Rethinking Knowledge Production: Moving Beyond the Quest for Authentic Epistemology

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ABSTRACT

This paper engages with the ongoing debate on decolonization, focusing on the dynamics of knowledge production. Decolonization scholars in the post-colonial era critique the dominance of Western epistemology, which has historically been positioned as the sole authentic, objective, and universal form of knowledge across time and space. This hegemonic perspective elevates Western knowledge as superior, relegating other epistemologies to inferior or peripheral status, thereby failing to appreciate the richness of epistemic diversity. The critique within the decolonization discourse takes two primary directions. One approach advocates for the establishment of alternative epistemologies to challenge the dominance of Western knowledge, as exemplified by Senghor's proposal of an African epistemology. The other approach calls for integrating diverse epistemologies, emphasizing that no single knowledge system should dominate, as doing so perpetuates existing power imbalances. The central argument presented here is that decolonization should not aim to marginalize any epistemology but rather create a space where diverse knowledge systems are valued and allowed to interact on equal footing. Instead of rejecting specific knowledge streams, the focus should be on recognizing their relevance, fostering mutual learning, and preventing the subalternisation of any epistemology. By embracing epistemic diversity, decolonization can promote an inclusive and pluralistic framework for knowledge production.

Keywords: Decolonization, Knowledge Production, Western Epistemology, Epistemic Diversity, Pluralism in Knowledge Systems.

Introduction.

I engage in the debate on decolonization, focusing on knowledge production. It deploys the decolonial perspective as a tool for problematizing the Eurocentric conceptualization of knowledge and epistemology through a geo and body politics of knowledge. It presents ideas, debates, and questions raised by the decoloniality school to engage what is referred to as the "darker side of modernity." The possibilities provided by the decoloniality scholars, i.e., pluriversity and ecologies of knowledge, inform this paper's premise. Attempts to deal with Eurocentric knowledge are two-fold, i.e., one that considers the need for an alternative knowledge to Western knowledge by fronting subaltern knowledge like Senghor and the other that thinks the prerequisite of bringing together numerous forms of knowledge[1].

My paper asks: Is there an authentic epistemology? Is it possible to share a single epistemology where multiple epistemologies exist? Does epistemic decolonization necessitate de-westernisation? What is the relationship between epistemology and place? The decolonization of knowledge production should go beyond the narrow search for an authentic epistemology to open up spaces for multiple knowledge. Theorizing subaltern knowledge should focus on knowledge "of the South" and not "from the South," given the divergent experiences of the subaltern and the difficulties in geographically defining/demarcating the South, which may risk reproducing colonial political categories. We shouldn't aim to break down knowledge into more local, indigenous, and authentic knowledge but to place knowledge of the south on the same footing with "dominant" knowledge if we are to offer full knowledge production processes.

Negotiating a Critique on "Western epistemology".

In this section, I engage a critique of Western epistemology. I argue that Western epistemology as a universal canon indicates the impossibility of "trans-culturalism." The contemporary theory of knowledge that predominates the modern world is said to have sprouted out of what Senghor calls "the scientific discoveries, which among others constitute "relativity, wave mechanic, non-Euclidian geometries" and was equally birthed by new "philosophical theories of phenomenology, existentialism, and Teilherdism"[2]. Linda has argued that when examining knowledge production, we needn't skip that period in European history that facilitated the search for new knowledge—the Enlightenment period. This period for Linda is referred to as modernity, and the roots of the "industrial revolution, the philosophy of liberalism, the development of disciplines in the sciences and the development of public education can be traced from

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[1] See Mignolo Walter. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border (Thinking*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011); Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni. *Decolonization/Decoloniality: Converging African/Latin American Thinking*. (MISR Lecture: Makerere Institute of Social Research, 2019).

