The Decoloniality of *being* Political Studies/Science:
Legitimising a(nother) way of *being*

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Abstract

In contributing further to the general debate on decolonising Higher Education in South Africa, this article grapples with the question of *being* for Political Studies/Science. Specifically, the article engages with the question of how might departments of Political Studies/Science begin to imagine and engage the kind of complex decolonised curriculum that pays attention to the relevant structural and sociocultural contexts of South Africa without resorting merely to the additive approach or nominalist model of curriculum transformation as sufficient. In response, the article argues that the notion of *being* (Barnett, 2009) for our curriculum transformation as Political Science/Studies should be of central concern in our decolonisation process. In developing this argument, the article puts forth a theoretical model drawn from an interdisciplinary understanding of what constitutes transformative/decolonised disciplinary legitimation codes (*being* decolonised), that should be intentionally brought into Political Science/Studies through the language of decolonisation.

Keywords: Being, Curriculum Transformation, Decoloniality, Decolonisation, Legitimation Code Theory, Political Studies/Science

Introduction

In looking at some of the most recent literature specifically on the topic of decolonising Political Studies/Science in South Africa (Essop, 2016; Gouws, et al., 2013; Matthews, 2018; Mngomezulu & Hadebe, 2018; Pillay, 2018; Zondi, 2018), the theme of contestation is a persistent one throughout. From much of this literature's perspective, the notion of decolonising the Political Studies/Science curriculum is a contested one by students, academics, and politicians, including the value of decolonising the curriculum. Moreover, such contestation raises further questions that need to be addressed in more depth as part of deliberating on decolonisation's value for the discipline of Political Science/Studies in general. As the discussion below demonstrates, the wide-ranging response of academics, not only in Political Science/Studies in South Africa (see

discussion below) but also globally in the area of education (Emeagwali and Dei, 2014; Galien, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020; Martinez-Vargas, 2020; Shawa, 2019; Shizha and Makuvaza, 2017; Tuck and Young, 2012), has been to embrace some version of curriculum transformation. However, the aims of such transformation are not merely to take an additive or nominalist approach to curriculum changes (where different perspectives are incorporated into the curriculum without changing its basic structure – see Banks, 1999). Rather, the primary aim is to underscore the real value of taking a more self-reflexive approach to the nature of pedagogy through decoloniality.

In particular, a main concern highlighted by this literature is that, currently in South Africa, there is an overemphasis on a nominalist approach to curriculum transformation that overlooks the deeper pedagogical issues that would require a shift in how the discipline imagines and enacts itself. For example, in 'Beyond epistemology: Ontological transformation in South African universities', Shawa (2019: 11) argues that, 'the integration of ontology and epistemology in university teaching and learning is vital in bringing together ways of knowing, acting and being'. Shawa's argument is in defense of a position articulated elsewhere concerning the value of decolonisation, where he argues that, 'African universities need to challenge ways of knowing or acting that perpetuate adherence to colonial thought without careful analysis of their own world' (Shawa, 2019: 89). In other words, the focus on Political Studies/Science as needing to reconceptualise its epistemology through ontological self-reflexivity is not unique, which is why I pay particular attention to the coloniality of being since the call for decolonising Political Studies/Science speaks to the broader issues in higher education that have to do with the ontological reality and subjectivity of academia, including academic identity and subject formation.

Consequently, in making a case for why Political Studies/Science should decolonise in more than simply cosmetic ways, the clarion call of the literature points towards a set of critical questions around the nature of the discipline's *being*. First, how can the discipline begin to implement the kind of complex decolonised curriculum that pays attention to relevant structural and sociocultural contexts and not simply resort to the content changing model as sufficient? Second, are there examples from elsewhere that may be used as benchmarks for the South African context in terms of addressing the multidimensional nature of curriculum responsiveness through decolonisation that is informed by this tricky balance between the global and the local nature of the discipline's 'core' concepts?

As one of many answers to these questions above, I argue in this article that decolonisation has to concern itself with more than just content (curriculum), but also with the inherent nature of the pedagogy (the praxis of teaching) of Political Science/Studies. This perspective is nothing new, but what is interesting about my approach is the centering of questions about the *being* (Barnett, 2009) of the discipline – that is, the process of coming to know who we are and what we can become – beyond the epistemological context by extending the discussion to the discipline's ways of being and how the discipline's ways of being affect what is known or knowable (its epistemology). That is, thinking about the *being* of the discipline changes the focus of what

ought to be regarded as important in thinking about transforming the discipline. The advantage of such a focus is how it highlights a broader key concern of the decolonisation project around the globe of how knowledge is constructed and why questions about power and truth (epistemology) are important to consider alongside questions of being (ontology) in the South African education context.

