outcome of a judgment. We are yet to be informed of any judgment which contradicts our observation.

It is also argued that the omission of *ubuntu* does not make any substantial difference because the values and rights contained in the 1996 constitution are the same as those that *ubuntu* would, in any case, recognise and uphold. This argument is evidently indifferent to the ontological point that to be is to coexist (cf Verbeke & Wahba, 1984, 3). The significance of this point is that even a diehard solipsist is likely to concede that coexistence necessitates epistemological dialogue. The implicit rejection of dialogue in this argument is an illustration of the colonial conqueror’s familiarity with the epistemic violence meted out against the conquered.

A similar argument is to be found in African theology. In enthroning Jesus Christ as the “Proto-Ancestor”, it is asserted that he deserves this status on the ground of “revelation” which establishes that he confers “a qualitative” difference upon the indigenous religions of Africa (cf Bujo, 2003, 132). Against this background, an argument for the recognition of “African marriage” in the Catholic Church is advanced with the conclusion: “For ultimately, the God of revelation is the same as the God of African tradition” (cf Bujo, 2003, p 135). Barring religious faith for the time being, the question may be asked: if the “God of revelation is the same as the God of African tradition”, what is it that makes such a “God” necessary for Africa? What is the justification for either setting aside or subordinating “the God of African tradition” to “the God of revelation”? The same questions apply to our interlocutor who holds that there is no substantial difference between the values and rights contained in the 1996 constitution and *ubuntu*. What is the justification for the subordination of whatever is *ubuntu* to 1996 constitution? These questions reveal a subtle attempt by the colonial conqueror – though not wholly successful – to conceal coercion by persuasion and to elevate the conqueror’s epistemology high above that of the conquered. The concealment of truth is contrary to the aim of science, namely, the quest for truth. To undermine this aim is to intensify

the struggle against epistemic injustice and to place barriers along the road to psychological liberation leading to social justice. The teaching of research methods in psychology, especially the psychology of liberation, ought to take serious cognisance of this by explicitly problematising the concept of truth.

As can be seen from the preceding paragraphs, the option for the conquered and conqueror categories did not involve colour-oriented reasoning. It is, however, not colour-blind. Nor is it oblivious of the historically real and enduring association of colour with good and bad, poverty and wealth respectively. Also, it is consistent with our intention to challenge the unethical biological fallacy of naming fellow human beings “Coloureds” or “people of mixed race”. In our view, these misnamed fellow human beings, including the Indians in the South African context, are, objectively, the conquered.

What the “Coloured”, the Indian and the indigenous conquered peoples share in common with the colonial conqueror is the ontological “right to exist” (cf Gutierrez, 1983, 101) as human beings: beings with a biological living body regardless of its skin colour and, beings endowed with the power to reason. Skin colour oriented reasoning is an attempt – decidedly unsuccessful – to effect an ontological erasure of the human right to exist. Two examples of the failure of this reasoning will suffice.

The concepts “black” and “white” are common usage in the language of politics. If one were to look properly, it is indeed possible that one may encounter a “black” human being, black – that is – like the colour of fresh coal. However, hard one may look, one is unlikely to meet a “white” human being, white – that is – like snow. No wonder that “snow white” is just a fairytale to be read for young children. Although, there is no “white” human being, political language upholds the belief that there is. Such a human being must then be white only in symbolic terms. Whiteness in this sense is the symbol representing rootedness in a specific historical reality subsisting right up to our time. Some whites who do not wish to be associated with the dark side of this history may even claim to be pink human beings.

*“A white philosopher once told me during a conversation about my various projects on philosophical discourse and whiteness, ‘Well, I’ve always thought of myself as kind of pink’.” (Yancy, 2008: 41)*

This ‘joke’ speaks to the various ways in which whites attempt to avoid admitting just how invested they are materially and institutionally in whiteness, how whiteness structures their social location and constitutes their subjectivity. Of course, in African

American vernacular, to be pink is a trope for whiteness. So, from our perspective, the white philosopher denied his whiteness only to reclaim his whiteness as pink.