[2] Senghor Leopold S. "*Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century*," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, *1994), p.8*

here"[3]. For her, the fallacy that the West is a center of knowledge and a source of "legitimate" and "civilized" knowledge can be traced to the globalization of knowledge and Western culture. It's within this framework of globalizing knowledge that the notion of universal knowledge is drawn[4]

Other scholars have argued that the European/western knowledge model has often been provided as an authentic form of knowledge that commands universality and superiority over other epistemologies. The Western epistemology pushed other forms of knowledge to the margins and has been presented as the only form of true knowledge that is objective and based on reason[5]. It has become "hegemonic" and has generated expansive scientific practices by establishing a frame of knowledge that universally conscripts other societies. Relatedly, it's considered repressive because it cannot leave any knowledge created outside the set frame to survive, thus failing to appreciate the epistemic diversities[6]. To Grosfoguel, fundamentalism assumes a single epistemic tradition "from which to achieve truth and universality"[7]. This is the basis for his critique of Eurocentric and third-world fundamentalisms, including colonialism and nationalism.

By responding to a question that guides his pursuit of what a Eurocentric canon is, Mbembe writes, "A Eurocentric canon attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production. It disregards other knowledge traditions"[8]. So, to him, any attempt at decolonization has two sides, i.e., deconstruction of the dominant Western knowledge and development of alternative models[9]. To elaborate on the question of reason as a qualifier for authenticating knowledge production and transfer, Senghor provides a distinction between European and African reason. Senghor argues that classical European knowledge is analytic through utilization, examines the object from the outside, and is based on Figure[10]. Western knowledge is said to be rational due to its visibility and measurability[11].

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[3] Linda Tuhiwai Smit. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1999) p.58

[4] Linda, 1999, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, p.63.

[5] See Senghor, 1994, *Negritude*; Mignolo, 2011, Local Histories/Global Designs; Anibal Quijano. *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America* (Nepental: View from the South 1, (3), 2000), 533-580; Sabelo, 2019. **Reason Quijano argues was considered the only entity with potential for generating rational knowledge and the body would be "nothing but an object of knowledge.**

[6] Mbembe Achille. *Decolonising Knowledge and the Question of the Archive.* 2015. Retrieved from https://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/Achille%20Mbembe%20-%20Decolonizing%20Knowledge%20and%20the%20Question%20of%20the%20Archive.pdf [Accessed on August 19, 2023].

[7] Grosfoguel Ramon. *Decolonising post-colonial studies and paradigms of political-economy: Decolonial thinking and global coloniality* (Trans-modernity, 2011), p.11

[8] Mbembe, 2015, *p.9*

[9] Ibid., p.18

[10] Senghor. 1994, p.8, 10.

[11] Ibid., p.12

As a counter to the Western epistemology, Senghor summons what he considers a cogent account of African traditional values, which he argues are expressed in African thought systems, their mentality, and social institutions. He avers that there exists a primacy of African account of strong sensibility and emotional disposition. Senghor's epistemology alters from static and untouched to one that can be touched. He calls off examining knowledge from the outside. He calls for participation in the object as a matter of expertise by immersing oneself in such knowledge out of love[12]. The African for Senghor doesn't create distinctions between himself and the object but embraces the rhythm of the object. He doesn't only take part in the object but creates no distinction between himself and the object, cannot hold the object at a distance, and doesn't analyze it by merely looking at it but rather ensures he touches it, feels it, smells it and engages with it. The subject and object have to enter into an organic and dynamic relationship in which intense perception through the senses culminates in the conscious fearfulness of reality. In trying to deconstruct the European description of Africa, he calls for a unique Africa by summoning a distinctive mode of reasoning through an articulation of a distinct African mode of epistemology and ontology. I find him to provide an African epistemology as if it's authentic without question. Senghor limits his understanding of epistemology to just two epistemic locations, i.e., European and African, which ignores epistemic diversities.