In particular, the article draws on the concept of curriculum responsiveness (Moll, 2004) as one of the ways through which deep engagement with the idea of decolonising the pedagogy of Political Studies/Science might be approached. In fact, what the discussion of curriculum responsiveness highlights specifically for Political Studies/Science in South Africa is the continued delimited responsiveness to calls for decolonisation in Higher Education. Specifically for my discipline, such a lack of responsiveness can be observed in the continued lack of engagement with African perspectives, especially Black Political Thought, in our curriculum, despite the availability of information and resources to teach a whole curriculum focused on a diverse set of thinkers from the country and the African continent as a whole. That is, whilst some of these thinkers feature in courses, such as the ones I teach on Black Consciousness Thought or African Political Theory or Afro-politics and Religion, they largely remain marginal and not central in other broad courses on Political Studies offered in the rest of the degree that focus on more 'foundational' concepts. In the context of my department, the courses I am teaching were brought in as part of the process of responding to the call for decolonisation. However, part of the critique being proffered in this article is precisely that a large part of a focus on black Political Thought, for example, remains largely peripheral and nominalist rather than central. In fact, the same can be said for many other marginalised perspectives in Political studies/Science including, but not limited to, women, the youth, and other non-hegemonic people of colour.

What this limitation highlighted above with respect to curriculum responsiveness also speaks to are concerns with what, then, is required to be able to go beyond the identified additive or nominalist approach. That is, what kind of transformative disciplinary changes can be brought into Political Studies/Science through the language of decolonisation? In answer to this question, and drawing on Maton (2003, 2014), the article argues for thinking of Political Studies as not only an academic field devoid of praxis, but also a dynamic social field of practice (or its *being* and semantic structure) informed by the organising principles of the specific semantic code of epistemological power-shifting (a new legitimation code for its *being*). To get at this conclusion, and as a way of properly framing the context for the article, I begin with a summary of some of the key arguments arising from the decolonisation debate in Political Studies/Science in South Africa. I then link these debates with the broader global discussion of the coloniality of being and conclude with some general observations around how the discipline as a whole can make its own self-reflexive contribution in the decolonisation project.

The Literature

In framing the general national concern with decolonisation in Political Studies/Science, Gouws, et al. (2013: 3) aver that, '[t]he discipline of Political Science cannot be separated from the

transformation of the higher-education sector in South Africa which poses several challenges to social scientists'. Consequently, according to these authors, in response to the general external factors emanating from the higher education sector, the wide-ranging response of academics in Political Science/Studies has been to embrace some version of curriculum transformation that has seen the discipline foreground its approach from merely taking an additive approach to curriculum change to taking a more self-reflexive approach (Gouws, et al., 2013: 24). Such a self-reflexive approach reflects a key theme of curriculum development in general that speaks against a nominalist approach to curriculum transformation (Cornbleth, 1988; Ogude, et al., 2005).

That is, rather than thinking of decolonising the curriculum as simply content transformation, which misses the point about shifting away from a Eurocentric approach to knowledge production (provincialised knowledge cum universal), Gouws, et. al. (2013) advocate for a non-nominalist approach to transformation. This is a point attested to by Pillay (2018: 33) who notes that, 'getting out of the problem of Eurocentrism is not solved by replacing one set of objects with another, such as the gesture of replacing European with African authors, for example, in a curriculum'. Such a form of change, although symbolically important, is only one part of a broader project of decentering Eurocentrism. What is also useful about thinking beyond content change is that questions of practice also come to carry greater significance. Zondi's (2018: 25) question captures this position well when he asks: 'How does one teach critical rebellion against global power asymmetry, imperial designs in world affairs, war and conflict, and so forth while maintaining a classroom situation that affirms hierarchy and inequality?' While Zondi asks this question with particular reference to decolonising the conceptual limitations of International Relations, it is clear that his call is for us to reframe our teaching and learning according to a different imaginary that transcends disciplinary kyriarchical boundaries. That is, we have to be able to examine how the discipline's boundaries are coded not only through content, but also through practices of domination, oppression, and submission.

Elsewhere, and drawing from Mudimbe's (1988) concept of the inescapability of the 'colonial library', Matthews (2018) affirms the limitations of thinking decolonisation in only additive or substitutive terms. She notes that, 'the idea of the colonial library urges us not to underestimate the reach and tenacity of the system of representations inaugurated by the colonial library' (Matthews, 2018: 53). That is, a library based on kyriarchical relations of domination, oppression, and submission. In other words, we need to pay attention to the ways in which simplistic arguments of the dismissal of decolonisation miss the ways in which decolonisation discourse is always caught up in some form of relationality to colonisation, even in its resistance forms. This observation leads her to pose the same question with which this article is concerned. Matthews (2018: 53) asks, 'How then can we respond to these calls for decolonisation while being attentive to the problem of the colonial library?' Matthews' (2018: 54) answer to her question is an acknowledgement that, 'the question of the decolonisation of university curricula acknowledges that decolonising the curriculum cannot just be about replacing white scholars and scholarship with black scholars and scholarship, even while the increased presence of black scholars is urgently required'. Moreover, we cannot also take the

other extreme view that 'one's identity does not matter at all in terms of one's ability to produce knowledge … [because] it is blind to long-standing discussions of the social construction of knowledge' (Matthews, 2018: 55).

Wilmer (2016: 1050) affirms Matthews' argument in the American context of the discipline of Political Science when he notes that, 'the categories and concepts of the discipline transpose poorly onto Indigenous experiences and practices *because they are a product of an academic enterprise that springs from the perspective of European colonial scholars*' (emphasis original). Wilmer (2016: 1050) observes how calls to decolonise American Political Science methodologies have led to a rejection of the 'notion that Indigenous peoples and nations should *start* with non-Indigenous meanings'. Both these examples illustrate how both content change and pedagogical practice are important to consider in the decolonisation process. This is because it is possible to have a whole slew of African authors (in our context), but still centre a Eurocentric reading of such authors. This would amount to a nominalist approach as argued already, and one that belies the violence of the *being* of Political Studies/Science as argued so far as well.