Thus the attempted escape from whiteness to pink is merely a claim in bad faith concealing the historical erasure of the humanity of “black” human beings by resorting to reasoning in terms of skin colour. Even without the attempt to resort to such an unsuccessful escape, the history of South Africa since conquest in the unjust wars of colonisation has been and, continues to be the systematic and systemic erasure of the humanity of “black” human beings and, here our use of the concept black includes human beings misnamed “Coloureds”, Malays and Indians. Political psychology ought to investigate skin colour oriented reasoning in order to achieve psychological liberation for the conquered and the conqueror.

The second example pertains also to naming in bad faith. According to the Western Australia Native Administration Act No 14 of 1905, amended by No 42 of 1911, No. 8 of 1931 and No 43 of 1936, a quadroon “means a person who is descended from the full blood original inhabitants of Australia or their full blood descendants but who is only one-fourth of the original full blood”. We note with emphasis that here “blood” is the basic criterion for the definition of “a quadroon”. This definition fits well into the conception of “a Coloured” in South Africa or “a mulatto” in the United States of America. Concerning the latter, Yancy writes that:

*“Douglass has a sense of himself as dejected, a brute, a thing, and as an abomination before God. His knowledge that his father was possibly a white man further solidified his identity as a dejected thing, a reminder of his owner’s lust for (and possible rape of) the female Black body that was deemed subhuman and lascivious. Douglass noted that the biological father ‘may be white, glorying in the purity of his Anglo-Saxon blood; and his child may be ranked with the blackest slaves’. The presence of the mulatto on a plantation was clear evidence of the powerful ideological workings of the slave system. After all, the enslaved mulatto was white in phenotype, and, yet, deemed ‘Black’.” (Yancy 2008: 160)*

All that was necessary is that:

*“the child be by a woman in whose veins courses one thirty-second part of African blood’. By the one-drop rule, no matter how light, the child was still ‘tainted’ or ‘stained’ Black and therefore less human.” (Yancy, 2008:160)*

Our point in emphasising blood as the criterion of definition is that it applies to both the “original inhabitants of Australia” and the colonial invaders from outside Australia.

The crucial importance of this criterion is that in the blood we are a oneness. If this were not so then medical science is merely a powerful superstition. According to the existing knowledge in medical science, it is legitimate to expect that even the unborn rural peasant would take panado tablets if she or he had a headache. Today even the Queen may take the same tablets for her headache and so may a rustic mother under the deadly grip of poverty. Skin colour oriented reasoning is thus often an attempt to deny the fact that all human beings are a oneness in the blood. Historically, this denial served the purpose of claiming ontological superiority over other fellow human beings as justification for their oppression, enslavement and exploitation. It is once again the duty of political psychology to investigate this phenomenon of bad faith in order to achieve psychological liberation for all.

We now distil from the foregoing a few research questions. This will include statements that require a reasoned yes or no answer.

- Given the provisional nature of the truth of science, what is the correct attitude towards the scientific claim to truth?
- The teaching of research methodologies can result in going against the quest for truth in science. (Yes/No?)
- The common blood that human beings share makes idiots of those who uphold the ontological superiority of one race over all the others. (Yes/No?)
- I am a Coloured. What is your problem?
- The conquered/conqueror categories are still relevant to research in political psychology. (Yes/No?)
- Blackness and whiteness are a species of a symbolism representing two historically conflictual experiences in the ontology of social being. (Yes/No?)

Our analysis of the conquered and conqueror categories in research shows the resolute tenacity with which the colonial conqueror adhered to a subtle, systematic and sustained epistemic violence against the conquered. It also reveals the problematic complication of intellectual and material poverty on the part of the majority of the conquered. Although the Black Consciousness literature is replete with the ethical imperative for “psychological” alongside “physical” liberation, it is rather odd that to date there is a dearth of literature on the “psychology of liberation” in South Africa. Manganyi’s work, *Being-black-in-the-world* (1973) and *Alienation and the body*

*in a racist society: A study of the society that invented Soweto* (1977) is a significant exception and so are the short stories of the novelists Wannenburg, (*Awendgesang*), Rive (*Resurrection*) Matthews, (*The Party*) and La Guma (*Slipper Satin*) contained in Rive's edited work (1963) It is curious that the psychology of liberation does not have enough attention among the conquered. Here the "psychology of liberation" is understood as a conceptually decolonised *tsa semoya* freed from the grip of the dominant epistemological paradigm of psychology. Unlike the black theology of liberation, mesmerised into captivity by holding Jesus Christ as its ineliminable point of departure for doing theology, the "psychology of liberation" ought to accord primacy to the historical content of the lived and living experience of the conquered. Its point of departure ought to be: "I am conquered, therefore, I ought to liberate myself from the reality of violence, oppression, exploitation and humiliation".

