

Sociology Beyond Despair: Recovery of Nerve, Endogeneity, and Epistemic Intervention

Presidential Address
South African Sociological Association Annual Congress, 2005
The Renewal of Sociology in South Africa
University of Limpopo, Polokwane
26 June

‘Jimí O. Adésínà
Professor of Sociology
Department of Sociology, Rhodes University, Grahamstown
E-mail: j.adesina@ru.ac.za

1. Introduction

A Presidential Address has alternative directions in which it can go—it could address the state of the discipline or the scholarly community or it could serve as a platform for a pet conceptual concern of the President. The Address comes with the privilege of knowing that the audience is sworn to not argue with you or interrupt you with questions: a privilege we don’t get as teachers. If an Inaugural Lecture is earned as part of the privilege of occupying a Chair, and a Valedictory Lecture the benefit of age, a Presidential Address is an unparalleled privilege. It is the benefit of enormous honour one’s colleagues bestow, which in my case is even more compelling. I thank you for this.¹ The immediacy of the challenges that we face as a scholarly community as well as my epistemic inclinations suggest that I do both: reflection and push a pet idea.

In the context of the challenges that we face as a community, it is important to reflect on the sources of our despair—or what Alain de Botton calls *status anxiety*.² It is an anxiety driven by *status ambiguity*, in so far as they affect not only the sociological vocation but the institutional contexts in which we do Sociology. However, the optimist that I am, I think it is important to do Sociology beyond despair. This is not just an “optimism of the will” over the overwhelming odds that “the pessimism of the intelligence” might warn us against. It is that the grounds on which we stand, so to speak, are shifting so fast that the diagnostic claims of the

¹ Someone sent me a congratulatory message after our election in Bloemfontein to the effect of something being “earned”. My reply was that my election only points to the decency and expansive “spirit” that define the South African sociological community. For that I wish to express my appreciation again. Being the beneficiary of the generosity of others may be part of what is inherently “social” but not something to be taken for granted.

² Alain de Botton. 2004. *Status Anxiety*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

decline and demise of Sociology might be overdone.

More importantly, it is the optimism that we could make a difference—which after all is “why we became sociologists in the first instance”!³ If you are wondering if you are in the right conference and venue, please note that this was official a long-time ago—as Morris Janowitz said, “the natural history of sociology as a profession is the tradition of a liberal and “left of center” personal ideology among sociologists.”⁴ That, of course, was before “Liberal” became a swear-word, depending on whose party-ideological card you carry, and “Third Way” readers took out a copy-right on “left of centre”.

The theme for this Congress demands that we move beyond despair: combine the diagnostic with the prognostic but not to be bogged down in recriminations and despair; we seek to make a difference. If Sociology, as Bourdieu suggests, is a “discipline that makes trouble” then perhaps we should disturb our own complacency in order to instigate ourselves into self-reinvention. In seeking the pathway to doing sociology beyond despair, I will hang my discussion on three pegs: “recovery of nerve”, “endogeneity,” and “epistemic engagement”. It is a chain-process.

The “recovery of intellectual and political nerve” requires that we move beyond the ‘status anxiety’ that has shaped our vocation in the last decade—under the weight of institutional instability, pedagogic ambiguity, and dreams deferred. I do not wish to underplay the institutional constraints that we face, and focusing on them is vital for how we do sociology beyond despair. There is the imperative of the recovery of intellectual nerve at a different level: the need to transcend the status ambiguity and anxiety that so constrain much of our encounters with the world “centres” of power in the production of sociological knowledge. At the expense of sounding uncharitable—we need move beyond doing sociology as if we are marooned in Africa. This is not about race or disconnectedness from “Africa.” I could be making the same demand of a gathering of sociologists in Senegal, Nigeria or Kenya. It is about what Joseph Ki-Zerbo (the Burkinabe Historian) might call the imperative of **endogeneity**.⁵

Contrary to the false claims of universalism and unicity of Sociology⁶, endogeneity is fundamental to the canonical works of what we call western sociology.⁷ “Universal knowledge”,

³ Michael Burawoy, 2004. “For Public Sociology—2004 Presidential Address.” *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 70 (Feb), pp. 4-28.

⁴ Morris Janowitz. 1972. “Professionalization of Sociology.” *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 78, No. 1, p.105-135.

⁵ Joseph Ki-Zerbo. 1990. *Educate or Perish: Africa’s Impasse and Prospects*. Paris: UNESCO.

⁶ Cf: Martin Albrow. 1987. “Editorial: Sociology for one world.” *International Sociology*, Vol. 2, No.1; Margaret Archer. 1991. “Sociology for one world: unity and diversity—Presidential Address.” *International Sociology*, Vol. 6, No.2.

⁷ Jimi Adesina. 2002. “Sociology and Yorùbá Studies: epistemic intervention or doing sociology in the ‘ver-

as Archie Mafeje notes, “can only exist in contradiction.”⁸ More importantly, “to evolve lasting meanings, we must be ‘rooted’ in something.”⁹ It is precisely because Marx, Weber, and Durkheim were firmly rooted in their specific contexts that they produced the canonical works that we today consider essential to Sociology. Kwesi Prah reminded us of the words of Mao Tse Tung: “If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed.”¹⁰ Endogeneity, to be meaningful must, however, be profoundly epistemic, which brings us to the third peg: epistemic intervention rather than proselytizing and propagating received categories.

I am not suggesting that this will be easy or that there is an audience waiting out there with wide-open arms to received wisdom from the voices from the global South. The hostility to ventures in the so-called “indigenous Sociology” within the International Sociological Association is evidence enough of what to expect—not unless something dramatic has changed since Margaret Archer’s Presidential Address of 1991. Endogeneity of an epistemic type may help us address a growing crisis in our classrooms. We need to move beyond making aliens of our students—who sit through courses and with teachers whose epistemic gazes are firmly planted on the global North, and do little to acknowledge the collective memories and sense of being of our wards. The crisis of substituting knowledge propagation for knowledge reproduction is manifest in the heightened sense of being **objects** of knowledge production but not subjects; “onlookers... [and] mere props in the play being staged”, to paraphrase Ki-Zerbo.¹¹ I will argue, that such embeddedness and embracing is fundamental to what is often called Curriculum Transformation. The lesson from disciplines such as History, as Shula Marks reminds us, is that taking Africa seriously fundamentally altered Historiography globally.¹² If experience is anything to go by, our classrooms fill to bursting points when our students felt we helped them make sense of society; that “we explained *everything*.” May be not ‘everything’, but explained their sociational world sufficiently to uncover the hidden meanings of the familiar everyday rituals of existence, and more importantly, a sense of their own self-worth. That, I believe, is what was said of Herbert Vilakazi’s sociology classes in the University of Transkei in the 1980s, as of Richard Turner’s classes in political economy in the early 1970s.

Writing specifically on gender discourse, Oyeronke Oyewumi reminded us that “the analyses

nacular.” *African Sociological Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 91-114.