This perspective, of which Wilmer speaks, is the colonial one that presupposes the universality of provincialised knowledge and has imposed this knowledge through various forms of epistemic violence. A violence that has now been called into question. All this to say that the problem of the Eurocentric nature of the discipline of Political Studies/Science is one that has a wider reach than simply the South African context. Therefore, any attempt at decolonising the curriculum has to speak to the complexity of the interaction between multiple contexts and multiple concepts.

Further affirming the Eurocentric nature of the discipline of Political Science/Studies, including the need to question it as described thus far, are Mngomezulu and Hadebe (2018). They argue that the Eurocentrism of Political Science/Studies is apparent in the fact that the content of what is taught at academic institutions places 'Europeans at the centre while simultaneously relegating Africans to the periphery' (Mngomezulu and Hadebe, 2018: 66). In that sense, as Pillay (2018: 35) further observes,

> The defining concepts of modern political life, such as freedom, equality, democracy, justice, representation, culture, equality, the citizen, the nation-state, majority and minority, are all concepts taken to be transparent and normatively the markers of progress, and the product of Western civilization.

In other words, the Eurocentric nature of the current Political Science/Studies curricula in the country masks the ways in which their content are treated out of context – i.e., conceptually decontextualised and operationally decontextualised (Cornbleth, 1988: 85).

This argument of the multiplicity of contexts and concepts is one supported by the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) (2017: 4-5) in its observation that:

the notion of a 'decontextualised' learner, which is argued to underlie the way in which 'mainstream' university teaching takes place in South Africa, needs to be debunked if decolonisation of the curriculum is to take place successfully. The argument starts from the premise that learners and learning are socially embedded, and that 'academic literacy' is not a value-neutral set of skills to be acquired, but that academic literacies, being socially constructed, can be experienced as colonial or alienating to students who are not privy to the hidden codes and meanings that actually underlie a so-called value-neutral discourse.

As Cornbleth (1988: 96) puts it: "Coping with complexity and contingency requires tolerance of ambiguity, flexibility and responsiveness, imagination and persistence, as well as further understanding of the interaction of curriculum and context". This point regarding the significance of context is further underscored by Mngomezulu and Hadebe (2018: 67) in their argument that, '[t]he change we refer to is the decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum so that it could speak to the local (African) context and address African problems'. What the above call by Wilmer and the CHE for recontextualisation means, then, is that there is an epistemological and political need to centre indigenous experiences and knowledge as productive rather than simply as instantiations of negative and reactionary discourses.

In fact, as an example of recontextualisation, and drawing on a number of scholars in the study of curriculum development in South Africa, Ogude, et al. (2005: 16) argue that curriculum responsiveness has to account for the multiple layers that inform higher education curricula. Where, 'the most significant educational goals for diversity in the curriculum are achieved not only by transforming the content of the curriculum but also through the ways of learning that are fundamentally collaborative, dialogical, deliberative and relational' (Ogude, et al., 2005: 9). In similar fashion to Cornbleth (1988: 91), then, these authors also argue against a nominalist approach to curriculum responsiveness that focuses only on content transformation as articulated through the discussion of the state of Political Studies/Science above.

The Being of the Discipline

What the foregrounding of the Eurocentric nature of the discipline in the aforementioned literature highlights in relation to the discourses of decolonisation is a call for the reconceptualisation of the discipline's *being* as such. Such a concern with curriculum *being* in the context of Education, where questions of curriculum change have received more focus than in Political Studies/Science, finds one of its salient articulations in Barnett (2009), who asks us to consider the value of the university as an enterprise of knowledge production, regulation, and reproduction. That is, a university is not only a space of positivist knowledge transmission, but also one of the transmission, and reproduction, of values and dispositions. As such, *being* and knowing are linked in so far as they represent a certain foundationalist approach to knowledge. What the performative turn in the humanities highlights, including the decolonisation discourse privileged in this article, is that for too long *being* has been assumed to be *the* originary source

of knowledge (therefore producing an approach to curriculum that assumes that there are things to be known and specific ways of transmitting that knowledge).

What I find most useful in Barnett's insistence that we think the notion of *being* in relation to curriculum development more strongly, is that becoming (which signifies being always in a state of flux) challenges the idea that there is an unchanging core of knowledge and asserts that knowledge is always conditioned by the contexts in which it is produced. As such, then, 'epistemology and ontology are irreducible to each other but are interlinked' as Barnett (2009: 437) rightly observes. For Political Science/Studies in South Africa, this observation points to how what we know and teach is a reflection of who we are, and who we are is no longer being (some would even argue that it has never been) reflected by what we teach. In essence, this is what the call for decolonisation asks the discipline to reconsider in its call for decentring Eurocentric ideas and centring African ones. It is about students being able to see themselves reflected in (and by) the knowledge that they are told is important to know.