By problematizing the concept of the "public sphere," Santos (2012) provides a critique of Western epistemology. He argues that the idea is one produced in the "global north," with its theoretical presupposition being "Eurocentric" yet universally invalid despite claims of being a "general theory"[13]. The Western canon of knowledge fails to account for epistemologies developed and anchored from elsewhere. Santos provides a "meta-theoretical" critique of the concept of the public sphere, claiming that modern science—an epistemology from the north—does nothing more than ignore the infinite diversity of the world. Western modernity marginalized, silenced, and subaternized other versions of modernity by rendering them invisible[14]. He not only deconstructs Eurocentric assumptions and knowledge standpoints but also attempts to revitalize the "historical and cultural possibilities of the African legacy, interrupted by colonialism and neo-colonialism"[15]. European epistemology falls short in understanding the diversity that "encompasses distinct modes of being, thinking and feeling, the conception of time, relations among

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[12] Ibid., p.10
[13] Santos B. de Sousa. *Public Sphere and Epistemologies of the South*. (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Africa Development, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, 2012), p.43
[14] Santos, *Public Sphere*, p.51
[15] Ibid., p.43

humans and between humans and non-humans, the conception of the past and future, production and leisure"[16].

Modern science doesn't appreciate the ecology of knowledge, which assumes multiplicity in forms of knowledge and "ignorance." It favors practices "in which scientific knowledge prevails" and privileges their intervention in human and natural reality. This legitimizes the diverse negative effects of such practices without question[17]. Santo's critique differs from Senghor's, for he distances himself from epistemic authenticity. In his other work,[18] Santos (2007) introduces the concept/debate on "abyssal thinking" to explain the "hegemonic" nature of Western epistemology. By abyssal thinking, there is a clear distinction between the visible and invisible, with the "visible defining the invisible"[19] and so the "invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, i.e., "the realm of 'this side of the line' and the realm of 'the other side of the line'"[20]. He, therefore, argues that modern epistemology functions as abyssal thinking, which creates lines of divisions upon which the world operates today. Eurocentric thinking, both in the contemporary and in the colonial period, continues to work on such lines that opted to create a separation between the "human" and the "sub-human," such principles worked on the principles of exclusion of the sub-human[21]. This divide serves to deny the co-existence of both sides on equal terms but subalternising one and superiorising the other. Modern epistemology is influenced by the abyssal lines, which may not always be fixed but are at certain points in time. Modern knowledge's foundations are territorial and imperial[22], which indicates a relationship between knowing and place.

Quijano addresses the question of epistemology. Gatsheni calls for the perversity of knowledge production since there can never be just a single epistemology. Quijano uses the duality of body and non-body to explain knowledge production. The basis for this duality is the need to explain the relationship between the two and how they are relevant in explaining the Eurocentric mode of knowledge production, as well as how modern dualism is related to race and gender in terms of coloniality of power[23].

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[16] Santos. 2012, p.51

[17] Ibid., p.57

[18] *Santos B. de Sousa. Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges*. (Published in *Review*, XXX-1-2007, 2017). Available at https://www.ces.uc.pt/bss/documentos/AbyssalThinking.pdf. Accessed on August 31, 2023

[19] Santos, Beyond Abyssal Thinking, 2017, p.1

[20] Ibid., p.1

[21] Ibid., p.10

[22] Mignolo, 2011.

[23] Quijano Anibal. *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America*. Nepental: View from the South 1(3), 2000, p.554.

To Quijano, different cultures identify with a universal difference between body and non-body, which he also calls spirit/mind a universal experience. He adds that it is "common to all historically known "cultures" or "civilizations," part of the co-presence of both as un-separable dimensions of humanness"[24]. According to Quijano, the body and non-body are distinct and separate elements in a Eurocentric view. To him, the non-body was conferred supremacy over the body as it is considered the only thing capable of "reason," "logic," and "knowledge," and so the body cannot possess reason. Reason, which is also considered a subject broke from the body. He questions whether there was no permanent co-presence between the two. Reason, he argues, was considered the only entity with potential for rational knowledge, and the body would be "nothing but an object of knowledge[25]. So, the European lens provides that certain races are inferior since they are never rational subjects and are regarded as bodies closer to nature. This, he says, was the basis for the domination, subjugation, and exploitation of other races. All non-Europeans were considered pre-European and were branded as primitive, traditional and magical-mythical, and other than civilized, rational, modern, and scientific.

Thinking the decolonial way out: Towards Border Thinking and Subaltern Knowledge.