⁸ Archie Mafeje. 2000. “Africanity: A Combative Ontology”, *CODESRIA Bulletin* No. 1, p.67.

⁹ Mafeje, *ibid*, p.66.

¹⁰ Cited in Mafeje, *op.cit.*, p.67.

¹¹ Reported in *the Courier ACP-EU*, May-June 2001 (European Union)—Joseph Ki-Zerbo address at the Graduate Institute of Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland.

¹² Shula Marks. 2000. “The Role of the Humanities in Higher Education in South Africa.” Lecture 1: *Higher Education Lecture Series 2000*. Pretoria: Ministry of Education.

and interpretations of Africa must start with Africa.”¹³ Axiomatic, perhaps, but the bane of much that we present as scholarship. For us who are doing Sociology in Africa, that is the job! The imperative of “African Sociology” is something I will commend to you in the final segment of this Address. But let us return to the diagnostic.

2. A Genealogy of Despair: threat, constraints and ‘status anxiety’

In his 1997 Presidential Address, Ari Sitas—fortuitously our Keynote Speaker tonight—signalled a foreboding sense of disquiet with Sociology. “What is glaring” Ari Sitas argued “is not the presence of our Apartheid shackles but the absence of ‘discipline’ of sociology as a serious and coherent intellectual tradition.”¹⁴ Contrary to the current genealogy of despair, Sitas was not speaking simply of the pain inflicted by the deluge of Higher Education transformation agenda or the storming of our barricades by those who gleefully proclaimed the death of the emancipatory project—even before we could declare the birth of a new South Africa. Ari Sitas was reflecting on the preceding two-and-half decades. While, he argued, there are interesting narratives about the history of sociology and sociological associations, “there is very little in terms of a history of exemplary ideas.”¹⁵ The initial promises of “serious home-spun scholarship” in the two decades before the Durban strikes failed to take root locally. In contrast, more foundational works were done by exile scholars like Bernard Magubane, Archie Mafeje, John Rex, and Harold Wolpe. To this number, I might add Shula Marks, and my former teacher at Ibadan, Sam Nolutshungu. I am aware that Marks is a Historian and Nolutshungu, a Political Scientist; they nevertheless helped us to make sense of the sociational dimensions of existence.

In the years that followed, Sitas, argued, neither the sociology done in the university nor the sociological associations “managed... to distinguish itself as an intellectual, scholarly exercise.”¹⁶ Inside the universities Sociology—as Edward Webster noted—was done by “servants of power.” In and outside the universities, intrepid, “marginal and harassed groupings of left intellectuals” were emerging. Their intellectual agenda traversed Black Consciousness and Marxism of a wide-range. This dichotomy reflected the fault lines between SASOV and ASSA.¹⁷ In her 2003 SASA Presidential Address, Tina Uys provided glimpses of disconnected SASOV on the one hand, and an ASSA where debates resembled gladiatorial war-

¹³ Oyèrónké Oyèwùmi. 2004. “Conceptualising Gender: Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies” *in* O. Oyèwùmi, *et al* (ed) *African Gender Scholarship: concepts, methodologies and paradigms*. Dakar: CODESRIA.

¹⁴ Ari Sitas. 1997. “The waning of sociology in South Africa.” *Society in Transition*, Vol. 28, Nos 1-4, pp.12-19, (p.13).

¹⁵ Sitas, *ibid*. Endnote 2, p.18.

¹⁶ Sitas, *op.cit*. p.13.

¹⁷ SASOV: *Die Suid-Afrikaanse Socioloieverniging*; ASSA: *the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa*

fare.¹⁸ It was the period of the ascendance of what Hendricks called the “materialist broadside”¹⁹—a euphemism for Marxist discourse. It produced a flowering of publications, and sociology/sociologists as a “resource” for the emergent insurrectional forces, even if it was sociology of “a hybrid formation” defined by theoretical and methodological transdisciplinarity, and embodied in an intrepid collage of personalities that constituted what Sitas called the “intellectual formation”.

This familiar history is worth repeating because it has implications for how we understand the crisis. The waning of sociology that Sitas spoke about, is about the crisis of coherence and confidence that afflicted the sociological practice within the Left-leaning intellectual formation”, even as a “segment [was] attempting to build a professional career within the university systems.” In the homeland universities, the agenda of producing a compliant petty-bourgeois class for the greater Apartheid project never quite took-off. The spirit of insurrection that led to the victimisation of students stretched to sociologists like Herbert Vilakazi. He was arrested on 15 May 1984, and subsequently deported from the Transkei and dismissed from his post at the University of Transkei.²⁰

A sense of professional divide in sociology, as between the Afrikaans-medium, the English-speaking, and the homeland universities, also makes a single narrative difficult. Much of what counted as the decline or Hendricks more foreboding idea of the “fall of South African sociology”²¹ flows from assuming that the “insurrectional Sociology” of the late 1980s was emblematic of the sociological vocation in pre-1990 South Africa. We know it was not. This in itself is not the problem—moments that inspire us to reach beyond ourselves are episodic.²² We mark everything else by these episodic moments, which are signifiers of the Art of the Possible in us all.

I will suggest that the genealogy of the prevailing sense of status anxiety is marked as much by this marker as by a host of other things: the loss of institutional status within our university; the virulent questioning of the usefulness of what we do as ‘social scientists’; the reinvention of institutional policing and authoritarianism—that now speaks not the language of racial exclusivity and male dominance, but the language of the market: competitiveness, effi-

¹⁸ Tina Uys. 2004. “In Defence of South African sociology.” *Society in Transition*, Vol.35, No.1, p.4.

¹⁹ Fred Hendricks. 2004. “The Rise and Fall of South African Sociology” in F. Hendricks (ed.) *The Social Sciences in South Africa Since 1994: Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary Areas of Study*. AISA Research Paper No. 74. Pretoria: AISA.

²⁰ Edward Webster. 2004. “Sociology in South Africa: its past, present and future.” *Society in Transition*, Vol.35, No.1, pp. 27-41. Personal communication: Herbert Vilakazi (June 2005).

²¹ Hendricks, “The Rise and Fall...” *op.cit.*

²² Such episodic instances include the 1871 Paris Commune (March 26 to May 28), the 1956 Women’s March on the Union Building, the 1906 Bambata Rebellion or one long day of queuing to vote for the first time on 27 April 1994.

ciency in pecuniary terms, and customer satisfaction. The community that inspired the insurrection sociology has also fragmented and the revolution seems to be eating its own children, while the smart ones defect to the side of Capital. For those of us who mark our scholarship by working class discourse and the insurgent “urban-poor” this must be the ultimate irony and the sense of loss is grave indeed. However, as John Lennon reminded us: “Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans.” And we did not plan for a post-Apartheid South Africa enveloped in the cold climate of Neoliberalism.