Granted, Barnett's ultimate aim is to get us thinking about how our curricula can contribute to students' senses of becoming that might then help them figure out who they are (Barnett's idea of being). This is another way to frame the fact that much of source of discontent for our students with the knowledge they receive arises from the sense that what they are told to be is not what they wish to become. Moreover, the knowledge that they are receiving towards this end is seen by many of them as not reflective or constitutive of their desires. That is, from Barnett's perspective, the university needs to adopt a framework that takes care not only of what students do (practical), but also answers questions of why they do what they do (ethical). In the way in which I have presented it here, the decolonisation of Political Studies/Science requires that we think about what is politics in our context and what can we do with it ethically. In other words, who are we not only as political scientists but also as political beings in this particular moment?

Such an understanding of the project of decolonisation as also concerned with the ethical dimensions of *being* draws from Latin American scholars of decoloniality who have especially taken on the task of troubling the foundationalist understanding of *being* that can further help us elucidate a useful understanding of how to be decolonised as a discipline. Part of what is missing in Barnett's conceptualisation of *being*, which would then also limit our understanding of it, is how deeply embedded it is in a particular colonial construction of *being* that assumes universal applicability without taking into account the violent context of its construction. According to Sylvia Wynter (2003: 260), the social sciences suffer from an overrepresentation of the 'coloniality of being' that presents a singular ethnoclass' perception of the human.

In highlighting the embeddedness of our current knowledge systems (of which I am arguing Political Science/Studies forms a core part) to the coloniality of being, Wynter (2003: 260) writes that,

> The argument proposes that the struggle of our new millennium will be one between the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the

human itself, and that of securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves. Because of this overrepresentation, which is defined in the first part of the title as the Coloniality of Being/ Power/Truth/Freedom, any attempt to unsettle the coloniality of power will call for the unsettling of this overrepresentation.

That is, as Maldonado-Torres (2007) argues elsewhere, it is the *coloniality of being* that has framed our disciplinary knowledges in the overrepresented fashion described by Wynter above which needs to be interrupted through a reading that foregrounds a focus on how being is undergirded by the violent of domination of other ontologies or ways of being. In other words, being as received is not as innocent as it might seem at first value.

In turning our attention to the ontology of Political Studies/Science we can begin to get away from nominalism (which takes the categories in existence for granted) by foregrounding how thinking our discipline into existence should form a key part of the decolonisation process. This is because, as Maldonado-Torres (2007: 261-262) further argues, decoloniality 'introduces question about the effects of colonization in modern subjectivities and modern forms of life as well as contributions of racialized and colonized subjectivities to the production of knowledge and critical thinking'. Consequently, it is only by unsettling the coloniality of being (Wynter, 2003) or reinscribing the ontological with the trans-ontological (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) or disrupting the coloniality of being (Richardson, 2012) of the discipline of Political Studies/Science that we can begin to move towards an ethical curriculum. This is the aspiration, 'at the very minimum to restore or create a reality where racialized subjects could give and receive freely' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007: 260). In other words, receiving and giving are not only important political concepts, but also have pedagogical importance in terms of challenging the positivist and traditional ways in which we teach Political Studies/Science concepts.

Maton's Legitimation Code Theory

To reiterate, in putting forward the concern with the *being* of the discipline, the argument is that curriculum change does not only refer or concern itself with content, but also with the ways in which that content is fashioned and presented. In further thinking about decolonising the Political Science/Studies curriculum though this notion of *being* as the interlink between epistemology and ontology, I am particularly drawn to Pillay's (2018) concern with entwinement and dynamism as both these concepts speak to the ideological nature of curriculum. That is, while curriculum may seem to be set one way, it is also subject to change. In that sense, it should be clear how then the concepts of structure (set) and agency (resistance), as key political concepts in resistance politics, foreground a discussion of decolonising the Political Science/Studies curriculum that should not simply be reactionary, but also puts forth a different vision of how the discipline can be more epistemologically and ontologically open.

Here, and drawing on Maton (2014), the understanding is that conceptualising Political Studies/Science as a social field of practice informed by specific organising principles and

semantic legitimation codes is useful for framing decolonisation in delimiting terms. In reading decolonisation through a Matonian lens, we can understand it as another 'sociological framework for researching and changing practice' (Maton, 2014: A-36). Maton (2014: A-36) further explains legitimation code theory as forming 'a core part of social realism, a broad "coalition" of approaches which reveal knowledge as both socially produced and real, in the sense of having effects, and which explore those effects'. Understood this way, decolonisation is not simply another abstract theory, but also a tool for changing practices that have effects on social reality. The question that arises is how, then, does decolonisation, as a form of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), achieve both explanation and practice transformation? Here one is reminded of Marx's critique of Hegel that many of Hegel's argument begin in abstraction and Marx's (1886 [1969]: n.p.) critique of the so-called Young Hegelians such as Feuerbach that, 'Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it!'. In this spirit, Maton's LCT and decolonisation are an affirmation of this Marxist dictum.