We now turn to an elaboration of the "psychology of liberation" with particular reference to the dominant educational paradigm and the ethical imperative to have it changed.

### **The Psychology of Liberation – The Question of Method**

Our point that the proposed psychology of liberation ought to focus on the everyday lived and living experience of the conquered, of course, in relation to the colonial conqueror, departs from the ontological position that: Education as the practice of freedom-as opposed to education as the practice of domination – denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world. In these relations consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it (cf Freire, 2003, 81).

Education for freedom demands that the pedagogical relationship between teacher and student should be changed so that both become active co-producers of knowledge, the student may no longer be regarded as a passive recipient of information to be regurgitated during periodic examinations (cf Ramose, 2016, 552–553). Nor may the teacher be regarded as the repository of complete and infallible knowledge. On the contrary, the teacher should be construed as the active communicator of knowledge that is in principle subject to interrogation both by the teacher and the students. Research for freedom should thus be construed as a transformational dialogical encounter where ignorance is exchanged for knowledge on the one hand and passive receptivity is deliberately abandoned in favour of an active problem-solving orientation (cf Freire, 2003, 81; Oladipo, 2007, 12). The end-result of this encounter should be an epistemology of liberation both for the conquered and the conqueror.

In practice, the component of the ontology that is the basis of the psychology of liberation involves the application of the four “r’s”, to borrow from Thésée and Carl. (cf Thésée & Carr, 2012, 23). The first “r” refers to refusal. One must refuse to take the meaning and use of everyday experience for granted. It ought to be interrogated. The second “r” refers to “re-questioning”. The refusal to take the everyday experience for granted cannot be meaningful without the idea of questioning. The point is that even if questions were raised in the past regarding such experiences, it does not follow that the questions are exhaustive. Because science is a constant becoming new questions may be posed in the light of the impact of experiences which were not part of the past. The third “r” refers to redefinition. The consequence of the re-questioning may lead to novel conceptual understanding that requires the redefinition of the old concepts. The fourth “r” refers to reaffirmation. Since the four “r’s” operate in the context of the conquered and conqueror power relations, reaffirmation refers to the recognition of the self – the conquered – as a visible and active part of the research discourse. It is the affirmation of the exercise of the freedom to be oneself amongst other selves. On this reasoning, *tsa semoya* is a novelty only to the colonial conqueror. It is an ethical obligation on the part of the conquered to reaffirm *tsa semoya* in the wider terrain of research discourses in South Africa. Doing so is treading along the path towards epistemic and social justice in South Africa.

Since the struggle for education for freedom does not occur in a vacuum, we now turn to provide the concrete context of this struggle in the sense of a critique of the prevailing psychology curriculum in South African universities. The proposed critique assumes agency on the part of both the conquered and the colonial conqueror. On this basis, the conduct of research shall involve the active participation of both the researcher and the researched. Such participation is crucial for a mutually transformational dialogical encounter between the researcher and the researched.

### **Sample Description of Psychology Curricula in South African Universities**

Our argument for the psychology of liberation illustrates the significance and meaningfulness of ownership of knowledge production by the conquered. We question the ontological, methodological and epistemological bases on which the conqueror has relentlessly pursued the epistemic violence and injustice on indigenous knowledge in South Africa. This situation continues to privilege Western ways of knowing while denying the admissibility of indigenous knowledge, culture and language to the domain of research (cf Smith, 2012, 175). This exclusive deliberate focus on Western conceptions of knowledge production precludes the possibility of a dialogical engagement between the colonial conqueror and the conquered as equals. It frustrates the necessity for the recognition of agency and active participation in research. This

is underlined by the fact that more than 95% of the prescribed psychology text books used in South African universities are still based on the colonial conqueror's conceptual frameworks, methodologies and cultural experiences.