The above, I will suggest, is only one side of the Cubic Cube that our reality seems to have become, and it is our business as sociologists to acknowledge these multiple terrains of living and engagement. My epistemic predisposition is to recognise the mutual embeddedness of seemingly contradictory forces. I will briefly touch two: to the either side of the insurrectional “intellectual formation.”

Capital and academia are considered emblematic of “white” power under Apartheid. Universities, like high Capital of the mining sector, constitute the concentration of different types of Capital—one cultural and educational; the other financial. Both are inscribed with power: “power over,” and “power to.” The Malegapuru Makgoba Affair at the University of the Witwatersrand, Mahmood Mamdani’s at the University of Cape Town, and the Rob Shell Affair at Rhodes University point to differential deployment of the entrenched “power-over” and the “power-to”—of political power that can be deployed with considerable ruthlessness against dissent, and these are only three instances of victims that are drawn from across the racial-lines. The furore unleashed at the University of Stellenbosch over the honorary award for Bram Fischer is testimony to the depth of feeling against one of the most remarkable victims of the Apartheid Regime. Like High Capital, the repositories of Cultural Capital in the higher education sector have escaped the public reckoning that the dispensable perpetrators and enforcers of the racist order, faced at the TRC hearings.

Today “whiteness” in South Africa produces a dimension of status ambiguity—of citizenship and belonging. To be lumped with the cultural and coercive enforcers of Apartheid or its beneficiaries, on the basis of pigmentation, especially for those with personal lifelong commitment to the liberation project, is sordid indeed. It generates a private sense of status ambiguity and anxiety. The anger reflected in the response of Robert Morrell²³ and Michael Morris²⁴ to Makgoba’s “white male baboons” newspaper article²⁵ is indicative of this.

²³ Robert Morrell (01 April 2005), “White, male, democrat, African,” *Mail&Guardian* (Mail&Guardian online www.mg.co.za. Accessed 10 June 2005).

²⁴ Mike Morris (12 April 2005), “It’s my country and I’ll whinge if I want to,” *Mail&Guardian* (Mail&Guardian online www.mg.co.za. Accessed 10 June 2005).

²⁵ Malegapuru Makgoba (25 March 2005), “Wrath of dethroned white males,” *Mail&Guardian*.

In the face of persistent demand for transformation and claims of affirmative action, the instability in the Higher Education system combines private troubles with public ones: sociology as C Wright Mills noted is at the intersection of biography and history. Where those who were historically locked out are banging on the door to be allowed inside, many will feel the sense of being beleaguered. The increasing valorisation of various ethno-religious and class identities would seem to reinforce a new sense of fragmentation and despondence among sections of people who considered themselves co-victims of the Apartheid racial order. This is an added area of sociological concern.

I will suggest that these status ambiguity and anxiety produce their valence at the discipline's coal-face. This intersection of biography and history and the loss of confidence that Ari Sitas highlighted among the insurrectional intellectual formation—following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc—and the implications for Sociology, had very little to do with the immediacy of the Higher Education reform programme and launching of GEAR; indeed, it predated these two events. Yet the implications for Sociology were enormous.

There is of course another dimension to South Africa. If, as with most things about popular discourse, the idea that “South Africa [is] alive with possibilities” seems a partial narrative, it does capture the existential location of most South Africans—both in material and affective terms. Yesterday was indeed another country.²⁶ And the affective is not irrational, contrary to what Rational-Actor Sociologists since Weber might assume. That we can go into the same restaurant together, share the same neighbourhood, vote in the same election are not just the illusions of the masses or the opiate of the poor. Here old and new forms of status ambiguity and anxiety, and social exclusion remain. At a societal level, the colour of poverty remains predominantly “black.” There are persistent concerns that the institutional culture in our universities are largely unreformed, or changing too slowly; that university education is still about inviting black students to “ascend” to a particular “European culture”; that racial and gender glass ceilings persist; and that many students are denied access based on class status—which largely still coincides with race. These create their senses of status anxiety and ambiguity, of belonging in our universities, with a different intersection of the private and the public dimensions of being.

2.2. Sociology in the University-context: threat and constraints

But let me return to a few institutional-specific threats that have a bearing on the sociological enterprise. The first wave of these changes, directly relevant to Sociology, involves the

(Mail&Guardian online www.mg.co.za. Accessed 10 June 2005).

²⁶ Alistair Sparks. 1995. *Tomorrow is another Country: the inside story of South Africa's negotiated settlement*. Jeppesstown: Jonathan Ball.

adoption of the National Qualification Framework and the programme-based education. The idea that the purpose of higher education is to produce a labour force with “market-required” practical skills has led to a narrow and counterproductive (mis)-reading of the *raison d’être* of higher education, generally, and universities, in particular. The result is the perception that social science and humanities subjects (other than Economics, which resides in Commerce faculties) are a luxury that a post-Apartheid South Africa could least afford.

2.2.1. Organisational and Content Issues in Sociology

In several universities, departments of Sociology were closed down and reassembled under Schools or programmes. In several cases sub-themes within Sociology were dispersed across several Programmes as modules which re-emerged as cogs in the wheel of ‘market-defined’ skill-specific training. Even in the universities that retained their departments of Sociology, a fundamental reworking of the curriculum took place. More conceptual and methodological focuses of the discipline were replaced with vocational orientation and ‘sexy’ courses that many thought would appeal to students in order to boost enrolment. The attempt to boost student enrolment has resulted in further retreat into courses with a focus on immediate gratification, and led to withdrawal from teaching fundamental conceptual and methodological skills.

The displacement of more fundamental conceptual and methodological-focused pedagogy has had the ironic effect of undermining the very skills essential to a post-colonial context: the requirement of epistemological endogeneity, commensurate with a shift from a colonial higher education system to a national system. While practical skills are important, the promise of Sociology is to arrive at such skills by developing critical and foundational capacity to think; to research and to analyse all things social. The value of Sociology for policy is precisely in the depth of the cognitive and conceptual skills that it fosters, which takes us beyond the ‘taken for granted’ understanding social relationship; it is about teasing out the sociational underpinnings of ostensibly non-sociological issues.

The closure of discipline-based department or their folding-off under Schools and Programmes derived from the idea that interdisciplinarity is the only basis for engineering an HE sector that is responsive to the post-Apartheid national project. However, in making the case for interdisciplinarity, this wave of reform in the higher education sector confused research programmes (which are necessarily interdisciplinary) with the project of educating people, which requires strong conceptual skills. The latter is inherently disciplinary. **Interdisciplinarity works precisely because the contributing disciplines bring their complementary strengths to the table.**

2.2.2. Teacher Accountability, Quality Assurance, and Bureaucratic Policing

Two further threats warrant our attention. Across many of our universities new structures have emerged whose remit is “quality assurance” in the area of teaching—with a growing army of enforcers. Although premised on the need to give teaching at the university level professional competencies, the underlining assumption is that formalised training of teachers is the answer to “bad teachers” in the university—which is all well and good until you take a closer look by what all these mean.

