

## Extraversion, Scientific Dependency and the Democratisation of Knowledge

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### **Abstract**

Paulin Hountondji is best known for his (in)famous critique of African philosophy as ethnophilosophy. However, while his criticism of African Philosophy has generated much debate, his analysis and critique of extraversion and scientific dependency, the pervading attitude among Global South scholars marked by an intellectual reliance on the Global North academia for relevance and validity has not attracted as much attention. This paper interrogates Hountondji’s critique of extraversion in the light of contemporary global discourse on global epistemic inequalities and the imperative of knowledge democracy. Utilising the qualitative method of research through critical analysis of library texts, it avers that 1) Houtondji’s recognition and acknowledgment of the fact of extraversion and scientific dependency implies a corresponding recognition and acknowledgement of distinct, particular knowledges; 2) his critique of extraversion and scientific dependency necessarily implies an acknowledgement of a form of epistemicide/epistemic injustice of/on local knowledge systems. It thereafter, utilising the analytic and synthetic methods of research, argues that Hountondji’s critique places him firmly in the realm of postcolonial scholars who have theorised on the need for the decolonisation and democratisation of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Epistemic injustice, Extraversion, Knowledge democracy, Paulin Hountondji, Scientific dependency.

### **Introduction**

Much of the debate on global epistemic injustice has focused predominantly on how knowledge and power are related, with particular emphasis on how power imbalances are structured into the knowledge transfer processes. With emphasis on the coloniality of knowledge, this debate critiques the universality of western hegemonic epistemographies by asserting the legitimacy of alternative epistemographies. Adopting a poststructural basis, it avers that knowledge

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production should be decolonised such that new epistemic categories and concepts are produced as alternatives to western hegemonic epistemic categories and concepts. A pertinent example of such new categories lies in Kwasi Wiredu's rejection of the existence of 'mind' as an epistemic concept in Akan epistemography and his subsequent analysis of the human person in relation to the Akan culture.

Foregrounding on the above, this paper examines Paulin Hountondji's philosophy with special emphasis on his criticism of extraversion and scientific dependency. Hountondji is best known for his reflections on the idea of African Philosophy in the early days of professional Philosophy in Africa. At this time, Hountondji, in his seminal work, *African Philosophy, Myth and Reality*, dismissively characterised some early trends of African Philosophy as ethno-philosophy. To him, the works presented as African Philosophy were more anthropological than philosophical. Primary amongst the reasons for this was the fact that these works presented unanimist presuppositions of collective worldviews. As he reiterated twenty years after,

I could not admit that the first duty, let alone the only duty of African philosophers, was to describe or reconstruct the worldview of their ancestors or the collective assumptions of their communities. I contended therefore that most of these scholars were not really doing philosophy but ethno-philosophy: they were writing a special chapter of ethnology (2009, p. 124).

Arguing that philosophy, based on his own philosophical tradition, is characterised by its 'deliberate, explicit and individual analytic activity,' Hountondji (1996, p. 63), held that the works presented as philosophy were collective endeavours. As such, these works could not qualify as philosophy works. Extending his critique of ethno-philosophy, he noted that these works were based on imperialist exclusion and white superiority, given that the authors, with special emphasis on Placide Temples and his *Bantu Philosophy*, operated on the logic that the indigenous members of the community whose worldviews were exposed as philosophical did not possess the necessary wherewithal to elaborate on their philosophical beliefs.

While much ado has been made about the first part of Hountondji's critique of ethno-philosophy, the concluding part which holds ethno-philosophy as a form of imperialist exclusion has not been sufficiently interrogated. As such, deriving from the fame(?) of his critique of ethno-philosophy as anthropology and/or philosophy in its popular sense; and his assertion on the universalist nature of philosophical thinking, Hountondji has been relegated to the realm of African scholars whose relevance to contemporary African Philosophy remains outdated and questionable.