As for this paper, thinking from a decolonial perspective means engaging the debate raised by proponents of decoloniality. The core argument the school raised is that colonialism never ended with independence. If Independence ended colonial physical presence, coloniality would continue with the metaphysical and commercial empires. This is because "coloniality of power and knowledge changed hands, so to speak, and became subordinated to the new and emerging epistemological hegemony"[26]. The decoloniality school argues that global antecedents of coloniality can be traced from colonialism. Still, its definitions encompass culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production, among others, over and above the limits of colonial administration[27]. Decoloniality arguments don't identify with the post-colonial perspective, for it is not trans-historical. They consider modernity to be a representative, if not a twin, of coloniality with an implication that there is continued oppression and domination of racialized groups culturally, politically, socially, sexually, etc., outside the ambit of colonial administration[28]. Coloniality tries to show the imperial aspect of Western knowledge that has been erected, transformed, and circulated over the past 500 years. Decolonial writings in the 1960s espoused the need to critique

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[24] Ibid

[25] Quijano Anibal. *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America.* Nepental: View from the South 1(3), 2000, p.552.

[26] Mignolo, 2011, p.87-8
[27] Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2000; Sabelo, 2019; Grosfoguel, 2011.
[28] Mignolo, 2011, p.43.

Western knowledge systems if decolonization was to be achieved[29]. As geopolitics of knowledge and decolonizing imperial knowledge took place in the global south, body politics of knowledge as a new way of organizing knowledge sprouted in the US. As a way of shaping knowledge through universalism, the colonial matrix of power propagated the subjugation of populations to innumerable dualistic identities and imperial forms of "self-understanding"[30]. Distinctions in ethnicity, race, gender, class, and nationalism are interconnected today in the logic within the modern system of power relations, including knowledge. The created identities turned into values within multiple interrelated hierarchies, including epistemic and linguistic hierarchies[31].

Since we cannot think of a single epistemic tradition from which to arrive at universal truth, we need to carefully consider epistemic perspectives and insights of critical thinking from the "Global South" during decolonization struggles through a "radical break" from Western epistemology in what is called "epistemic decolonial turn"[32]. But does decolonization necessitate wholesome de-westernisation? The decolonial school does not suggest this but opts for an interplay of knowledge through border thinking, which calls for delinking[33]. This shift considers the body politics and 'geopolitics' of knowledge by trying to understand who is thinking, who is knowing, and from which location [34] by considering those excluded from the process of knowledge production. Border thinking, it is argued, should be read as a response to the "violence of imperial/territorial epistemology and the rhetoric of modernity of salvation that continues to be implemented on the assumption of the inferiority or devilish intentions of the Other"[35]. In other words, border thinking can be considered "derivative." The subjugation of the acclaimed universal knowledge truth instigated a decolonial turn as a solution and response.

Border thinking calls for de-westernization by way of thinking from the exteriority of modern Westernization itself. This implies that it is not thinking outside Western civilization and possibly capitalism but thinking in the sense of the outside, created in the process of making the inside[36], by ignoring Western standards and embracing a global standard of thinking. We need to think from the

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Quijano, 2000

[31] …As epistemic hierarchy venerates and institutionalises Eurocentric knowledge at the expense of non-Western knowledge and cosmologies, linguistic hierarchy privileges European languages, communications and knowledge production while subalternising the non-European ones as sole producers of folklore or culture but not of knowledge and theory. (Grosfoguel, 2011)

[32] It has numerous names i.e., *Grosfoguel calls it body politics of knowledge looking at locus of enunciation, Mignolo calls it "border thinking", Santos branded it "keeping distance" and/or "post-abyssal thinking"*

[33] Mignolo Walter and Tlostanova Madina. *Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body- Politics of Knowledge.* (European Journal of Social Theory 9(2), 2006)

[34] Ibid.; Sabelo, 2019; Sabelo, 2018.