The “higher education reforms” of the 1980s—from the UK to Australia—was driven by the new political agenda of those who considered the university the haven of a leisure class tainted by left-wing tendencies. In much of the popular discussion at the time, you got the impression that university teachers worked for two to three hours in a week and spent the rest idling away nurturing a counter-culture project. The “reform” was part of reining-in of the leisure class and subjecting it to the same logic of the market that other sectors of society have to bear. That much of this was driven by failed/wannabe intellectuals, is less known.

There is a further issue. Central to the narratives of the “quality assurance” in teaching is a misrepresentation of the essence of teaching at the university level—conflating it with teaching at the primary and secondary levels. There is no doubt that university teachers, like all teachers, share a common ethos. But there are several other characteristics unique to the university context.

For the university teacher, the link between research and teaching is distinct: it is about placing our students at the cutting edge of the debate in the subject area. Universities are or should be driven by something equally: the issue of being *inter silvas Academi*—being *among the grooves of the academe*. Let me illustrate a defining moment in my university education experience. It was about 8pm on a walkway behind the university library at Ibadan. I was walking with Omafume Onoge—teacher, mentor and a brilliant sociologist—and we were engrossed in a discussion, whose subject I no longer remember. In the middle of the discussion, he stopped, asked me to repeat something I said a second earlier. When I finally did, he exclaimed: “You know, I never thought of it that way!” This was Omafume Onoge, and I a lowly 2nd year undergraduate. Among other things, it was a moment that taught me that true scholarship requires humility; but it was an incident that boosted my self-confidence, as well! But here is the twist: Onoge is someone who would not brook intellectual laziness and sloppy thinking—and my ear rang a few times with his charge of “Rigour, Jimi, Rigour!” These are aspects of teacher/student interaction that far transcend the 45 minute-lecture room contact. Yet something totally at odds with the commodity discourse of

current quality assurance procedures, where the student is a customer.

A central instrument in teacher accountability and getting a customer feed-back is the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) instruments. But what do we know of SETs? Nowhere are SETs more widely used—form the basis of tenure and personal promotion—than the United States. A study by the American Academy of Arts & Sciences reported that “grades were significantly correlated with students ratings of faculty performance... courses with higher grades received higher evaluation [and that] faculty members who were ‘easy graders’ received better evaluations”²⁷ This is part of what Goldman called “the betrayal of the gatekeepers.”²⁸ Delucchi and Pelowski asked the question: “are we being rated as effective teachers because we promote student learning, or because we have become more ‘likeable’?”²⁹ Researches reported by Delucchi and Pelowski and Rosovsky and Hartley show that content has suffered (become ‘watered down’) and the concern, especially at lower echelons of the academic ladder, is increasingly more with being liked, yet “effective teaching... must be defined as promotion of student learning.” Excessive dependence on SETs as a measure of teaching effectiveness is therefore not only suspect, in terms of content validity, it promotes “student consumerism in higher education.”³⁰

Added to these are profound methodological issues that many of the quality assurance units are ill-equipped to address. At the heart of opinion surveys/polls are two fundamental questions: *reliability* and *validity*. Methodologically, we know that gender matters in research; as does race,³¹ and their implications are quite profound, given the implicit assumption that comments that students enter into SET questionnaires are *necessarily* valid. When a black female teacher receives a comment that she is an “affirmative action” teacher, is that about her gender and race or her effectiveness as a teacher? When a group of 1st Year students complain that they do not understand the accent of a senior “black South African” Law pro-

²⁷ Rosovsky, H. and Hartley, M. 2002. *Evaluation and the Academy: are we doing the right things? Grade inflation and Letters of Recommendation*. Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts & Sciences, p.9.

²⁸ Goldman, L. 1985. “The betrayal of the Gatekeepers: Grade Inflation.” *Journal of General Education* 37 (2): 97-121.

²⁹ Delucchi, M and Pelowski, S. 2000. “Liking or Learning? the effect of instructor likeability and student perceptions of learning on overall rating of teaching ability.” **Radical Pedagogy**, Vol.2 No.2. (http://www.radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue2_2/delpel.html) (Accesses 13 Nov 2003).

³⁰ Delucchi and Pelowski, *ibid*.

³¹ Kane, E. and Macaulay, L.J. 1993. “Interviewer Gender and Gender Attitudes.” **Public Opinion Quarterly**, Vol. 57 No.1; Cavendish, R. 1982. **Women on the line**. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.; Roberts, H. (ed.). 1981. **Doing Feminist Research**. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Egharevba, I. 2001. “Researching an-‘other’ minority ethnic community: reflections of a black female researcher on the intersections of race, gender and other power positions on the research process.” **International Journal of Social Research Methodology** 4 (3) 225-241; Hendrix, K.G. 2002. “‘Did being Black introduce bias into your study?’: attempting to mute the race-related research of Black scholars.” **The Howard Journal of Communications** 13: 153-171; Adesina, J.O. 1992. “Doing workplace study: reflections on a field research” in Dafe Otobo (ed.), **Further readings in Nigerian Industrial Relations**. Lagos/Oxford: Malthouse Press.

fessor—who is from the region in which the university is situated—are we dealing with teacher effectiveness or the racial prejudice of the students? Does the failure to address these methodological problems not give rise to a range of unintended consequences—providing a platform that encourages the persistence of racist and sexist bigotry?

I will argue that **the new “quality assurance” enforcement regime is producing the very opposite of what it claims at its objective!** Rather than promoting teacher effectiveness, it is promoting the “teacher likeability” effect. University education suffers as a result and Sociology by implication. A combination of a consumerist orientation to education by students, grade chasing, competition for a small pool of students, and SETs may be impacting negatively on teacher effectiveness in maintaining discipline in the class and promoting education, in its foundational sense. Rather than promoting a passion for teaching and research, what is emerging is a very instrumental approach to what should be second nature to the way we practice our vocation: our passion for teaching.

2.2.3 Rating System

At the other end is the new framework for NRF-rating for researchers in the Humanities. Again, the problem may be less with rating per se, but the crisis of appropriateness of the model. The model in use, in spite of claims that it has been refined to suit the social sciences, imposes a ‘Natural Science’ model on the Humanities. Scholarship and research output in the natural sciences revolve around a laboratory, which brings the senior researcher together with research students, post-doctoral students, and junior academic researchers. The work of this production colony is defined by the research focus of the leader. The productivity of the laboratory is the result of a sociational dynamics within the colony—with a clearly defined leader, subalterns, and junior workers, who are under training; a clear division of labour. The productivity of everyone, and the leader more so, depends on keeping everyone in line and getting the production belt moving. The colony functions in intense competition with similar colonies elsewhere. The output of the research student is directly attributable to the leader or anyone else who might have made some contribution to the value-chain. A doctoral candidate is expected to publish several papers out of the research work as evidence of the acknowledgement of their scholarship by a wider community of scholars; again with the supervisor’s names on the papers. When the leader of the laboratory receives an honour for the work of the colony, it is understood that it is for the whole colony—and the career of a junior member is enhanced by such association.

