

Panorami

African Political Philosophy of Decolonization: De-Alienation and Emancipation for Transmodernity

**La filosofia politica africana della decolonizzazione:
de-alienazione ed emancipazione per la transmodernità**

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Abstract. The present article aims to propose the concept of emancipation and de-alienation in African political philosophy of decolonization in the actual context of neoliberalism for transmodernity. That is, every culture can dialogue with another and they can create a new culture where they can recognize one another. After the criticism of postcolonial philosophy, African political philosophy is at present struggling against neocolonialism in its form of neoliberalism, which is alienating various dimensions of life. This condition of the African continent led Olúfémí Táíwò to speak of the necessity to criticize the concept of decolonization. As a result, it is becoming clear that a new critique of de-alienation is urgent. In this article, we reflect through the contribution of Frantz Fanon's concept of de-alienation as humanism, Jean-Marc Ela's criticism of neocolonialism, and finally the Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's concept of decolonization of the mind as cultural decolonization, connected with Kwasi Wiredu's conceptual decolonization. First of all, the reflection will recognize the role of decolonization's philosophy as emancipation and de-alienation. In this case the African political Philosophy is conceived as the way for epistemological, cultural, political, economic, conceptual and linguistic decolonization. Finally, we will reflect on colonialism and neocolonialism as coloniality.

Keywords: emancipation, de-alienation, colonialism, neocolonialism, coloniality, decoloniality.

Riassunto. L'articolo mira a proporre il concetto di emancipazione e de-alienazione nella filosofia politica africana della decolonizzazione nel contesto attuale del neoliberismo per la transmodernità. In altre parole, ogni cultura può dialogare con un'altra e insieme possono creare una nuova cultura in cui potersi riconoscere a vicenda. A seguito della critica alla filosofia postcoloniale, la filosofia politica africana sta attualmente lottando contro il neocolonialismo nella sua forma neoliberista, che sta alienando varie dimensioni della vita. Questa condizione del continente africano ha portato autori come Olúfémí Táíwò a parlare della necessità di criticare il concetto di decolonizzazione. Di conseguenza, sta diventando chiara l'urgenza di una nuova critica della de-alienazione. L'articolo riflette questa questione attraverso il contributo del concetto di de-alienazione come umanesimo di Frantz Fanon, la critica al neocolonialismo di Jean-Marc Ela e, infine, il concetto di decolonizzazione della mente come decolonizzazione culturale di Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, collegato alla decolonizzazione concettuale di Kwasi Wiredu. In primo luogo, l'analisi riconoscerà il ruolo della filosofia della decolonizzazione come emancipazione e de-alienazione. In questo senso, la filosofia politica africana è concepita come la via per la decolonizzazione epistemologica, culturale, politica, economica, concettuale e linguistica. Infine, si rifletterà sul colonialismo e sul neocolonialismo intesi come "colonialità".

Parole chiave: emancipazione, de-alienazione, colonialismo, neocolonialismo, colonialità, decolonialità.

1. Introduction

African political philosophy is currently undergoing epistemological revisionism because, with the independence of African countries, Africa became formally independent but not in practice. Indeed, the actual African condition calls for decolonization and emancipation. According to Michael Amoah in Africa it is necessary to decolonize the whole political system.¹

Contemporary African philosophy begins its inquiry with Placide Tempels's book, in which the central idea was the possibility of the existence of African philosophy.² Tempels dissented from the dominant colonial discourse that denied the existence of African philosophy, as represented by the Hegelian vision of his philosophy of history.

This epistemological debate monopolized African philosophy, whereas the other dimensions – political, logical, linguistic, and so on – revolved around the question of existence or non-existence of African Philosophy. Thus, it is possible to say that African politics was viewed as the last

¹ See Amoah, *Decolonizing African Politics*.

² See Tempels, *A filosofia Bantu*.

topic to be addressed in the reflection of African philosophers. In the second part of the 20th century, after African countries gained their independence, African political philosophers began to reflect on the meaning of independence. Today, with the crises of African institutions, African political philosophy has become a central topic of the debate on African philosophy. It was expected that political independence would bring social and economic independence, but the old colonialism paradoxically became the new colonialism together with financial capitalism. This is what Kwame Nkrumah called *neocolonialism*. Accordingly, “the greatest danger at present facing Africa is neo-colonialism and its major instrument, balkanization.”³ For Nkrumah, balkanization is the condition in which the African state remains divided and without union, a situation that enables the colonizer to dominate. According to him, one state alone in Africa cannot resist the colonizer’s domination.