For Maton (2014: A-36), as an on-going theoretical development, LCT is a practical approach 'designed to be an open-ended endeavour that foresees its own repeated refinement, deepening and extension through dialectical relations with substantive studies'. Translating such an understanding of LCT to decolonising Political Science/Studies curriculum, means taking decolonisation not as an end-in-itself process, but rather an opportunity to reframe our concepts such that they reflect the changed reality in which we find ourselves. In defense of a similar reading of decolonisation, and in response to what she terms 'epistemological ethnocentrism', Matthews (2018: 56) argues that such a view

> does not favor the wholesale rejection or displacement of Western knowledge, nor on the other hand the integration of marginalised knowledge into a mostly unchanged system of knowledge production. Rather, it demands that we give greater attention to the ways in which knowledge production is influenced by scholars' social position and implicit values and that we commit to reworking our bodies of knowledge in response to attentiveness to what are currently marginalised voices.

That is, what Matthews highlights as being attentiveness is similar to Maton's open-ended endeavour of LCT; it also makes reference to receiving and giving as intertwined. Primarily, the argument here is about how a discipline can and should constantly think of itself on contextually located and dynamic terms that speak not only to its epistemological concerns, but also ontological ones.

In this sense, and especially for Political Studies/Science, such marginality will be both reflected contextually and constantly renegotiated in terms of the shifting power relations at play at any given moment. Pedagogically, this means reframing our methods of teaching that reflect a more participatory approach that invites students as those outside the centre of traditional knowledge production to contribute more meaningfully to the practice of teaching and learning. Epistemologically, a greater appeal to Indigenous knowledge systems in our understanding of

traditional politics studies/science concepts can also serve as another way of attending to marginality. As one of the reviewers observed, and rightly so, there is a need to pay attention to the limits proffered through a continued focus on some of the Dead White European Males (DWEMs) of Political Studies/Science by bringing into greater focus African ontological realities, which are currently marginalised in the discipline.

Furthermore, Maton (2014: A-35) provides yet another explanatory model through which we can understand how some forms of knowledge are more powerful than others - as he says, theories are not created equal and some forms of knowledge are better for building knowledge over time and helping students learn – i.e. exhibit less knowledge-blindness (2014: A-35). The discussion of the Eurocentric nature of the Political Studies/Science curriculum is a case in point. In this sense, LCT (and decolonisation by extension of my argument) can be said to demonstrate Bourdieu's observation that education is demonstrated to be a *field of struggles* wherein various actors compete for legitimacy. To that end, as Maton further observes (2014: A-36), '[t]he framework of LCT comprises a multi-dimensional conceptual toolkit, where each dimension offers concepts for analysing a particular set of organising principles underlying practices as legitimation codes'. In the current moment in South Africa, decolonisation is the necessary conceptual toolkit that can help Political Science/Studies to better analyse not only its own set of organising principles, but also those of the broader South African society.

Moreover, in Bernsteinian terms (1995), the practices and beliefs of education as a field are used as languages of legitimation or a Legitimation Device that functions through a particular set of codes or organising principles of practices. Therefore, being able to think of the planned curriculum of Political Science/Studies as a legitimation device, might be useful for helping the discipline to be more deliberate and intentional in thinking about recontextualising the knowledge of our discipline. That is, using the language of organising principles and legitimation codes might help get a little bit away from the knee-jerk reaction that metaphorised notions of decolonising incite (Tuck and Young, 2012); thereby helping us get faster into fruitful discussions about reimagining a Political Science/Studies curriculum that has both semantic gravity (pull of the moment) and density (historical context) for our students.

Consequently, then, a key question that arises out of this whole discussion is: what are the necessary legitimation codes that I can bring to my discipline, using the language of decolonisation and Africanisation, which can help students to both successfully master the organising principles of the discipline's semantic structures and also question them. That is, as Gouws, et al. (2013: 24) put it: 'The question that emerges when dealing with transformation of the discipline is what exactly is meant by transformation?' Matthews (2018: 59) asks the same question differently in saying, how might we be able to concretise the need to challenge epistemological ethnocentrism? For me, these questions extend to decolonisation's own openness to difference and commitment against parochial thinking. After all, in the way in which I have discussed it thus far, this is primarily what decolonisation asks us to do – to redefine the centre for our context. And, if what Gouws, et al. (2013: 28) conclude is true - that currently Political Science/Studies suffers from a 'conceptual deficit to deal with African politics' – then we

(scholars in the discipline) have to think more deeply about shifting the discipline's curriculum to supporting a transformed ontological identity of our discipline's epistemological framework.

Furthermore, the contested nature of decolonisation, including the value of such a process, raises questions that need to be highlighted as part of deliberating on the concept's value. One of these questions can be phrased as follows: How does one even begin to implement the kind of complex decolonised curriculum that has been suggested so far – one that pays attention to the relevant structural and sociocultural contexts? Another related question that emerges concerns the relation of the South African decolonial project to the rest of the African continent. That is, are there examples from elsewhere on the African continent that can be used as benchmarks for the South African Political Science/Studies context in terms of addressing the multidimensional nature of curriculum responsiveness through decolonisation that is informed by this tricky balance between the global and the local? An alternative way of phrasing the question, as suggested by Essop (2016) and Garuba (2015) above and as Pillay (2018: 36) puts it, would be: how might we 'navigate towards a pedagogy and a curriculum which grapples with political philosophy and political theory as a diverse set of intellectual traditions which are neither discreet nor static but rather entwined and dynamic?'