Our analysis of a sample of prescribed text books for the past three years for Psychology 1, 2, 3 and Honours courses of at least 10 South African universities reveals that these text books are not designed and standardized for, nor are they conceived from an African conceptual framework and cultural experiences. Evidence for this is the following sample of titles for psychology prescribed for students of psychology in several South African universities: *Introduction to Psychology: Themes and Variations* (Weiten, 2014); *Introduction to Psychological Assessment in the South African context* (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2012, 2013); *Abnormal Psychology: A South African perspective* (Burke et al., 2012), *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed method approaches* (Creswell, 2014); *Adult development and Ageing* (Louw & Louw, 2009); *Lifespan Human Development* (Sigelman & Rider, 2015); *Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach* (Barlow & Durand, 2013); *Family therapy: A systemic integration* (Becvar & Becvar, 2013); *Personology: From Individual to Ecosystem* (Meyer, Moore, & Viljoen, 2008); *Psychological Assessment; Theory and Practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy* (Corey, 2012); *Neuropsychological Assessment* (Lezak, Howieson, Loring, Hannay, & Fischer, 2004); *The Practice of Social Research* (Babbie & Mouton, 2007); *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Neuman, 2011); *Research in Practice: Applied methods for the social sciences* (Terre Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006); *Psychological Testing: History, principles and applications* (Gregory, 2004); *Principles and practice of psychological assessment* (Moerdyk, 2015); and *Psychopathology: Research, Assessment and Treatment in Clinical Psychology* (Davey, 2014).

The above sample, authored predominantly by those who arguably have little contact and therefore less experience with the conquered, shows that anything African comes in only as an after thought in the teaching of research methods in psychology. Due to the authors' awareness that the texts mentioned are imposing a foreign epistemological paradigm on local communities, the cautionary preamble for readers is that these texts should be applied and interpreted with sensitivity to the South African context. What is ostensibly absent from texts is that there are no questions about the epistemological paradigm; the cultural context from which they are derived. The ethical question of why should such texts be deemed applicable to the conquered even if their experience is so patently excluded is often not raised at all. There is no doubt that the conquered need to know, from a scientific point of view, about other paradigms of knowledge. But this concession is an issue separate from the ethical question just posed. The question is patently about justice in science and not about the broadening of scientific knowledge. Universality, usability, relevance and suitability

may not be predetermined without any dialogical engagement with the prospective consumers of knowledge. The avoidance of dialogical engagement illustrates the dominance of the colonial nature of research in psychology in South Africa (cf Collins, 2004, 3), and therefore necessitates liberation psychology (cf Foster, 2004, 560–574).

It comes as no surprise therefore that this overwhelming Western bias of psychological training in South Africa leaves professionals ill-equipped and culturally incompetent to deal with local problems (Mkhize, 2004). Why is it that specifically designed psychology texts for the conquered such as; *A handbook of critical indigenous methodologies* (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008); *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (Smith, 2012) are not widely prescribed or even suggested as additional readers for students in most universities in South Africa? This omission is in our view not accidental. It is a carefully and systemically designed marginalization of liberation psychology. There are however attempts, albeit negligible, to infuse indigenous worldviews and conceptions of knowledge from the conquered people's experiences, culture and philosophy, for example, *Critical Psychology* (Hook, Mkhize, Kiguwa, & Collins, 2004) and *Psychological Assessment: Thinking innovatively in contexts of diversity* (Maseko, 2016).

The sample provided above shows that the dominance of knowledge production by the colonial conqueror has indeed been maintained and escalated, and therefore became the norm for current modern day 'drama of being-black-in-the-world'. This has constituted a further assault on the psyche and philosophy of the conquered. The colonial conqueror's psychological dominance through prescribed books at universities should be understood at least on two levels. 1) By unilaterally deciding on who produces what suitable knowledge is for the conquered, the colonial precludes the possibility of entering into any dialogue. This situation creates favourable conditions for monopoly in knowledge production in favour of the colonial conqueror. 2) The colonial conqueror's material conditions such as the monetary benefits which accrue from royalties ensure the persistence of epistemicide. It goes without saying that if the colonial conqueror prescribed article is published in an accredited journal then there is additional monetary benefit for the institution and the individual author of the article. Under these conditions, the possibility of conceiving, "harvesting and sharing the vast variety of human ways of knowing and the infinite variety of human knowledge and their innumerable possibilities of change in changing contexts" are virtually diminished (cf Okere & Nkwocha, 2004, p 6). On this basis, the pluriversal nature of knowledge as a norm will remain a pipe dream.