So, for him, the solution to neocolonialism is that *Africa must unite*⁴ and only with that unity, can the continent be decolonized. Nkrumah’s conception of African union is rooted in the Pan-African movement, which emerged before his political thought and later became the basis for the present-day African Union.

On the other hand, the Third World movement that met in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955 aimed to liberate all colonized countries based on the principle of non-alignment. When the leaders of African liberation movements returned from Bandung, however, they continued their political, social and linguistic divisions and negotiated only with their respective metropolises. This consequence is precisely what Nkrumah theorized as the “balkanization” of Africa.

According to Jean-Marc Ela, for Nkrumah, “balkanization” meant that the great powers transformed Africa into smaller territories by means of their “disagreement policy.”⁵ Nkrumah himself argued that the term “is particularly appropriate to describe the breaking up of Africa into small, weak states, since it arose from the action of the great powers.”⁶

To this day, Africa’s economic dependence has led to neocolonialism. African political decolonization – beginning in 1957 with Ghana as the first country to become decolonized, followed by the majority of African countries between 1960 and 1975 – did not mean economic decolonization. Even with political independence, African countries remain economically dependent on Western countries and today also on China. As

³ Nkrumah, *Africa must unite*, 190.

⁴ The first publication of Nkrumah’s book, *Africa must unite*, was in 1963.

⁵ Ela, *Afrique*, 8.

⁶ Nkrumah, *Africa must unite*, 190.

previously stated, Nkrumah calls this economic dependence neocolonialism. For Nkrumah, neocolonialism is an instrument of the balkanization of Africa “this is one of the diverse forms of dependent countries which, politically, are formally independent, but in fact, are enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence”⁷. Structural poverty – resulting from slavery, direct and indirect colonialism, and various forms of racism – has to this day prevented Africa from achieving any real decolonization. As Walter Rodney argues, the European project of domination through colonization actively underdeveloped Africa.⁸ Europe dominated Africa in all dimensions of existence: political, economic, social, religious, epistemological, cultural, linguistic, and so on. This colonial domination has profound roots in Africa. The consequence of this condition is what Engelbert Mveng calls “anthropological pauperization.”⁹ Therefore, it is necessary to pursue the decolonization of all dimensions of the African worldview. Instead of creating strong institutions, colonialism created strong leaders who have misdirected African society.

This debate on decolonization was developed by Frantz Fanon, who reflected on the conditions of the oppressed in his concept of decolonization as humanism, understood as de-alienation and emancipation of the oppressed. From the same perspective, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o affirmed the importance of the cultural decolonization of language. For him, it is possible to decolonize Africa if Africans reappropriate their own local languages in order to decolonize the African worldview. On the other hand Kwasi Wiredu concentrated his reflection on epistemic decolonization in African philosophy, where conceptual decolonization became the basic framework of his thought.¹⁰ Finally Valentin Mudimbe sees African thought as *gnosis* and proposes the decolonization of knowledge.¹¹

This article presents the debate on African philosophy of decolonization from a critical theory and intercultural perspective. This framework identifies Frantz Fanon, Jean-Marc Ela, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Kwasi Wiredu, Valentin Mudimbe, F.E. Boulaga and Achille Mbembe as key figures who developed an African philosophy of decolonization and proposed a deconstructionist approach to it. Therefore, this reflection contextualizes the concept of decolonization in Africa in order to present the continent in dialogue with its own culture and other world cultures.

⁷ Nkrumah, *Africa must unite*, 191-192.

⁸ See Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

⁹ See Mveng, *Identità africana e cristianesimo*.

¹⁰ Wiredu, “Toward Decolonizing African Philosophy;” Wiredu, “Conceptual Decolonization;” Wiredu, “Introduction: African Philosophy in Our Time.”

¹¹ Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*.