The problem is that the Humanities work on a completely different logic. Laboratories of the nature mentioned above are rare; acknowledgement of contribution to a research work is

normally reserved for the footnotes; there is intense discouragement of multiple authorship beyond three; your research students are not required to put your name on their research work—even if you spent weeks reading, correcting, suggesting structural changes and complete reworking of the entire thesis. Collaboration is often more informal than structural. Scholars in the Humanities are as oriented towards journal articles as they are towards books—indeed books are valued more than journal outputs: something inadequately understood in current SAPSE subsidy system, but suitable for the natural sciences.

It is rather trite to argue with assessment as such—that happens within the university, every time you go for promotion. My sense is that the unintended consequences of the current NRF rating system will outweigh the intended benefits; scholarship broadly may be damaged; fragmentation and isolation may in fact deepen in the search for impact. Again we return to the issue of appropriateness of model.

3. Sociology Beyond Despair

In spite of all we've said so far, however, if Sociology were a person she might respond like Mark Twain (Samuel L Clemens) that “the report of my death has been grossly exaggerated.”³² I will highlight four dimensions of this.

First, as mentioned earlier, much of what is considered the highpoint of South African sociology is the praxis of a part of the whole. As inspiring as episodic historic instances are, they are statistical outliers of human behaviours and not exclusively sociological. Outliers are not a good guide to everyday existence, and many of insurrectional intellectuals might consider their works aspects of Political Economy, History or Politics, rather than Sociology.

Second, most of the major personalities that were practicing sociologists then are still active in doing Sociology today.³³ Indeed, several of them are with us at this Congress. I suspect that when we talk of the size of the old ASSA, we might be confusing those who gravitated towards it, as the spaces of hope and intellectual freedom, with actually practicing Sociologists.

Third, the travails that we inscribe to Sociology, as signifiers of its decline, crisis, or fall, cut across the Humanities. Compared with several other disciplines like Anthropology, History, Geography, and Philosophy, Sociology is actually in a more robust state than we are inclined to admit. There are clear evidence of return even where departments fragmented into pro-

³² Albert B. Paine. 1912. *Mark Twain: a biography* Vol. 2. New York: Harper & Bros, p. 1039

³³ Ari Sitas (op cit, p.16) listed, among others E. Webster, J. Maree, D. Bonin, D. Posel, J. Cock, Walker, Bozzoli, A. Desai, F. Hendricks, D. Pillay, G. Mare, and A. Sitas. Others include Ken Jubber, and Janis Grobelaar.

grammes.

The anxiety about the future (indeed the nature of Sociology) is neither new nor peculiarly South African. A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of being invited to address a conference of Journalism and Media Studies teachers. If we thought we have manic depressive status anxiety, you should have seen these people. Further, the contestation over the future of Sociology is not an evidence of crisis. I suspect that the problem is that we take the Kuhnian claims about *normal science*—with its assured boundaries, canons, and focus—too seriously for our own good! Not even Economics is immune from the contestation of its *raison d'être*.

I am not sure this is necessarily indicative of crisis—what constitutes the canons, the ends of our studies may vary according to our political and existential locations. John Scott's³⁴ recent "reflections of disciplinary specialisation and fragmentation" put these in dramatic terms. On the one extreme, you have the "Comtean view that sociology is the supreme scientific achievement and stands above physics and biology in a hierarchy of all the sciences."³⁵ On the other extreme is "the view that sociology is a mere parasite or scavenger living on bodies of knowledge generated elsewhere."³⁶ Somewhere in between these extremes "is the view of sociology as the central social science." This was not a discussion about South African sociology but British Sociology between 1950 and 1980! Theodor Adorno gave a series of lectures, seventeen in all, between 23 April and 11 July 1968, to a hall packed with eager students, all held in the early evenings, and he would not even give the definition of Sociology. These lectures were published as Adorno's *Introduction to Sociology*.³⁷

In the context of post-colonial Africa, the intensity of the debate over Sociology (and sometimes Social Anthropology) ranges from Ben Magubane's "Crisis in African Sociology" (1968) and Omafume Onoge's "Revolutionary Imperatives in African Sociology" (1971), to the debate around Akínsolá Akiwowo's ventures in indigenising Sociology.³⁸ What Magubane refers to as "African Sociology" is probably better referred to as "Colonial Sociology in Africa". From C Wright Mills to Alvin Gouldner, Talcott Parson's hold on the discipline was always subject to contestation. The point I wish to make here is that if we were to operate on a wider

³⁴ John Scott. 2005. "Sociology and Its Others: Reflections on Disciplinary Specialisation and Fragmentation." *Sociological Research Online*, Volume 10, Issue 1, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/1/scott.html>. para 2.1.

³⁵ Scott, *ibid*, para 2.1.

³⁶ Scott, *op.cit*, para 1.2.. Cf. John Urry. 1981. "Sociology as a Parasite: some vices and virtues" in Philip Abrams, *et. al.* (eds) *Practice and Progress: British Sociology, 1950-1980*. London: George Allen Unwin.

³⁷ Theodor W. Adorno. 1993. *Introduction to Sociology*. (Edited by Christoph Gödde, translated by Edmund Jephcott). Oxford: Polity Press.

³⁸ Ben Magubane. 2000. "Crisis in African Sociology" in *African Sociology: towards a critical perspective*. NJ: Africa World Press, Ch 1 (originally published in 1968 *East Africa* 5(12) Dec, pp.21-40; Omafume Onoge. 1977. "Revolutionary Imperatives in African Sociology" in PCW Gutkind & P. Waterman (eds), *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader* [Written in 1974]; for the Akiwowo debate see my "Sociology and Yoruba Studies: epistemic intervention or doing Sociology in the vernacular."

canvass we might have persuaded ourselves to the position that the ebbs and flows in a discipline like Sociology is not evidence of 'death', 'fall' or whatever else we might want to call it; it is not even an evidence of a discipline that is yet to attain maturity. We might want to take Pierre Bourdieu's words to heart: Sociology is an "undisciplined discipline"—in the sense that it does not sit easily with the kind of homologous paradigm that Kuhn characterised as evidence of a *normal science*!

3.1. The recovery of intellectual nerve

If we return to the central issue of the need to reinvigorate the content of our discipline as we try to produce the next generation of Sociologists, I will highlight three developments since 2004 that may suggest that we are coming out of the nightmare created by the banality of instrumentalist abuse of university education; confusing training for education. As Tina Uys noted in her 2003 Presidential Address, the universities that "dragged their feet" regarding the headlong dash into the abyss of programme-based education are the ones who have come out stronger. The Humanities at Rhodes University is witnessing unprecedented growth, so much so that the university has had to cap admission. The three developments that I mentioned signal a return to strong conceptual grounding, the re-affirmation of the value of disciplinarity, and more importantly, that university education is not about vocational-skill training.