[35] Mignolo and Tlostanova *Theorizing from the Borders*, 2006, p.206

[36] Mignolo, 2011; Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006, p.206.

vantage point of a subaltern epistemic location while embracing pluriversity and not a Eurocentric vantage point, as Mignolo narrates:

The tensions between culture and civilization staged by Beji parallel my concept of subaltern knowledge in the constitution of the modern/ colonial world system. Her idea of "worldly culture" parallels my border thinking as, precisely, the multiplication of epistemic energies in diverse local histories…Beji's "culture" parallels my own "local histories" and, therefore, "worldly culture" could be translated to my vocabulary as the re-articulation and appropriation of global designs by and from the perspective of local histories…the hegemony (face) of civilization and the subalternity of cultures would become the multiple diversity of local histories (without faces) but no longer subaltern to global designs[37].

The above lines show that Mignolo favors multiple cultures and epistemologies by acknowledging the pluriversity and diversity of epistemologies emanating from local histories without being considered subaltern to "global designs." Mignolo, just like other decolonial thinkers, doesn't struggle to do away with the Western truth claim but to show that it is partial/incomplete/insufficient and must be supplemented by other truths. Considering multiple knowledge indicates that there can be no single authentic epistemology. In other words, rethinking knowledge production means providing space for all knowledge and picking the best essentials across cultures and traditions without discounting any of them. Epistemic decolonization, in this case, accommodates all forms of knowledge and respects all epistemic perspectives.

Further reading of the decolonial school shows that epistemological decolonization is not place-specific. Mignolo states:

Border thinking brings to the foreground the irreducible epistemological difference between the perspective from the colonial difference and the forms of knowledge that, being critical of modernity, coloniality, and capitalism, remain "within" the territory, "in custody" of the "abstract universals[38].

A closer reading of the above quote indicates that pursuing epistemic decolonization should go beyond thinking of places/locations/territories. Mignolo's (2000) notion of "global designs" already gives us a sense that the "post-colonial state" is a continuation of the colonially designed colonial state. But Mignolo also builds upon Anibal Quijano's notion of "coloniality of power," and the idea that the states (in this case, post-colonial states) are part of the institutional ensemble (like the church, universities, and others)

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[37] *Mignolo, 2011, p.39*
[38] *Ibid., p.38*

designed to manage the way global populations have been classified and reclassified by power (Mignolo 2000: 17).

The notion of "border thinking" that Mignolo (2000) developed became key to his decolonial project. It "brings to the foreground the irreducible epistemological difference between the perspective from the colonial difference and the forms of knowledge that, being critical of modernity, coloniality, and capitalism, remain "within" the territory, "in custody" of the "abstract universal"[39]. Borrowing from Abdelhebir Khatibi, "border thinking" is "another thinking"[40]. It "structures itself on a double consciousness, a double critique operating on the imaginary of…modernity/Coloniality [41].

Santos argues that a solution to epistemological dominance is "keeping distance." Keeping distance from Santos doesn't mean dumping the Western tradition and closing doors to the historical possibilities for the social emancipation of Western modernity but assuming Southern time, which sees no modern solutions to modern problems[42]. Keeping distance refers to the fact that there is a need to get closer to a subaltern, silenced, marginalized versions of modernity and rationality, not only non-western but also Western[43]. It calls for placing yourself "inside and outside of what you critique"[44]. He points to the impossibility of doing away with everything Western, hence the need to embrace what works for the subaltern

Grosfoguel and Mignolo argue that the idea of "postcolonial" is misleading since the struggle to decolonize is still underway. Both give primacy to the "epistemic decolonial" aspect, which is an interest in the knowledge dimension of decolonization. Grosfoguel calls the whole movement an "epistemic decolonial turn," which shifts the emphasis to the knowledge "subaternized" by Western modernity. Hence, Mignolo (2000) suggests that his book engages mainly two subjects: the historical subalternization of colonial modernities/ and the radical transformation of these (p.13). This "Subalternization," according to Grosfoguel (2007), is historical. There was a shift from the 16th century's rendering of "people without writing" to the 18th and 19th century "people without history," to the 20th century "people without development," and to the recent 21st century "people without democracy" (p.214). according to Grosfoguel (2007) and Mignolo (2000), postcolonial theorists are Eurocentric critics of Eurocentrism, regardless of the differences internal to postcolonial theory. The source of the charge is

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[39] *Mignolo, 2011, p.88*

[40] *Mignolo, 2011, p.68*

[41] *Mignolo, 2011, p.89*

[42] *Santos, 2012, p.45-46.*
[43] *Ibid, p.51*
[44] *Ibid.*

that many of these postcolonial thinkers built their models with the primacy of Western thinkers (Derrida, Foucault, and others).