Gesturing at an answer to their own question above, Gouws, et al. (2013: 24) aver that, generally, transformation is directly associated with creating a more equal society, but their assessment of the state of the discipline also revealed a concern with the inherent nature of the pedagogy of Political Science/Studies. That is, questions about the *being* of the discipline were regarded as important by the respondents of their survey, thus further highlighting the key concerns of decolonisation project around how knowledge is constructed and why this question of *being* is an important one to consider in the South African context. In the case of my department at the University of the Witwatersrand, the question of being for our curriculum has been a central one with respect to the decolonisation process. This is to the extent that now, as a result of the #FMF movement, we are in the process of revamping not only our content but also our assessment practices. In my case, for example, this has meant including more assessments that draw on orality as a significant aspect of decolonising my assessment practices. In a sense, this article is an attempt to attend to what Gouws, et al. (2013: 30) refer to as 'the next challenge for the discipline', which 'is to address questions around its character, pedagogy and creating an increasingly African identity to be able to meet the demands of relevance for the African context'. For reasons outlined above, this is easier said than done, and, as noted already, raises more questions than provides answers.

An additional issue for us (Political Science/Studies) to consider in this context, and one also highlighted by the very acrimonious nature of the protest context at various South African universities recently, is the following: whose responsibility it is to decolonise? Mngomezulu and Hadebe (2018: 75) state in their article that, '[o]ne point that cannot be repudiated is that Africanising and decolonising the political science curriculum could prove to be a difficult assignment for various reasons. However, under no circumstances should that be seen to an insurmountable task'. That is, from the perspective of 'difficulty' it might be easy to fall into the

argument that the burden of proof for change lies with those seeking transformation. Such an argument is illustrative of the positivist and colonial mentality that underlies much of what students have questioned in the higher education curriculum; viz., that the curriculum as it stands does not speak to their lived experiences and universities don't seem interested in addressing this issue – hence the radical stance of decolonise or perish.

If anything, as Mngomezulu and Hadebe (2018: 78) argue, the task of decolonising the Political Science/Studies curriculum 'should not be the job of one stakeholder; it needs concerted effort by everyone, including the political leadership, academic leadership and the Political Science students who will be the beneficiaries of a decolonised and Africanised university curriculum'. Although I am not as optimistic as Mngomezulu and Hadebe regarding the trust that to be placed in political and academic leadership in this role, I do share their hope. The hope that, since a similar feat has been achieved elsewhere on the continent South Africa can draw from such experiences to ensure that the aim of Africans becoming custodians of their own knowledge becomes a successful endeavour.

Shifting the Epistemological Power Locus

For Cornbleth (1988: 88), such a shift in perspective regarding the responsibility of decolonisation requires a move away from '[i]solating curriculum and curriculum construction from their structural (i.e., systemic) and sociocultural (i.e., extrasystemic, societal) contexts'. This means paying attention 'to the values that a curriculum conveys … and the social groups and interests those values serve' (Cornbleth 1988: 87). This is because, as Garuba (2015: n. p.) puts it, 'at a basic level, a curriculum is simply a way of assigning value, a way of discriminating between what we think is important and valuable and what isn't.' Therefore, self-reflexivity about these values is a challenge that value-laden disciplines, in particular, such as Political Science/Studies have to grapple with in earnest, because in the current South African context we cannot afford to divorce the university from the general national-structural context of socio-political transformation.

Arguably, then, in centering decolonisation as a disciplinary way of *being*, I am arguing that such a shift of epistemological power is less about simply replacement of one singular canon with another similarly singular one. It is, instead, more about responsible form of curriculum responsiveness that takes seriously the ethical call for epistemological redress and justice. Furthermore, the shift is less about defending a territory of ideas and more about defending the principle of inquiry in knowledge production, where knowledge is both constitutive of and constituted by context (Le Grange, 2016; Mbembe, 2016; Wilmer, 2016). Therefore, in response, we have to move closer towards an understanding that 'curriculum construction is an ongoing social activity shaped by various contextual influences within and beyond the classroom and accomplished interactively⋯Curriculum is not a tangible product but the actual, day-to-day interactions of students, teachers, knowledge, and milieu' (Cornbleth 1988: 89).

This is a point attested to by Garuba (2015: n. p.) when he notes, rhetorically, that, '[h]ow, therefore, do we think about curriculum transformation in the context of higher education in South Africa today? The first step is to recognise the cultural and scientific production – the

knowledge – of previously devalued groups of people'. This recognition of marginalisation is important as it points to a demand for different conceptual tools than the ones currently on offer. Surely, for a discipline concerned with questions of power - to evoke Bessie Head (1973) - such a concern is foundational to the ability of the discipline to remain contextually relevant and ideologically meaningful. In fact, as Gouws and colleagues (2013: 28) further observe using primary data from their survey:

> Open-ended comments on what respondents think of the discipline included the following: that it is too 'western' and Eurocentric and shows an inability to deal with political phenomena of Africa. As one respondent puts it: "It represents only a small portion of South African society, with very few black scholars (and black thought) allowed into (sic) centre stage". Some lamented the lack of theoretical rigour in teaching and research, especially post-colonial and subaltern thought.

As such, the contextual demands laid out under the decolonisation project in South Africa are about recognising the limitations of the current forms of Political Science/Studies curricula and drawing these into conversation with the broader debates of transformation in the country. In fact, according to Maldonado-Torres (2007: 261),

> Decolonization itself, the whole discourse around it, is a gift itself, an invitation to engage in dialogue. For decolonization, concepts need to be conceived as invitations to dialogue and not as impositions. They are expressions of the availability of the subject to engage in dialogue and the desire for exchange.