This work is structured as follows: 1. *Philosophy of decolonization as emancipation and de-alienation*; 2. *Cultural, linguistic, and economic decolonization*; 3. *African criticism of colonialism, neocolonialism and coloniality*.

2. Philosophy of decolonization as emancipation and de-alienation

To speak of decolonization is to engage with the concepts of liberation, emancipation, and de-alienation. Current movements claiming for the revision of African cartography – in which African maps are presented as smaller than the European continent – are one example that shows how important epistemological decolonization is. On the other hand, recent protests connected with Black Lives Matter in the United States demonstrate the demand for genuine liberation. These movements recall the necessity of epistemic decolonization. It is in this way that Olúfemi Táíwò tries to carry out an epistemological critique of the first decolonization, which was basically formal¹². As Boaventura de Sousa Santos¹³ puts it, this involves the decline of the Western cognitive empire and the emergence of a new epistemology of the Global South. Epistemological decolonization is emerging as the path toward cultural decolonization, because the first decolonization was merely political or formal, and remains so to this day. Decolonization was supposed to be the transition from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light. It is a birth, a passage to a new life that engages every dimension of the human being.

The African philosophy of decolonization saw figures such as Jean-Marc Ela¹⁴, Frantz Fanon¹⁵, Valentin Mudimbe,¹⁶ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o,¹⁷ Michael Amoah,¹⁸ Kwasi Wiredu,¹⁹ F. Eboussi Boulaga,²⁰ and Achille Mbembe²¹ as its key precursors. The philosophy of decolonization, before being political, economic, and social, is first and foremost epistemological.²² It manifests itself as a counter-discourse aimed at deconstructing

¹² See Táíwò, *Against Decolonisation*.

¹³ See De Sousa Santos, *La fine dell'impero cognitivo*.

¹⁴ See Ela, *Le cri de l'homme africain*.

¹⁵ See Fanon, *I dannati della terra*.

¹⁶ See Mudimbe, *L'invenzione dell'Africa*.

¹⁷ Thiong'o, *Decolonizzare la mente*.

¹⁸ See Amoah, *Decolonizing African Politics*.

¹⁹ See Wiredu, "Conceptual Decolonization."

²⁰ See Eboussi Boulaga, *La crise du Muntu*.

²¹ See Mbembe, *Sortir de la grande nuit*; Mbembe, *Postcolonialismo*.

²² See Eboussi Boulaga, *La crise du Muntu*; De Sousa Santos, *La fine dell'impero cognitivo*; De Sousa Santos, *Epistemologie del Sud*; De Sousa Santos, *Decolonizzare la storia*; Fanon, *Os condenados da Terra*; Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizzare la mente*.

narratives of oppression to achieve emancipation and overcome alienation. The urgency of a critical philosophy of decolonization for liberation stems from an analysis based on historical realism, which shows that the colonized or oppressed are not yet free. This was the basis for the creation of the Latin American philosophy of liberation, whose leading exponents include Leopoldo Zea, Augusto Salazar Bondy, Horacio Cerutti, and Enrique Dussel.²³ Therefore, there is today an urgent need for a philosophy of decolonization that can respond to this existential condition of the oppressed under neocolonialism²⁴ in its neoliberal capitalist form.

Indeed, the African philosophy of decolonization shares the same philosophical question as Latin American philosophy, where the critique of neocolonialism is the fundamental concept. The oppressed, despite their so-called independence, do not feel truly free because of neocolonialism. Therefore, a new systematic and critical theoretical approach to the African philosophy of decolonization is imperative. De-alienation and decolonization must be grounded in a concrete external metaphysics, as articulated by Enrique Dussel and Emmanuel Lévinas through their metaphysics of alterity.²⁵ When we say *person* we must refer to the *concrete person*, who lives in a *concrete context*. It is this person whose dignity and humanity we are called to respect. One cannot continue to philosophize in Africa's present condition of extreme poverty, nor can philosophers remain indifferent to the barbarities of contemporary society. The current African context shapes the very conditions of philosophizing; that is, it compels us to raise fundamental questions. Thus, today in Africa the great question is: How can we build a society with strong institutions and stability for integral development? It is in this context that the concept of decolonization becomes relevant once again.