Liberation psychology therefore ought to respond to this psychological dominance and oppression through indigenous knowledge production and



dissemination. Psychological service provision is often required for indigenous people whose values and beliefs are based on African traditions (Moletsane, 2016) Viewed in this way, the epistemic dissonance created by this situation on the conquered raises both ethical and pedagogical questions. This is partly so because “teaching, undertaking or performing research is a pedagogical enterprise...but pedagogical enterprise is always political” (cf Denzin et al., 2008, p xi). The method of inquiry is inextricably linked to the epistemological paradigm. This is evident in the sources and methods by which useful knowledge is produced in South Africa (Nwoye, 2015). Liberation psychology should ensure that indigenous psychology and methodologies, that is, psychology and research by and for indigenous conquered people [of South Africa], using indigenous methods, sources and techniques are drawn from those people (cf Denzin et al., 2008, x). Against this background, *tsa semoya*, being the psychology of the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation ought to be an integral part of the teaching of research.

This curriculum transformation is already happening at the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, Department of Clinical Psychology, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Department of Psychology and the University of Limpopo, Department of Psychology. For example, the former has the following covered in the MSc Clinical Psychology programme; *African epistemology, African Psychology, indigenous healing modalities and indigenous research methodologies* and *Ubuntu and its healing and ethical implications in the hospital context*. The latter offers the following African psychology-based modules at an undergraduate level (as part of Introduction to Psychology module: *Pyc 102: Introduction to African and Asian Psychologies*), *Pyc 209: Psychology: African and international perspectives* (Nwoye, 2018). There is a body of published research and doctoral studies from the University of Limpopo, Department of Psychology, focussing for example, on *African culture and mental health, traditional healing systems, African conceptions of suicide and bereavement rituals*.

## **Transformation or Trans-Substantiation of the Psychology Content and Methodologies?**

So far, discourses on transformation in the struggle for epistemic and social justice place more emphasis on the prefix “trans”. By so doing, they endorse the idea that transformation means going beyond the existing forms. The philosophical problem arising from this understanding is that there is a distinction between form and substance. The importance of this distinction is that going beyond the form while leaving the substance intact might mean that qualitative change is not envisaged at all in terms of the dominant meaning of transformation.

It is worth recalling the rather cumbersome concept of trans-substantiation. It is to be found in christian theology. The core meaning of this concept according to that theology is that at the point of liturgical consecration when the priest declares “this is my body” and “this is my blood” both the bread and the wine literally – on the ground of faith – undergo qualitative change and become the body and the blood of Jesus Christ respectively. From this perspective, it is arguable that trans-substantiation is more consistent with the intention of “transformation” than the widely accepted meaning of transformation. This is why this sub-title is in the interrogative mood. Our use of the concept of transformation does take cognisance of this problem of discordance between “transformation” as the performance of some carpentry on the same substance and the intention to effect qualitative change. Our argument for qualitative change inclines more to trans-substantiation than to the currently dominant meaning of transformation.

## Conclusion

We have argued that epistemic justice is an indispensable complement to social justice. We have illustrated this by reference to research focussing particularly on psychology. We have shown that research methods can be used to defeat the aim of science which is to seek, find and declare truth. We have given examples of this and suggested research questions oriented towards upholding the aim of science. Our argument for the epistemological and axiological visibility of African psychology, *tsa semoya*, is presented as a challenge to the dominant paradigm of psychology as a scientific discipline in South Africa. The challenge takes the concrete form of arguing for a psychology of liberation driven by research for freedom. Research for freedom together with the pedagogy of liberation as we have explained it, are presented as the route towards epistemic and social justice for both the conquered and the colonial conqueror in South Africa.

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