The first concerns the Council on Higher Education's 2004 Report, *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy*. The report argued that higher education institutions "have a critical role to play in developing solutions to 'real world' problems through research that supports innovation, as well as through sustaining disciplinary knowledge foundations which underpin interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary knowledge production."³⁹ Indeed, as we argued earlier, interdisciplinarity works because the contributing disciplines bring to the table their distinct strengths. Central to the report is the idea of education as a public good. This is not new at the CHE, but the significance is in linking this idea with that of a return to fundamental epistemological concerns.

Second, in July 2004 the Ministry of Education released a draft discussion document on the higher education qualification framework.⁴⁰ Unlike the earlier excessive focus on programmes, the document emphasizes disciplinarity and discipline-based competences. The qualification descriptors, in setting out the purpose of a Bachelor's Degree emphasises "a

³⁹ Council on Higher Education. 2004. *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy*. CHE: Pretoria, p.17.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Education. 2004, *The Higher Education Qualifications Framework: Policy issues under the Higher Education Act, Act No. 101 of 1997*. Pretoria.

well-rounded, broad education... [emphasizing] principles and theory.”⁴¹ The purpose of a Honours degree is “to develop research capacity in the methodology and techniques of [the] discipline. Honours degrees should demand “a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence.”⁴² The document further notes that “the primary purposes of a Master’s Degree are to educate and train researchers who can **contribute to the development of knowledge at an advanced level.**” The requirement is “a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence.”

Third, in June 2005, the Presidency released a discussion document titled “The challenges facing higher education in South Africa.” In contrast to earlier demands for market-specific skills in the graduates, the document argued that the nature of knowledge and technology is changing so fast that what is needed “are persons with very high levels of generic knowledge... People have to be exposed to the education process for longer to acquire such levels of specialised knowledge.”⁴³ More significantly, is what the document persistently referred to as the epistemological question. It defined the primary challenge as that of a need for a shift in self-designation: from being on the periphery of global knowledge production system; a shift from being consumers and propagators of knowledge to **producers** of knowledge, in a foundational sense.

This brings us to the final segment of my Address—endogeneity as the basis for epistemic engagement with knowledge production.

3.2. Endogeneity and Epistemic Issues in Knowledge Production

I wish to anchor my discussion here on three core idea: endogeneity, Africanity, and African Sociology.

3.2.1 Africanity, Identity and Scholarship

Given the racial classificatory system the word “African” may suggest something exclusionary. **Africanity**, I should emphasize, arose out of a different historical conjuncture and has a different meaning. Africanity arose from a “historically-determined rebellion against the domination of others.”⁴⁴ What is significant, in the 20th century Africa and its Diaspora is the double-logic of its formation and expression. On the one hand, across the continent—from Tunis to Cape Town; from Cape Verde to Mauritius—was a forging of bonds of shared iden-

⁴¹ Ibid, p.24.

⁴² Ministry..., *op.cit.* p.26.

⁴³ The Presidency. 2005. “The Challenges Facing Higher Education in South Africa: Discussion Points” June, para. 38.

⁴⁴ Archie Mafeje. 2001. “Africanity: a commentary by way of conclusion”. **CODESRIA Bulletin** Nos. 3 & 4, p.16.

tity defined by opposition to the imperial order. What is important is that skin tone and pigmentation have very little to do with Africanity and African identity. It was this that defined several leading figures in the anti-colonial struggles: a host of individuals from Ahmed Ben Bella to Patrice Lumumba; Kwame Nkrumah and Gamal Nasser. It mattered little that neither of the pair could have been defined as belonging to the same racial category. As Mafeje reminds us when Patrice Lumumba was murdered his family found home in Egypt. Lest this be seen as a romanticised misconception of an episodic instance in the national liberation project in Africa, I will like to draw attention to Africa's continental organisation of social scientists, CODESRIA. When Mahmood Mamdani was elected the President of CODESRIA, in 1998, it was irrelevant that his progenitors were Punjabi immigrants. He is a Ugandan colleague and comrade.

Put differently, our shared sense of Africanity—hence, African identity—is not purely a matter of progenitors, descent, pigmentation or morphological differences. Ruth First did not enter Mozambique as a European; she did as an African! Being African is not a matter of pigmentation or location: it is about being *self-referentially* “African”—it is *a commitment to Africa*. It is possible to be physically located in Africa but not be *of* Africa; it is possible to be physically located outside Africa but be self-referentially *African*.

Africanity, Endogeneity and Scholarship: Lessons from History

The discipline of History offers us an important example of the value of endogeneity driven by a commitment to our locale. Three schools of history are emblematic of this: the Ibadan School, the Dakar School, and the Dar-es-salaam School.

Central to the colonial historiographic project was the idea that Africa (and Africans) had no history before its encounter with *mercantilist Europe*. The challenge of the Ibadan School and Onwuka Dike—who founded and nurtured it—was fundamentally about the content of scholarship and relevance to national rather than imperial aspirations. What emerged was the *Ibadan School of History*.

I argued elsewhere⁴⁵ that while the Ibadan School of History displaced and discredited racist colonial historiography, it did not transcend received historiography: it did History as the history of great men, and sometimes great women. Nevertheless, its enduring contribution was in the *will* to give an African content and focus to the discipline of History. It gave second generation, post-colonial students like myself a sense of connection: the ‘stories’ I read were

⁴⁵ J. Adesina. 2001. “Sociology and Yorùbá Studies: epistemic intervention or doing sociology in the vernacular?” *Annals of the Social Science Academy of Nigeria*. No.13. A shorter version was published in *African Sociological Review* Vol. 6. No.1 (2002).

my stories, told by my people for my people! I did not encounter history as something alienating and disconnecting from my pre-school Self and self-worth. University was an inspiring continuation of what I learnt on the knees of my grandmother.

The Dar-es-Salaam School of History took historiography beyond history as the stories of great men and sometimes great women. In historiographic terms, the problematic that the Dar School contended with was, to paraphrase it: Who built the pyramids? Surely it was not the Pharaohs! Who writes the stories of the thousands of labourers, the architects, and so on that put up the structures? It was a search for history not simply as the stories of great men/women but of ordinary people as well. The Dar School sought to write history in a counter-hegemonic manner; to do history with a class attitude, but a class rooted in Africanity.

Cheikh Anta Diop's (1923—1986) scholarship defined the Dakar School. Diop's Africanity was shaped by what he considered the falsification of Egyptian history. As founder of the Radiocarbon Laboratory at the *Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* (IFAN) at the University of Dakar, his concern was to apply the tools of science to valorise African-centred historiography. IFAN and History remain central to University of Dakar's self-identity. It is a measure of the national prestige of Professor Diop that the university where he worked most of his life was renamed *Cheikh Anta Diop University* in his memory.