Today, neoliberalism continues to alienate society, promoting war and destroying the natural biodiversity in Africa; therefore, deconstructing the concept of neoliberalism is necessary, and it will be important to recover Karl Marx's concept of alienation, which seems to have been forgotten in recent years.²⁶ De-alienation is only possible through a critical theory that places the concept of humanity at the center of its reflection, rather than through instrumental reason, which can no longer operate within a logic of domination. For Frantz Fanon, de-alienation is not possible without

²³ Melchiorre, *Filosofie nel mondo*, 433.

²⁴ Nkrumah, *Africa must unite*, 190.

²⁵ Melchiorre, *Filosofie nel mondo*, 433; for the concept of concrete or external metaphysics, see Cacciari, *Metafisica concreta*.

²⁶ Rosa, *Accelerazione e alienazione*; Hartmut Rosa proposes a revival of the concept of alienation that was developed by the Frankfurt School and subsequently abandoned by its followers Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth.

violence, as it is the only path to liberation.²⁷ This view aligns with Heraclitus, who claims that everything begins with *Polemos* (war), or with the defenders of just war. Unlike Heraclitus's determinism, Fanon's view does not present violence as inevitable. Rather, he places violence as *conditio sine qua non* – a necessary means of liberation – in the form of de-alienation understood as a new humanism.²⁸ According to Fanon, the process of alienation is the result of instrumental reason and violence. Thus, decolonization is necessary for liberation, that is, to de-alienate the whole human being. Violence creates violence; therefore, decolonization must take place through cultural and integral formation. It is necessary to de-symbolize African people in order to decolonize their imagination through critical consciousness, so as to question everything that has been indoctrinated that led to their alienation.

To date, the philosophy of decolonization is a critical ethical-political and theoretical reflection, grounded in an intercultural and transcultural vision for transmodernity.²⁹ According to Dussel, transmodernity is a dialogue between modernities aimed at creating a new modernity in which everyone can recognize themselves. Decolonizing today means humanizing and protecting the whole human being. Yet this process requires rationality, a reason capable of illuminating the reality in which we live. According to Enrique Dussel,

The affirmation of rationality is the indispensable condition for the process of liberation from oppression. Without reason, without practical, communicative, technological-instrumental, emancipatory rationality, it is not possible to intelligently carry out the struggle for justice.³⁰

The struggle for justice is the result of an unconditional commitment to the total liberation of the human person. Today's oppression by neo-liberal and digital domination in Africa is the continuation of erotic, religious, pedagogical, and cultural colonization. According to Do Nascimento and Ngameni, the concept of digital domination represents a new form of colonization in Africa, characterized as cybercolonialism.³¹ According to others, cybercolonialism is a form of digital domination through contemporary information technology.

The new form of imperialism – which involves not only human rights violations but also ecological and military invasions – is justified in the

²⁷ See Fanon, *I dannati della terra*, 3-70.

²⁸ Fanon, *I dannati della terra* 4; see Fanon, *Pelle nera, maschere bianche*, 25.

²⁹ Dussel, *Modernità e interculturalità per un superamento critico dell'eurocentrismo*.

³⁰ Dussel, *Filosofia della liberazione*, 58.

³¹ Do Nascimento and Ngameni, *L'Afrique au risque d'une cybercolonisation*.

name of defending the human person, who paradoxically is being massacred everywhere. The “de-dollarization” (Jean-Marc Ela) of today’s world requires the “de-economization of the imagination”³². Through a critical vision of reality, the oppressed can create the existential conditions needed to restore human dignity. In Nancy Fraser’s words, many people are sacrificed on the altar of cannibalistic capitalism, left to their fate by the greed of multinationals and governments.³³ The sphere of life is being destroyed, and racism is growing with neoliberalism. Inequalities continue, and *The Wretched of the Earth* find themselves without prospects. We are living in an anarchy caused by neocolonialism, and the United Nations has lost credibility and is collapsing due to a lack of funding from major powers. We are in the Hobbesian condition of *Man as a wolf to Man*. Selfishness and greed for capital are destroying humanity and nature, as well as reducing everything to immanence.