This paper, therefore, sets out to establish the contemporary relevance of Hountondji's critique of ethno-philosophy. While acknowledging that African Philosophy, characterised as developing as at the time of Hountondji's critique, can be said to have come of age, it examines Hountondji's critique in the light of contemporary discourse on knowledge inequalities,

decolonisation and knowledge democracy. Taking its cue from pertinent passages in Hountondji's writings, it argues that Hountondji's philosophy was a forerunner of current decolonisation theories, given his emphasis on knowledge democratisation and the need to overcome global epistemic imbalance.

To realise the foregoing objectives, the paper considers the question of knowledge inequality and knowledge democracy. Afterwards, it examines Hountondji's notions of extraversion and scientific dependency, after which it proffers an analysis on the relevance of Hountondji's notion of endogenous knowledge to contemporary quests for knowledge democracy.

### **Knowledge Inequalities and Knowledge Democracy**

Knowledge, the art of acquiring practical or/and theoretical information/understanding of a subject is an essential tool in humanity's quest to understand and master reality. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, knowledge is playing a more dominant role than it hitherto played in previous centuries. However, knowledge production has been, in recent times, mired in controversies relating to how knowledge is produced and disseminated. Premised on poststructuralist and postcolonialist criticisms of colonialist and hegemonic, universalist models of knowledge, salient questions have arisen on the types of knowledge produced, the sources of such knowledge and the primary determinants of what constitutes knowledge.

Critics of this definition of knowledge hold that any definition of knowledge must necessarily include recognition of the role played by dominant epistemic institutions in determinations of what knowledge is and how it is produced (Tandon et al., 2016). For them, knowledge production as presently constituted remains mired in systems that value knowledge production within specified institutions (academia), through specified methods including induction, deduction and the scientific method of data collation and using specific concepts and categories. That these systems persist speaks to the fact that the specified institutions remain the dominant determinants of the future of knowledge production.

The reality of 'specified' institutions and their predominant role in knowledge creation raise the question of what other 'unspecified' institutions of learning might exist and what kinds of knowledge and methods are excluded from dominant knowledge paradigms. More importantly, who is the determinant factor in what institutions are worthy to be specified and which knowledge type, structure and method is acceptable? These questions lead to the reality of non-dominant knowledge structures. If dominant knowledge structures and institutions are identified as the main drivers of future knowledge production, what happens to non-dominant knowledge structures and institutions? Why is there a bifurcation between dominant and non-dominant knowledge structures and institutions? Why have these other knowledge structures and traditions been apparently sidelined, more so in the light of global contemporary challenges which have resisted known solutions?

These questions, such as they are, have highlighted that knowledge inequalities pervade the global epistemic space. Institutions generally regarded as 'knowledge producers' have

created a monopoly in epistemic spheres wherein they are the sole determinants of what counts as knowledge and how such is produced. In doing so, they have excluded many forms of knowledge and methodologies as invalid. As Nathan (2021) avers, knowledge is a public good, and as such, its acquisition and creation cannot be limited to any singular person or group. However, knowledge inequality arises where there is a monopoly of knowledge creation and application. This monopoly can be seen in the existence of dominant knowledge structures aptly exemplified in the western hegemonic universal-objective knowledge structure; and is responsible for the global epistemic divide between the Global North and South.

In contemporary academic discourse, much has been made about the fact that the hegemonic nature of western epistemes is a resultant effect of the colonial experience (Spivak, 1994; Whitt, 2009; Santos, 2016; Hall & Tandon, 2017). This nature is credited with the knowledge inequality and epistemic injustice seen in contemporary academia where other sources/forms of knowledge and knowledge production different from the western, Eurocentric ones are deemed invalid on the basis of their difference from the dominant structure. However, in the light of contemporary socioeconomic global challenges and the growing importance attached to global knowledge economy, it is only rational to presuppose that the critical role played by dominant epistemic structures in resolving global challenges would be strengthened if/when diverse knowledge structures are applied to resistant global challenges. This is where the notion of knowledge democracy comes in.