By epistemology of the south, Santos calls for retrieval of new processes of production and valorization of valid knowledge, whether scientific or non-scientific, and the establishment of new relationships between different types of knowledge based on various "classes and social groups that faced capitalist and colonial oppression"[45]. Therefore, the epistemology of the South means trying to understand the world in ways beyond Western thinking and acknowledging world diversity. Decolonization of knowledge in a Santosian sense doesn't mean looking for alternatives but a search for an "alternative thinking of the alternatives"[46]. Is the global north and global south geographical or place-specific? Santos argues that either of the two can exist elsewhere. He argues that there can be a "global North in countries of the South, consisting of the local elites that take advantage of the production and reproduction of capitalism and colonialism," which he terms the "imperial South"[47]. Ramon Grosfoguel has given an account to elaborate on the link between knowing and place. He states that:

It is important to distinguish the *epistemic* location from the *social area*. Just because one is socially located on the oppressed side of power relations does not automatically mean that he/she is epistemically thinking from a subaltern epistemic location…[48].

The coloniality school of Mignolo and Grosfoguel provides a critique of decolonization, postmodernism, and postcolonial studies. Mignolo begins by providing us with a very profound debate between the subaltern studies group of South Asian and Latin Americans. The Latin American subaltern group is condemned for reproducing the area studies schema in their attempt to forge an alternative yet radical knowledge. On the other hand, the South Asian subaltern group is noted to have used Western epistemology by privileging Foucault and Gramsci. As the Latin American subaltern group sided with postmodern critique, the South Asian subaltern group provided a post-colonial critique. It is argued that postmodernism and poststructuralism reproduce the Western canon of thought and practice coloniality of knowledge and power.

Mignolo and Grosfoguel argue that colonialism at its best never ended with the colonial occupation and the attainment of independence. To them, global antecedents of coloniality can be traced from colonialism, but its definitions encompass culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production, among others, over and above the limits of colonial administration. They consider modernity

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[45] *Ibid., p.51*

[46] *Ibid., p.52*

[47] Ibid., p.53

[48] Grosfoguel, 2011, p.14

to be a representative, if not a twin, of coloniality with an implication that there is continued oppression and domination of racialized groups culturally, politically, socially, sexually, etc., outside the ambit of colonial administration. Mignolo states: "There is no modernity without coloniality, the coloniality of power underlines nation building in both local histories" of nations that "drafted global designs and those that accommodate themselves to global designs devised with them in mind but without their participation" (p.43). Therefore, for the dream of decolonization to come true, there is a need to break away from the narrow ways of thinking about colonial relations through the examination of "utopian alternatives" over and above the Eurocentric and "third-world fundamentalisms" (Grosfoguel, p.221). I find this critique not only speaking to postcolonial intellectuals but also to anti-colonial nationalists and intellectuals who only sought political independence by restoring power, ignoring other dimensions of colonialism that have remained to haunt the postcolonial state as if colonialists never "left."

What sparks my mind is their critique of European epistemology, which is assumed to be universal, neutral, and objective. They question the reason behind claims that Western knowledge is considered neutral and universal and other knowledge is considered peripheral and situated. To them, coloniality tries to show the imperial aspect of Western knowledge that has been erected, transformed, and circulated over the past 500 years. They state that the "coloniality of knowledge and of being" is hidden behind the merriment of epistemic disruptions and paradigmatic alterations. So, they argue that there is no single epistemic tradition from which to arrive at truth or universality, and so decolonization of knowledge is needed whereby the epistemic perspectives and insights of critical thinking from the "Global South" are also taken seriously. This is what they call "epistemic decolonial turn." This, however, has different names as Grosfoguel calls it body politics of knowledge looking at the locus of enunciation, and Mignolo calls it "border thinking." By border thinking as a new epistemology/ gnosis/ gnoseology, Mignolo calls for de-westernization by way of thinking from the exteriority of modern westernization itself. This implies that it is not thinking outside Western civilization and possibly capitalism but thinking in a sense of the outside, which is created in the process of creating the inside. Therefore, their decoloniality paradigm is a call that seeks another radical break from Western standards of knowledge to a broader yet global standard of thinking. However, the thinking should be that from the vantage point of a subaltern epistemic location and not a Eurocentric vantage point. I find them consenting that there are two modes of epistemology, i.e., the European epistemology and the subaltern epistemology. These are similar categories to those used by colonialists, i.e., north and south epistemologies. So, if one is to create knowledge, this must come from one of these epistemologies. This shows that they fall prey to the very categories they are critiquing, thus risking the attainability of their radical break, considered only two epistemic locations, ignoring other possibilities for "gnosis."