Three clusters, three methodological, and three epistemic foci; but all driven by a shared commitment to their locales. For each, Africa is the locale. I wish to argue that local relevance is never at odds with global and rigorous scholarship and being internationally reputable. The impact of taking endogeneity seriously enough to create *African Historiograph(ies)* has been fundamental. As Shula Marks noted:

The eminent historian, Steve Feierman, goes even further insaying that the study of African history has transformed the nature of our subject, not only by revealing that 'what was thought to be universal history was in fact very partial and selective', but in destabilising the very categories of analysis and periodisation of world history which have derived from European experience: the state, slavery, the impact of capitalism—one could go on and on. African history has also showed with exceptional clarity the value of oral history, historical archaeology and historical linguistics in revealing the history not only of preliterate peoples in Africa (and elsewhere) but also of all those many silent people who left no written record, and have generally been hidden from history, transforming our notion of agency and of geographical boundaries. As a result, African history—like gender his-

tory—is not an optional, multicultural add-ons; as Feierman says, it changes ‘our understanding of general history, and of Europe’s place in the world, in profound ways’. Ultimately, Feierman sees a connection between the ‘crisis of historical representation that came about when historians began to hear the voices of those who had been voiceless and the more general epistemological crisis affecting all the sciences and humanities.’”⁴⁶ (Underline mine.)

3.2.2. Endogeneity and Epistemic Engagement: doing African Sociology

The epistemological impact of doing African history, from the point of view of Africans—regardless of the location among the three historiographic schools mentioned earlier—produced a foundational impact that changed the way historians approached their subject-matter globally. This is what I mean when I use ‘endogeneity’ and ‘epistemic engagement’ or intervention as a bounded idea. I will commend this to how we do Sociology. Again to reiterate the injunctions mentioned earlier: “to evolve lasting meanings, we must be rooted in something”; and “if what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed.”

Doing African Sociology rather than sociology in Africa does not seem to come easy to many of us. Again, the concept of ‘status anxiety’ is important: an anxiety driven by what we think the sociological establishment of the global North will say of us. Let me illustrate. Sometime in 2001, I raised this as part of a broader discussion of how we understand and operationalize “indigenous knowledge.” I presented an outline of what I referred to African Sociology from the perspective of distilling epistemological guidelines from an African ontological narrative. My colleague listened attentively, paused for sometime. He was puzzled..., and then he said: “But that won’t be Sociology.” I asked, why not. His response was “But where is Weber; where is Marx or Durkheim?” Last year, on the same broad topic, I mentioned the imperative of “African Sociology” to another colleague. His response was “Where is our Weber?” It raises foundation issues in how we teach and were taught Sociology. In both cases, my question was: “Is Sociology the specific ideas of a dead “sociologist” or a distinct approach to the study of society?”

The incredulity that I have encountered is something of a puzzle—Marx was never self-consciously or otherwise a sociologists. We made sociology out of his works. Weber’s case is no less a paradox. Weber never took a degree in Sociology—indeed his training and university teaching career were in Law and Economics. His work, which we claim for ourselves as the *magnum opus*, “Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism” was conceived as an

⁴⁶ Shula Marks, *op. cit.* p.10.

exercise in Economic History *not* as a sociological enquiry. Except for a 9-month period in 1918, when he occupied a “specially created chair of sociology” in Vienna, Weber held no Sociology appointment.⁴⁷ Weber left the Vienna post to take the chair of economics in Munich! Donald MacRae speculated that Weber took the Vienna post, in the first instance, to be with a lover.⁴⁸ It was as if, at the first opportunity—given his long absence from a university position before the Vienna position, on account of illness—Weber was returning to his first love. While he joined the German Sociological Society in 1909⁴⁹ there is no evidence that he played any active part in it. Weber the exemplar sociology is a manufactured personality, and posthumously, by those who wanted him for Sociology! The trinity of Sociology—the three dead, male, continental Europeans—is largely Anthony Giddens’, and an arbitrary selection at that.

My point is not to suggest that Weber or Marx have no relevance for Sociology, which will be preposterous. The point is the ‘sociological Marx’ and Weber, the ‘exemplar sociologist’, are the constructions of sociologists. We only need to look at Talcott Parson’s works to see how syncretism can be mistaken for genius—and he straddled our discipline for a few decades. There are, I will argue, several ‘potential’ candidates for similar adoption if we only look hard. Top on my list will be Amilcar Cabral. What constitutes the “cannons” of Sociology is not axiomatic or immutable—a brief history of western sociology will demonstrate how individuals deified as canonical, changed. There is an added aspect. Consider the idea of ‘structure’/‘agency’, whose use in *sociologese* (Sociology-speak), has become a signifier of those who are card-carrying party members of Sociology—to whose version of this idea do we subscribe: Giddens’ or Bourdieu’s? The meaning and effect of structure/agency are diametrically opposed. Giddens’ ‘structuration theory’ disguises and obfuscates real, existing power relations in society and the mechanisms of domination; for Bourdieu exposing hidden networks of interest, power and domination is the *raison d’être* of Sociology!

But there is a second aspect to the status anxiety. It is as if we were invited from the farm to be a guest at the sumptuous dinner of Western Scholarship, and we are scared that in raising awkward questions we might be considered unsuitable guests. While we shrink at the idea that “African Sociology” will signal our retreat into nativistic ghettos, others have no difficulty with affirming the existence of German Sociology, British Sociology, American Sociology or Western Sociology, and their subscription to it. Recently, Chinese scholars are boisterously affirming the “sinicization” of Sociology. No one would say that the label “German Sociology” is a retreat into nativistic parochialism—we simply assume it is a brand of Sociol-

⁴⁷ Donald G MacRae. 1974. *Weber*. Glasgow: Fontana, p.24.

⁴⁸ MacRae, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ MacRae, *op.cit.*

ogy. However, when we make similar claims for ourselves (both as descriptive of what we do and our aspirational) there are concerns that we may be doing something less than Sociology or as Margaret Archer and Martin Albrow did (in response to the demands made at the Mexico and the Indian World Congresses) that we might be degrading Sociology and undermining the task of **one Sociology for one world**. Yet the unicity that Archer pitched for was the internationalisation of particular brands of western sociological enterprise. In spite of the efforts to ascribe nomothetic status on the works of Marx, Weber or Durkheim, they are fundamentally idiographic. Scholarship, as we know, is biographical. It is impossible to understand Weber's writings without situating them within his specific German context of the late-19th century and early 20th century. *Protestant Ethics* have more immediate source in Helene Weber's influence on her young son, than the disconnected use of the work often suggests.⁵⁰

Two areas within Sociology have successfully established their global reputation on the basis of endogeneity—Health Sociology/Sociology of Diseases and the Sociology of Gender. In both cases, international reputation emerged by being firmly rooted in local ontological narratives, and giving these narratives epistemic effectivity. Two of the pioneers of the two sub-disciplines, Professors Layi Erinsho (Health) and Oyeronke Oyewumi are participating in this Congress.