Knowledge democracy is simply the position that diversities and pluralities of knowledge exist, and as such, should be recognised. Knowledge exists, is created and is transmitted in many forms. As Tandon et al. (2016) assert, knowledge democracy is characterised by (1) The recognition of 'ecologies' of knowledge; (2) The multiple forms through which knowledge can be created, transmitted and through which it can exist; (3) The fact that knowledge and power are interrelated such that knowledge acts as a power tool in social agitations for a better world/society; and (4) The demand that justice should be fundamental in the creating and usage of knowledge.

With the recognition of global epistemic injustice occasioned by the hegemonic nature of western knowledge structures and drawing from poststructuralist and postmodern theories, scholars have emphasised the need for a knowledge economy that is based on knowledge democracy. Predominantly, they argue on the diversities and pluralities of knowledges, given the nature of knowledge as a mode of solving challenges encountered in humanity's search for how to extract good standards of living from their environment. As such, they criticise dominant knowledge structures of committing epistemic violence and epistemicide on subaltern knowledge structures (Spivak, 1994; Santos, 2016).

For Spivak, epistemic violence occurs where a knower and her knowledge is privileged over other knowers and their forms of knowledge. This privileging results in an epistemicide, a destruction of the rejected forms of knowledge and the knowers' epistemes. Epistemicide and epistemic violence remain significant in knowledge production and transmission due to

the power role inherent in knowledge production. As Vargas-Mariño (2021, p. 1) avers, these power structures determine, using science as the norm, what is true and what is not, what is objective or what is non-objective.

In response to this recognition, postcolonial attempts to rescue subaltern epistemologies have taken various forms, ranging from attempts at validating these subaltern epistemologies through to anti-scientisms and anti-methodisms. Of essence to this work however, despite the wide variety of responses, is the recognition of the existence of alternate, subaltern epistemologies, a recognition spurred by the rejection of the status quo, a challenging of scientific hegemony and an acknowledgement, in the light of this glaring global epistemic injustice, of a necessity for emancipatory epistemic spaces, achieved through a decolonising process.

Postcolonial challenges to a hegemonic universal-objective methodology have mainly centered on the need for introducing new/alternative paradigms (Martinez-Vargas, 2017, p. 15). To achieve knowledge democracy, theorists highlight the necessity of diversification of discourses. Global epistemic democracy is achieved when victims of the hegemonic universal-objective narrative, hitherto excluded from the hegemonic western episteme, are included in the search for possible solutions to contemporary global challenges. As G.J.S Dei (cited in Martinez-Vargas, 2017, p. 13) holds, in its present mode, western science is limited in its restriction of ‘ontological, epistemological, political and spiritual blindness.’ Thus, the need for alternatives which pay attention to these excluded and neglected areas. Calls have therefore arisen for an epistemic pluriverse (Boidin et al., 2012, p. 1; Tandon et al., 2016; Vargas-Mariño, 2021, p. 14). Deriving from this call and the question of scientific hegemony, the next section examines Hountondji’s notion of extraversion and scientific dependency.

### **On Extraversion and Science Dependency**

As earlier noted, Hountondji is well renowned for his critique of ethno-philosophy. However, his analysis of science and the global knowledge economy has not aroused the level of interest generated by his analysis of African Philosophy. This paper adds to the debate on African Philosophy by examining the import of Hountondji’s analysis of global knowledge economy. In particular, this section examines his critique of the hegemonic nature of Anglo-Eurocentric epistemologies.

For Hountondji (2009, p. 128), research should be one aimed at an “autonomous, self-reliant scientific activity.” As he argues, postcolonial research, done in foreign languages, are targeted at meeting the research needs/interests of the Global North scholars. In his own words

(P)ost-colonial scientific research to this day has been tributary to, and structured like, colonial scientific research. In short post-colonial scientific research has been basically extraverted, i.e. turned outwards toward the outside world and

organised to respond to a demand (theoretical, scientific, economic, etc.) that comes from the ‘centre’ of the world market (2006, p. 46).