Does Mignolo call for a subaltern knowledge or a mix? Similarly, despite the authors making efforts in these well thought writings to show how the Western hegemonic school of thought made Western epistemology universal, objective, and neutral, I find them to equally follow the same footsteps by homogenizing the global south into a single epistemic position which ignores diversities and varying experiences of the global south. It is very clear that the worldwide south faced colonialism, but the experiences were not the same for instance, the Latin American experience may not have been the same with the South Asian experience and the African experience. It remains to doubt the possibility of universalizing the coloniality/decoloniality mode of thought in a homogenized way.

From the above lines, we can learn that knowing is not attributed to a specific territory but an identification with a particular epistemic perspective. Being in the South does not qualify you to be identified with a subaltern thinking. Experiences of marginalization are not automatic qualifiers of subaltern epistemic location. He distances himself from a body of knowledge that claims "epistemic populism," in which all knowledge produced from below can qualify as epistemic subaltern knowledge. Rather, he identifies himself with a line of thinking that argues that any epistemology is located in the dominant or subaltern position and power relations[49]. Such a relationship, he argues, is identical to the "geo- and body-politics of knowledge"[50]. I say that there is a need to think within the frame of the epistemology of the South and not from the South. This is because not all epistemologies from the South represent subaltern perspectives and interests. The decoloniality school leaves some questions that still require answers: how should we read the decoloniality within an African context? Is the global south/subaltern a homogenous category with similar experiences? Sabelo tries to provide answers to some of these questions.

Sabelo tries to re-contextualize the decolonial thought from the African vantage point. In his work on *the dynamics of epistemological decolonization in the 21st century towards epistemic freedom,* Sabelo introduces a pertinent concept of epistemic freedom as a tool for colonialism. With epistemic freedom, there is intellectual independence to engage in the process of production and reproduction of knowledge. In other words, intellectuals, scholars, theorists, and researchers have a right to think, theorize, communicate, and interpret the world from their locations[51]. By epistemic freedom, therefore, numerous forms of knowledge that enable people to make meaning, attach value to their lives, and make sense of the world must be recognized and appreciated. Sabelo tackles the epistemological challenges that continue to preoccupy Africa through his "triple process of provincializing Europe, de-provincializing

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[49] Ibid, p.14-15
[50] Ibid.
[51] Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni. *The dynamics of Epistemological Decolonisation in the 21st Century: towards epistemic Freedom* (Strategic Review for Southern Africa, Vol 40, No 1, 2018)

Africa and epistemological decolonization"[52]. Epistemological decolonization for him calls for de-provincializing Africa while provincializing Europe, and this is nothing more than a process of "moving the center"[53]. Provincialization of Europe debunks narratives that over-represented European epistemology and so an attempt to de-Europeanise the world. Through this, the imperial nature of Western thought can be challenged and neutralized[54].

Through a decolonial lens, Sabelo proposes five strategies that can be used to decolonize knowledge production both in Africa and across the globe. These include; "*return to the base/locus of enunciation; shifting the geo-and bio-of knowledge/moving the center; decolonizing the normative foundation of critical theory; rethinking thinking itself; and finally, learning to unlearn to relearn*"[55]. Sabelo invites us to appreciate the diverseness of forms of knowledge and knowing when engaging in decolonization. Attempting to provincialize Africa means trying to rethink the position in which its knowledge had been placed historically by the dominant canons of expertise from the West. In so doing, the decolonial process tries to deal with the problems caused by the metaphysical empire, i.e., "epistemicides, linguicides, cultural imperialism, and alienation"[56].