In drawing on the idea of decolonisation as a gift, what Maldonado-Torres' argument above further highlights is the observation that 'shifting the geography of reason' (Gordon, 2014: 66) should not be read in imperial terms of domination or substituting one imperial system with another, but as an opportunity to reframe our concepts in line with a new reality. In fact, as a gift, decolonisation recognises the other of western *being* as worthy of both giving and receiving, not just receiving or just giving.

That is to say, in a context with 'a strong focus on creating African solutions for African problems, it is clear that for the discipline of Political Science to remain relevant is to embrace a more African or non-Western identity' (Gouws, et al., 2013: 30). Ideologically this means, first, taking seriously African ontologies; and second, engaging these ontologies and their demand for representation by students as grounds for granting greater intellectual credence to their value. For Mngomezulu and Hadebe (2018: 73), drawing from the experiences of the Federal University of East Africa in the 1960s, the call for decolonisation and Africanisation is 'necessitated by the realisation that African politics, values and many other aspects of life were all fading away and were being eroded'. Consequently, in order to challenge the entrenchment of a westernised

curriculum, it is important to foreground the heteroglossial nature - to evoke Mikhail Bhaktin's (1934) provocation regarding the conflict between voices - of the political, including its curricula.

Echoing the same claim in another voice, Garuba (2015: n.p.) speaks of adopting an Africanised curriculum as being a process of

> thinking how the object of study itself is constituted, what tools are used to study it and what concepts are used to frame it. This is because analytical tools and concepts may marginalise some students and privilege others. This kind of approach will not only supplement simple additions to the content of the curriculum, it will lead to a rethinking of the theories and methods that underlie the framing of the curriculum. Contrapuntal analysis takes into account the perspectives of both the colonised and the coloniser, their interwoven histories, their discursive entanglements – without necessarily harmonising them or attending to one while erasing the other. Transforming the curriculum involves contrapuntal thinking at every level; it needs a contrapuntal pedagogy that brings the knowledge of the marginalised to bear on our teaching. A transformed curriculum is one that encourages contrapuntal thinking and pedagogy.

Understood this way, decolonising the Political Science/Studies curriculum is not only just another pedagogical practice of reading, writing, teaching, and learning differently. It is also one oriented towards some form of justice aimed at restoring previously devalued epistemologies and ontologies.

Pillay (2013: n.p.) affirms this view of decolonisation as *just praxis* elsewhere when he notes that, by justice he means

> to include undoing the devalorisation of intellectuals, of thought, of knowledge and aesthetics outside the Western tradition as constituted in the modern disciplines around which the university is structured. Here I am referring to those devalorised traditions of thought and intellectuals not only in Africa, but also in most of the world, in the Middle East, South Asia, South East Asia and Latin America.

That is to say, as a heteroglossial endeavour, decolonisation is about disrupting the singular narrative mode of teaching and learning and opening up the discursive spaces and places of encountering knowledge. It is deconstructionist in the Derridean (1982) sense of dealing with a violent hierarchy that needs to be challenged by not only creating new terms and vocabularies, but also creolising them. As Gordon (2014: 70) notes, 'what is unique about what is now termed creolisation is that it refers to instances of such symbolic creativity among communities that included those thought incapable of it'. Consequently, and by necessity, '[d]ecolonise must mean reversing the injustice of colonising in the first place and in respect of the texts and voices that speak' (Zondi, 2018: 23). It means foregrounding a language that disrupts the hegemonies of *being* that currently inform our political concepts.

In that sense, the notion of decolonisation articulated thus far is more akin to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's definition of it (2004). For wa Thiong'o (2004: 88), decolonisation is primarily about how Africa re-centres itself and its place in the world by redefining what the centre is. This definition of decolonisation as remaking is also articulated by Franz Fanon (1963: 36) when he argues that decolonisation is a remaking of a violent phenomenon and one that tries to imagine and create a new humanity. In other words, decolonisation is an answer to epistemic violence, including the continual epistemic exploitation (Berenstain, 2016) which marginalised groups are consistently coerced to perform for the benefit of the privileged. Mbembe (2016: 35) affirms this reading of Ngugi's notion of decolonisation by arguing that,

> [i]n Ngugi's terms, the call for 'Africanization' is a project of 're-centering'. It is about rejecting the assumption that the modern West is the central root of Africa's consciousness and cultural heritage. It is about rejecting the notion that Africa is merely an extension of the West. It is not about closing the door to European or other traditions. It is about defining clearly what the centre is.

In foregrounding the notion of re-centering, decolonisation for Ngugi becomes more than simply adding and stirring, but about the transformative action of re-centering the dynamic trans-ontologies of generous interaction (Maldonado-Torres, 2007: 259).

Perceived this way, decolonising the Political Studies/Science curriculum should be thought of in terms advocated by Lesley Le Grange (2016: 8) who argues that:

> Thinking curriculum as an active conceptual force means that the concept does not have fixity or closeness – that the term does not convey an a priori image of a pedagogical life – the multiple coursings of a pedagogical life that exist prior to thought···The conceptual power of *currere* implies newness, creation of things unforeseen, experimentation, expanding difference and movement. This notion of curriculum opens up multiple pathways for the becoming of pedagogical lives and therefore the basis for decolonisation.