It must be stated that after political independence in Africa, the process of recolonization or neocolonialism began, masked by domination through energy warfare and cybercolonialism.³⁴ Coloniality, as Anibal Quijano³⁵ called it, is a consequence of the attempt to maintain colonial hegemony with a continued logic of recolonization through financial imperialism.³⁶ The desire for power and the rush to brainwash people through the universalization of ideological narratives in order to repeat dehumanizing theories are the basis that perpetuate neocolonialism as a form of domination.³⁷ Modern philosophy is based on instrumental reason, which forces *The Wretched of the Earth* to repeat narratives that prevent them from developing counter-narratives. That is why Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o shows the urgency of decolonizing the mind³⁸ and the word. Neocolonialism as a culture is based on instrumental reason, which seeks to perpetuate the ideology of the denial of otherness; consequently, it is cannibalistic, as it requires oppression for its own existence. Only an emancipatory reason can seek to reverse this condition. The urgency of the critical theory imperative for the complete decolonization of humanity is grounded in a realistic analysis that leads to the conclusion that freedom has become an increasingly distant utopia today.

Political freedoms in Africa have not been transformed into economic and cultural freedoms due to a lack of cultural emancipation. Leaders

³² Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*.

³³ Fraser, *Capitalismo cannibale*.

³⁴ Fraser, *Capitalismo cannibale*.

³⁵ Quijano, “Colonialidade del poder”.

³⁶ Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*.

³⁷ Wa Thiong’o, *Decolonizzare la mente*.

³⁸ Wa Thiong’o, *Decolonizzare la mente*.

such as Agostinho Neto (Angola), Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane (Mozambique), Patrice Lumumba (Congo), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Gamal Abdel-Nasser (Egypt), and others thought about the concept of political freedom and did not develop a philosophy of decolonization. This was because, after political independence, an even worse form of cultural and economic-financial colonialism emerged. As Amílcar Cabral argued, decolonization should be a cultural project – it should be a project that has culture as its key element and could then have political consequences. When Cabral speaks of decolonization as a cultural act, he is precisely evoking the philosophy of decolonization as a cultural driving force, as does Kwame Nkrumah when he speaks of *conscientiousness*.

3. Cultural, linguistic, and economic decolonization

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues that cultural decolonization in Africa requires the decolonization of the mind. Frantz Fanon, for his part, conceives decolonization as de-alienation and, through his concept of humanism, shows the necessity and urgency of decolonization for the total liberation of Africa. However, Frantz Fanon is widely regarded as the greatest precursor of the philosophy of decolonization³⁹ for having developed a philosophy of anti-colonial emancipation in a more systematic and rigorous way, starting from the category of humanity. According to Fanon:

Decolonization never goes unnoticed because it rests on being, fundamentally modifies being, transforms spectators struck by inessentiality into privileged actors, captured in an almost grandiose way by the face of history. It introduces into being a rhythm of its own, brought by new men, a new language, a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men.⁴⁰

Whether one considers Fanon's conception of decolonization or that of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, both share a common goal: to bring about the emergence of a new human being capable of criticism and self-criticism. Thus, the philosophy of decolonization is shaped by humanism. While Fanon does not develop a systematic theory of linguistic decolonization as Ngũgĩ does, both authors recognize that the colonized subject's desire to adopt the colonizer's identity is accompanied by a rejection of their own cultural and linguistic heritage.⁴¹ Both agree that linguistic decolonization

³⁹ Dussel, *Filosofia della liberazione*, 64.

⁴⁰ Dussel, *Filosofia della liberazione*, 4.

⁴¹ Fanon, *Pelle nera, maschere bianche*.

is key to the de-alienation of colonized peoples, and that their ultimate aim is to free humanity from its existential bonds.

In fact, cultural decolonization requires linguistic decolonization. For Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o, one cannot exist without the other. He criticizes an African literary culture that mimics European models and consequently dehumanizes Africans. This line of criticism continues that of Frantz Fanon, who denounced the attempt to render black people inferior.