To deal with the problem of knowledge production, there is a need to "rethink thinking." Citing Cathrine and Howard, Sabelo narrates that rethinking thinking should "recognize the cultural asphyxiation of those numerous 'others' that have been the norm, and work to bring other categories of self-definition, of dreaming, of acting, of loving, of living into the commons as matter of universal concern"[57]. Within a decolonial logic, digging out the decolonial attitude is necessary for ensuring knowledge production. We should not think of human beings as only born in knowledge systems but also as "legitimate" thinkers, knowers and producers of knowledge[58]. Decolonisation equally needs to open up to new learning to "unlearn" for purposes of "relearning"[59]. This involves moving beyond the Western canon of knowledge and opening up the space for other pieces of knowledge and scholars beyond those from Euro-America. This project of rethinking thinking summons a shift in the "geography of reason"[60] and "unthinking" some epistemological assumptions that Eurocentrism has tainted.

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[52] Sabelo, *The dynamics of Epistemological Decolonisation,* 2018, p.17
[53] Sabelo, 2018, *p.17;* Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: J. Currey, 1986)

[54] Sabelo, 2018, p.17-18.
[55] Ibid., 16*ff*
[56] Ibid., p.19
[57] Sabelo, 2018, p.32
[58] Ibid., p.33
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] *Sabelo, 2018.*

When we think of epistemic decolonization, it has to be a double task, i.e., "deconstruction and reconstruction." This implies that we don't have to dismantle what has been miswritten, but we should take up the mantle to build and rebuild new and old stories. Sabelo avers that we should not only interrogate "distortions of people's life experiences, negative labeling, deficit theorizing, genetically deficient or culturally deficient models that pathologies the colonized other" but we should also endeavor to retell stories "of the past while envisioning the future"[61]. I argue that Sabelo doesn't attempt to provide a magic bullet to the epistemological challenges of Africa and the global south but points to some possible channels through which decolonization of knowledge production can be attained.

Suppose Sabelo and Mignolo invite us to deploy the ecology of knowledge and border thinking, respectively, as a way out to rethinking knowledge production. In that case, Santos summons us to post-abyssal thinking if we are to realize epistemological diversity and pluriversity[62]. Through this, there can be an interplay/interrelationship across all canons of knowledge, which can serve as a basis for debunking the "abyssal lines." Epistemological decolonizing necessitates thinking and acting beyond abyssal lines created by Western modernity. Santos illuminates that failure to appreciate such thinking will result in "derivative thinking" that will continue reproducing colonial/imperial logic[63].

Conclusion

In summing up this paper's engagement, decoloniality provides possible ways out of the enigma of the continuities of colonialism and coloniality of knowledge through the proposed "epistemic decolonial turn." Sabelo postulates the prerequisite to decolonize power, knowledge, and being through de-provincializing Africa and provincializing Europe by creating a pluriverse. He posits that the starting point to creating space for the interplay of numerous pieces of knowledge has to begin with the decolonization of knowledge itself[64]. Despite the decoloniality school providing a solution to coloniality, they don't deal with the question of history when it comes to Africa. I read them as if imagining the export of Latin American solutions to the rest of the global south, which may point to homogenization despite "Africa's" heterogeneity. Even Sabelo, who attempts to contextualize decoloniality to fit the African experience, doesn't do a theorization of the African experience. Epistemological decolonization necessitates creating space for displaying all forms of knowledge internationally, embracing the good elements, and rethinking available spaces for knowledge interaction. I argued that the decolonization of

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[61] *Sabelo, 2018, p.38.*
[62] *Santos 2007, p.11*
[63] *Ibid., p.26*
[64] *Sabelo, 2019.*

knowledge production shouldn't seek an authentic epistemology but open spaces for multiple knowledge.

Theorizing subaltern knowledge should focus on knowledge "of the South" and not "from the South.

Data availability
No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

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The author(s) declare that it is not applicable.

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