As a form of creating new legitimation codes that speak to new contexts, decolonisation actually is a necessary corrective to the hubris of the Eurocentric epistemological ego (Mignolo, 2009). The re-centering is not only good for Africa's self-determination, but also for the West's self-reflection on its inflated sense of self-importance that has led to many forms of epistemic genocides/epistemicides (Grosfoguel, 2013). Of course, as a result, decolonisation does undermine certain aspects of the current praxis of pedagogy, but it does not do away with supposedly sacrosanct academic standards and expectations as some of the popular criticisms of decolonisation and Africanisation assume.

For example, as a form of decolonising how one teaches a topic of statehood in Political Science/Studies (a key concept), rather than teaching the concept of 'the state' from a purely

Westphalian genealogy, one would also consider the importation of this notion to non-Western contexts and the experiences of those subjected to its imposition (Pillay, 2018) – that is, its coloniality of being. Such an approach speaks to the Gordon' argument above regarding the value of seeing decolonisation through the lens of creolisation. Specifically, for Gordon (2014: 75), this is because,

> Creolisation by contrast assumes that disciplines are the culmination of particular genealogies taken up to make sense of particular problems and circumstances. These will render specific elements of fairly sedimented practices especially relevant as others become less so. One is likely to find as well that dimensions of other disciplinary formations, those not typically employed, offer categories, foundational analogies, forms of evidence, and ideas that are highly illuminating. One will not, however, turn to these for the sake of being ecumenical or exemplifying inclusivity but, instead, because they offer magnifying routes into and through a dilemma that one otherwise would lack. Even then, one does not simply add these respective methods up···To creolise social scientific and theoretical approaches then is to break with an identity-oriented understanding of disciplines and methods in which one and one's work can only emerge as meaningful by being isomorphic with pre-existing conceptions of what a scholarly designation would indicate one must do.

That is, since creolisation is not beholden to some form of disciplinary maintenance or preservation, but to the creation of a habitable social world, it is a significant way through which to understand how decolonisation has to foreground multiplicity of meanings. By necessity, grappling with multiplicity and plurality of genealogies of political concepts challenges monolingual disciplinary teaching and learning currently privileged by the discipline of Political Science/Studies.

To the end of grappling with multiplicity, whilst the general literature on decolonising Political Studies/Science in South Africa highlights the external constraints on curriculum transformation due to pressures from elsewhere, they also point to possibilities of where agency might be found with respect to such constraints within the discipline itself. In this sense, with respect to the project of decolonisation and Africanisation, the discipline of Political Science/Studies in general can be said to be 'in the process of transforming and finding its identity in a constantly changing' (Gouws, et al., 2013: 30) global higher education context. Consequently, this global context can serve as both caution and inspiration in the path towards a Political Science/Studies curriculum that has both local purchase and global value. What this means is that a decolonised Political Studies/Science curriculum must become a subversive educational project that requires the action of dismantling and rebuilding the discipline through pluriversal and transformative praxes.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, what these differing ways of analysing decolonisation highlighted by the literature examined above drive home is not only the issue of the contested nature of curriculum, but also how different stakeholders will emphasise different things based on their positionality. Where, for example, in the South African context the same discipline engages with curriculum transformation very differently in terms of both focus and intent than their counterparts in East Africa. Consequently, as one of the observations highlighted by the discussion above is that, if it is to be meaningful, decolonisation can no longer afford to be decontextualized. That is, having rendered 'visible the structuring force of Western enunciation' broadly (Gallien, 2020: 38), a shift has to take place regarding how to then move into pluriversality or a 'diversity of de-colonial project' as Mignolo puts it (cited in González García, 2006: 46). In other words, context matters, but so does the relationality of the diverse aspects of decolonial projects.

Furthermore, a number of questions (which can also be framed as possible practical solutions) arise from the above reflection for which there is little space to consider in this article, but worth thinking about going forward. These are: first, in taking seriously the idea of power, how much can we assume about our students' abilities to be meaningful agents in the production of knowledge, whether new or not? Second, is the decolonisation process gradual or are some forms of excluding essentialisms important to foreground? Third, given that what decolonisation means even within the small confines of academia is so diverse that it cannot be proscribed through a single narrative, might it be the case, to stick with my discipline, that some departments will require an ethnocentric approach that replaces one paradigm with another, while others will require a socially neutral observer approach? Fourth, what might it mean to take seriously the idea of epistemic violence as central to the discipline's sense of being? Might such a centering provide us with a more urgent urge to find a decolonised ontology?

In other words, how can the discipline as a whole harness its possession of the language of power and its discursive means for the purposes of decolonisation? How can we meaningfully focus on other strategies of curriculum decolonisation beyond the obvious ones such as diversifying our curriculum content or constantly highlighting the contested nature of knowledge? That is, and this is a question directed at my colleagues, how can the discipline recontextualise its legitimation codes in terms commensurate with the decolonisation discourse presented thus far that calls for a radical re-imagination of the notions of *the political* through African and African diasporic ontologies?

Acknowledgments

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