African linguistics needs to be consolidated in order to reveal the African subject, and this is a cultural-epistemic process grounded in the valorization of African cultures and their philosophies. As Wa Thiong'o has insisted, the study of African anthropology, African linguistics, and African philosophy – along with other fields of knowledge in dialogue with modern science and consciousness – provides essential tools for an African cultural critique. Thus, performative African proverbs are the key to immersing oneself in *the African worldview*. Only through self-knowledge via the linguistic decolonization can the *munthu* (person) be revealed. The *munthu*, freed from all oppressions, can manifest itself as the key to *ubuntu* (the relational dimension of the human person). In this vein, knowledge of philosophical pluralism in Africa is key to understanding the richness that manifests itself in diverse cultures through knowledge of African languages, in line with Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o. This is the basis for the decolonization and the liberation of Africans from the shackles in which they find themselves. Similarly, Frantz Fanon, in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), states that his goal is to “liberate black men from themselves.”⁴² This liberation cannot happen without economic and social decolonization – that is, without decolonizing the concept of progress upon which it depends.⁴³

In fact, the basic concept in Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o is the decolonization of the African imagination through cultural and linguistic decolonization. African liberation, for him, depends on this process. African languages need to be consolidated as vehicles for perceiving the world in order to better decode reality. In advancing his ideas, Ngūgĩ insists on mastering local languages so that linguistic decolonization can lead to the decolonization of the African worldview and thus avoid what Frantz Fanon calls *double consciousness*. The new humanism resulting from the de-alienation proposed by Fanon involves a process of linguistic decolonization leading to the decolonization of consciousness – which, in Thiong'o's terms, we can call the decolonization of the mind. Black people must stop wanting to be white, and this involves a process of searching for authenticity

⁴² Fanon, *Pelle nera, maschere bianche*, 26.

⁴³ See Allen, *The End of Progress*.

through recognizing their own existence. Mastery of languages is the key to effective decolonization in Africa and to cultural emancipation. For Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, thinking in one's own language helps to grasp complexity and to criticize the desire for power that can arise from interaction with others. Through his linguistic studies, he takes up Kwasi Wiredu's question: is it possible to philosophize in African national languages? This is crucial for conceptual decolonization.

In Wiredu's view, philosophizing in African languages is of paramount importance. Thus, his vision of decolonization leads him to valorize local languages as instruments of cultural decolonization. Consequently, Wiredu promotes the development of Akan philosophy in Ghana.⁴⁴ His reflection on conceptual decolonization is significant because it highlights the value of intercultural dialogue through critical reflection. Wiredu argues that philosophical reflection must recognize epistemic plurality and listen to other rationalities. Given that colonialism persists in Africa even after independence, Wiredu focuses on conceptual decolonization as a means to achieve intellectual autonomy on the continent.

The same interest in cultural decolonization through language is evident in Giuseppe Frizzi's work on Macua philosophy in Mozambique. Kwasi Wiredu (Ghana), Giuseppe Frizzi (Mozambique-Niassa-Macua), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya) all see African languages as the way to decolonize the African continent. Whatever the case, Western reason needs to be disarmed, and the West must accept that others exist. Therefore, when we speak of the philosophy of decolonization from the perspective of critical theory as the integral emancipation of humanity, we refer to anti-Eurocentric discourse and, particularly today, to anti-neoliberal discourse as a critique of neocolonialism. It is a theory that, in the words of Enrique Dussel, aims at liberation from the last and most advanced stage of neocolonial capitalism.

4. African criticism of colonialism, neocolonialism and coloniality

The thinking of Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, Jean-Marc Ela, Engelbert Mveng, Pierre Meinrad Hegba, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Michael Amoah, Valentin Y. Mudimbe, Eboussi Boulaga, and Achille Mbembe, in addition to its undeniable impact on African philosophy, has the further global merit of having questioned Eurocentrism and the instrumental reason for domination. This Pleiad of African philosophers reflected on the urgent need to overcome colonialism and neocolonialism by seeking a

⁴⁴ Wiredu, "Conceptual Decolonization."

critical historical consciousness among Africans, thereby enabling them to become subjects of history rather than its objects. With scientific rigor and legitimacy, these authors can be regarded as African decolonial thinkers, as their work has left a significant mark on the philosophy of decolonization. According to Fabien Eboussi Boulaga,⁴⁵ African critical theory today cannot take the European worldview as its starting point; it must instead begin from the African worldview. This worldview must serve as the starting point for all reflection in the African context, grounded in the Bantu vision – in other words, the *ubuntu*⁴⁶ worldview. This is an African systematic concept that affirms Ubuntu across epistemological, political, economic, and social relations. *Ubuntu* logic is anti-Aristotelian as it rejects the Aristotelian principle of *tertium non datur* (the excluded middle) and affirms *tertium datur*⁴⁷ (the inclusion of a third possibility). The aim of these scholars is to deploy critical analysis so that African peoples may emerge from the abyss of colonialism and neocolonialism and become masters of their own existence. For this reason, a process of decolonization is urgently needed in Africa.