From Indigenization to Epistemic Outcome: Ti'bi-Ti're Logic

Let me end with an illustration from some of my own recent works in similar area—explored in some details in my "Sociology and Yoruba Studies."⁵¹ These grew out of my engagement with the works of Akínsolá Akíwowo, who tried to develop indigenous ways of teaching and doing Sociology by exploring the corpus of the Ifá oral sacred texts (orature) of the Yoruba (West Africa). The oral sacred texts are organised into verses and stanzas, and are often in the form of a dialogue between the mythical Òrúnmilà and some deity or individual, social commentaries, or invocations. They are a rich repository of Yoruba ontological narratives and cosmology.

Akíwowo's seminal efforts, since the late-1970s, involved distilling sociological categories on themes that explicate sociational issues and human habitation from the Ifá orature. In a 1999 response to aspects of the intense debate (both supportive and critical) generated by his enterprise, Akíwowo attempted to modify some of his earlier propositions by borrowing insights from Bart Kosko's works on Fuzzy Logic and fuzzy-sets in mathematic, computer program-

⁵⁰ Cf. MacRae's (*op.cit*) coverage is excellent.

⁵¹ Jimi Adesina. 2001. "Sociology and Yorùbá Studies: epistemic intervention or doing sociology in the vernacular," *African Sociological Review*, Vol. 5, No.2.

ming and engineering.⁵²

My arguments with the Akiwowo Project were methodological and about adequacy. I felt he was hide-bound in Functionalist Sociology, which I believe was contrary to the insight that I garnered from the Ifá oral texts. Further, I argue that while Fuzzy Logic represents a major epistemic advance on Aristotelian Logic, it does not adequately reflect the epistemic imperatives of the Ifá orature. It is further exploring the Ifá texts and Yorùbá cosmologies and ontological narratives that I suggested that we can identify something that I call **Ti'bi-Ti're Logic**.

While much in the Yorùbá ontological narratives reflects the polyvalence of Fuzzy Logic, what defines much of Yorùbá ontology is the cohering of contradictory things or more appropriately, the mutual self-embeddedness of contradictory things. In a specific dialogue in the Ifá text, marriage is not only about youth and about beauty; it is also about frailty and old age. The two mutually cohere: one who marries the young beautiful bride also marries the frail, old maid of the future.

Affirmation of contingent co-existence of opposites provides the basis for a distinct sociological paradigm. One that stresses nuanced discourse rather than binary opposites; embraces the coexistence of “opposites” and the open-endedness in the outcome of social interaction or contending social forces. It suggests an analytical framework devoid of teleological discourse. The cultural, for instance, is embedded with contradictory forces. Resistance has conformity embedded in it, as conformity is embedded in the contestation of the terrain of its performance. Outcome is not fixed before hand. When we confront class, ethnic, religious, gender (etc.) manifestations of mutually exclusive identities; it will not be as alternative identities. Rather it is in their inter-penetration and mutual embeddedness that we understand real, lived existence as multi-layered, contradictory and context-situated. We are not “either” / “or”; we are often many things embedded in one—without suggesting Freudian personality disorder. The negotiation of multiple identities—sometimes contradictory, sometimes not—is something we do everyday. And it affirms foundational basis for adjudication among competing claims—which is far from what we know of postmodernism.

The second aspect of **Ti'bi-Ti're Logic** is methodological. The currents in western discourse make the distinction between knowledge derived from three sources: senses and experience (Empiricists), reason (Rationalists), and Inspiration or Illumination (Mysticism). The sharpest distinction is drawn between the material (senses and reason) and the non-material (faith/inspiration/illumination) sources of knowledge with the privileging of the former: if it is not verifiable it does not exist. To put a Popperian spin on it; if it is not falsifiable it does not qual-

⁵² Bart Kosko. 1994. *Fuzzy Thinking: the new science of Fuzzy Logic*. London: Flamingo.

ify for science. We know that this is in fact not a useful approach or an accurate description of actual practice in the natural sciences. I have used the cases of the discovery of the DNA and the first description of the Haley's Comet to demonstrate this. While the Aristotelian logic will privilege one or the other, *Ti'bi-Ti're Logic* will argue that the three sources of epistemic vocation are mutually inclusive and interpenetrating.

But the above is only to illustrate an exercise endogeneity and the promise of more foundational engagement with global Sociology.

4. Research Agenda: some concluding notes

Let me end this Address by suggesting a few lines of research for our community: one to valorise existing works and the knowledge we have of particular individuals. The second is about explicating—and opening up for discussion among South African sociologists—ontological narratives with the objective of distilling their epistemological implications and relevance. The first line of research is premised on taking ourselves seriously. I have noticed how eagerly we adopt every new concept and author that reaches our shores from the global North; the rapid uptake on the idea of “Public Sociology” being the most recent case. Yet we hardly give ourselves, our scholarship, and local resources the same degree of scholarly attention. Let me identify three clusters of ideas and authors that we may want to consider:

1. The first set of ideational resources will include the works of Goven Mbeki and Steve Biko from a huge potential resource base.
2. The second set is drawn from an older generation of sociologists. Among these are Bernard Magubane, Archie Mafeje, Ruth First, Fatima Meer, Harold Wolpe, and so on. How many of our students have ever heard or read the works of any of these South African sociologists, and integral parts of our course designs and reading lists, with focused attention on them? Yet Bernard Magubane, as an example, inspired the person who turned out to be have wielded the greatest influence on my formative years as an undergraduate. Mafeje's works has been inspirational for a two generation of African social science scholars and students. How many of our courses and reading lists contain the works of any of these scholars?
3. The third set is drawn from ourselves. How well do we take ourselves seriously enough to produce focused scholarly engagement with our works? Jacklyn Cock's “Madam and Maid” was a huge eye opener to students in my 3rd Year Sociology of Work class last year, but how many of our undergraduate or postgraduate research

students are working on the works of Jacklyn Cock, Edward Webster, Ari Sitas, just to mention a few? This is not about gratifying egos of people—works of such nature can be critical in the extreme, but who said scholarship is about praise-singing? I notice that there is one paper at this congress on Jeremy Seekings. It should be the beginning.

Making the objects of critical scholarly engagement is the beginning. The same should apply to the works of African scholars on the rest of the continent. We know that intellectual communities are constructed around ideas, events, and persons. They become canonical because we spend enough time dissecting them and chewing them over. It starts with taking ourselves and our locales seriously.

The second line of research is more demanding and complex, but they are essential for endogeneity and epistemic intervention. This will involve efforts at documenting the range of ontological discourses/narratives in South Africa to inform our scholarship. Let me use the example of Philosophy, which fundamentally affect Sociology. How much of the philosophy we do indicate, minimally, that we are surrounded by seas of Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, or Khoi ontological narratives? Yet we know that epistemological discourses are rooted in specific ontologies. This type of research will involve collaboration among Linguists, Philosophers and Sociologists, working in interdisciplinary teams. The result will be fundamental to a more foundational sociological knowledge production projects and the basis of engagement with the rest of the world. We need only refer to the impact of African History and historiography.

Thank you for your patience.