This lineage of philosophers and theologians contributed to criticizing the Western culture of domination through the concept of decolonization. Their work aims to develop an African emancipatory reason within the critique of imperialism, seeking to restore Africans' faith in their own abilities. Early after independence, these African scholars developed such a reason, one that regarded the historical trajectory of Africa with suspicion. They sought to show the urgency of Africa using its own capacities for a new way of being and existing within the historical process. For Engelbert Mveng, this takes the form of anthropological pauperization as a process of depersonalization.⁴⁸ Jean-Marc Ela's critique, meanwhile, locates this condition of external dependence in the fact that Africans rely entirely on the outside world, which raises the urgent problem of liberating Africa from human and economic dependence.⁴⁹

M. P. Hegba argues that Africa's identity crisis and emotional dependence on the outside world allow others to prosper, particularly in the context of various forms of global imperialism. Consequently, there is a clamor for liberation on the continent and an urgent need to mobilize industrialization using African resources. There is a cry from African people to break free from the condition of being objects of history. According to

⁴⁵ See Eboussi Boulaga, *L'affaire de la philosophie africaine*.

⁴⁶ *Ubuntu* is an African systematic concept which affirms the power of Ubuntu in the epistemological, political, economic and social relations.

⁴⁷ Mussomar, Cecere, *Para um iluminismo Africano*.

⁴⁸ Mveng, *Identità africana e cristianesimo*, 70.

⁴⁹ Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*, 9–17.

F. Eboussi Boulaga, such liberation is possible only by believing in African forces through African *Ubuntu reason* – a form of reason that operates without a conflictual dialectic.⁵⁰ The demand for freedom and justice requires that Africans systematically and rigorously critique both the current context of the African continent and the condition of *The Wretched of the Earth*. According to Ela and Hegba, Christianity contributed to the domination of Africa. In this regard, for Ela, the objective is to develop a critical theoretical method of faith within the African context, one that resists the interference of domination through culture, economy, and politics.⁵¹ Ela's thought offers a systematic critique of the impact of colonial domination in Africa and seeks the means for its decolonization. As Ela writes: "The urgency of radical change is to create better conditions for millions of Africans".⁵² Through Ela's critique, these transformations produce an enlightenment – a critical awakening that can lead to the continent's renewal. Ela recognizes that it is a violent process, since the colonizers will not relinquish their spirit of domination and persist in creating conditions of dependence and injustice for African countries. What Ela's criticism shows is the issue of neocolonialism that has led Africa into an abyss from which it cannot easily escape. To emerge from this situation, what is required is a critical dialectical enlightenment. According to Ela, in a situation of widespread poverty,

It is not certain that men who have all the initiative will eternally accept their status as objects of history. The lack of prospects for social and cultural advancement, such as real participation in political decision-making, if prolonged, will transform the Africa that was born out of independence into a huge powder keg.⁵³

Further, Ela views political and economic corruption as the root causes of the collapse of African regimes. The prolongation of the African crisis is akin to a labyrinth with no way out. He is convinced that, to escape this situation of misery and injustice, violence must be avoided and human dignity respected and protected. The central point is humanity. In this, the Cameroonian thinker aligns with Fanon, for whom humanism is de-alienation. For Ela, Fanon is "one of the thinkers of the Third World who most broadly addressed the problem of violence within the revolutionary process."⁵⁴ Through his therapeutic work, Fanon sought to

⁵⁰ Boulaga, *L'affaire de la philosophie africaine*.

⁵¹ Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*, 17.

⁵² Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*, 70.

⁵³ Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*, 70.

⁵⁴ Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*, 71.

de-symbolize Africans and *re-symbolize* them within an African symbol framework. African thought must therefore engage in a deep and honest dialogue with modern culture and scientific knowledge. This process demands sacrifice, honesty, and rigor, rejecting any inclination to continue receiving donations and depend on others for everything. Identity and freedom require work and seriousness; nothing comes for free. Freedom resides in truth, not in slander or trickery. However, according to Ela, economic and political aid to Africa is so pervasive that neocolonialism has turned independence into a process not of liberty but of recolonization. In other words, independence has led to dependence. This is why Ela asserts that, for Fanon, “the liberation of the colonized masses must be achieved and must not be achieved through force.”⁵⁵ This process also entails a radical transformation of both colonizer and colonized, breaking free from the colonizer’s superiority complex and the colonized’s inferiority complex, so that both may become protagonists of their own existential destiny. Fanon’s idea of liberation aims to find a new humanity and constitutes a therapeutic process for the creation of a new human being. It seeks to reverse the alienating situation to which the colonized have been subjected by the colonizer. The colonized must overcome their inferiority complex. Jean-Marc Ela concurs with Fanon, stressing that “the struggle for freedom involves a radical reordering of the universe where the colonized work to bring out the man in themselves.”⁵⁶ That is why, for Fanon, liberation means leading the human being out of darkness into light, enabling him to begin trusting in his own abilities. It is a new creation in which the colonized man himself becomes the architect of his own destiny through his own critical capacity. It is therefore undeniable that Fanon’s philosophy is a philosophy of decolonization, for it affirms the capacity of the colonized to redeem themselves from their condition and become subjects of their own history. Decolonization is the questioning of an established order that continues to blame the colonized; hence, according to Fanon, the mentality to be eliminated is that of the oppressor. In this sense, the philosophy of decolonization functions as a counter-narrative, a counter-discourse to Eurocentrism.

Ela clarifies that Fanon’s position is not a legitimization of violence but rather an affirmation of the need to eliminate imperialism. In his reading of Fanon, Ela states: “Hence not only the legitimization of armed struggle, but the awareness of violence as ‘absolute praxis.’ Decolonization means the destruction of the colonial system.”⁵⁷ The philosophy of

⁵⁵ Fanon, *I dannati della terra*, 3.

⁵⁶ Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*, 73.

⁵⁷ Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*, 73.

decolonization is therefore a critical-practical theoretical framework that seeks to call into question all claims of domination (*imperium*), whether colonial, political, social, religious, historical or epistemic-cultural. Therefore, in the wake of Fanon, “decolonization is humanism” because “it implies the possibility of reconstructing human relations and thus creating a new society.”⁵⁸ In line with Ela’s reading of Fanon, violence is understood as a means of decolonization, since armed organization compels the colonizer to change his mentality. Ela further observes that, “it is this aspect that Fanon draws on in his conception of violence as a means of purification.”⁵⁹ Violence, according to this postulate, transforms “the psyche of the human being” and detoxifies him by removing the colonized’s inferiority complex while simultaneously undermining the colonizer’s superiority complex. Fanon rejects the revolutionary romanticism of elites who seek to benefit from the revolution after its outcome. Decolonization thus manifests itself as an immersion in history as a subject rather than an object – a pedagogy of decolonization of the oppressor and the oppressed.

5. Conclusion

Neoliberalism in Africa perpetuates the process of colonization to this date. The African philosophy of decolonization must therefore once again critique the mentality of domination through concrete and practical action. The African State is called upon to advance decolonization from neocolonialism and to initiate the process of emancipation and de-alienation through education. To that end, Frantz Fanon’s work provides a powerful theoretical framework for a new vision of humanism rooted in cultural transformation. For Africa, it will be necessary – as Jean-Marc Ela argues – to undertake the deconstruction and critique of the concept of progress, which is intrinsically linked to capitalism and to modernity understood as rationality. Africa must therefore pursue cultural decolonization in dialogue with modern society. At the same time, it must embrace modern experimental science and technology as tools for its own development. Thus, Africa must promote a genuine dialogue between traditional and modern societies. Without such a reconciliation between modernity and African tradition, a new, decolonized Africa cannot emerge.

⁵⁸ Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*, 74.

⁵⁹ Ela, *Afrique l'irruption des pauvres*, 74.

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