These two factors- foreign languages and foreign interests, act as means through which researchers in the Global South alienate themselves and their research from their local audience. Not only that, where such scholars address their local realities as research interests, they often do so within the confines of such local realities, with little or no attempt to integrate their research into global epistemic space.

This, then, is the major problematique faced in African intellectual activities: extraversion – when intellectual and scientific activities done in Africa by Africans are targeted at western audiences (Hountondji, 1995, p. 2). Through this process, research products of Global South scholars on their particular realities are taken as source materials for epistemic spaces deemed ‘more’ valid than the source researchers’. In this manner, the source researcher becomes alienated from his/her research products, given that these research products are presented through western scholars’ research products, with the western scholar receiving the resulting accolades and honours.

Extraversion thus, not only alienates Global South scholars from their home audience who, rightly, should be their target audience, it also holds Global South source researchers as analogous to the local informers utilised during colonialism; informers responsible for obtaining and transmitting information about local realities to the colonialists. The setting up of the Global North as the world’s epistemic center, the physical site of epistemic pilgrimages for scholars in the Global South is also a resultant effect of extraversion. Scientific tourism, as Hountondji terms it, is hardly reciprocal; while scholars from the Global South travel to the Global North in search of “paradigms, theoretical and methodological, models, books, articles, laboratory equipment or research team members,” the researcher from the Global North whose area of research interest lies in the Global South travels there merely for empirical data to be utilised (Hountondji, 2006, p. 49).

Through extraversion, the Global South is relegated to a dependent epistemic zone. In establishing the underdevelopment/scientific dependency of science and technology, Hountondji (1995, pp. 2-3) presented a six-point argument as follows:

- a) Modern science produces scientific statements through the collation, processing and interpretation of collated data;
- b) Scientific activity in colonial Africa lacked facilities for this process, resulting instead in a shortened process of collation and application of collated data;
- c) The vacuum left by this truncated process was filled by scholars in the coloniser’s homeland, resulting in African institutions acting as data depositaries where deposited collated data was thereafter forwarded for onward processing, being in this sense, a form of knowledge exploitation;

- d) The production of scientific knowledge is thus, analogical to that of economic materials, with the major distinction being that while one involves material goods, the former deals with non-material goods;
- e) The mode of production of non-material goods is determined by that of material goods;
- f) Africa's underdevelopment is better explained by theories which conceptualise underdevelopment as a resultant effect of domination and exploitation, with the forceful integration of subsistence, developing economies into global economy dominated by industrial and developed economies; rather than its explanations as a result of evolutionary principles;
- g) This presents as a pertinent analogy for science and technological underdevelopment as a result of a forceful integration into the knowledge economy dominated by the Global North.

He thereafter noted the following as indices of scientific extraversion:

- 1) The Global North's possession of technical supremacy and equipment;
- 2) Dependency on Western information systems due to inadequate literary and scholars publications;
- 3) The fact of institutional nomadism, that is, the unreciprocated nature of essential research travel to the Global North by Global South;
- 4) Brain drain as a form of institutional nomadism;
- 5) Alienated theoretical products that have little or no bearing on local concerns;
- 6) The primacy of applied research derive from a western pragmatism;
- 7) The fact of mental extraversion, a situation where research publications are targeted at western audiences;
- 8) A lack of consistent efforts in investigating, interrogating and formulating of theories based on peculiarities of the scholar's society, occasioned by mental extraversion and prejudice;
- 9) The continuing exploitation of African resources through the products of scientific research;
- 10) The marginalised development of ethno-studies in western epistemology;
- 11) The continued dependency on foreign languages as the medium of teaching and learning;
- 12) Minimal collaboration and communication exists between scholars in the Global South, in comparison with the amount of collaborative activities between Global South and North scholars;
- 13) Most African universities and research institutes are headed by scholars who studied in western universities and who either perform superlatively by organising their local scientific communities, or who perform woefully and end up fostering a system of

intellectual mediocrity, one lacking scientific rigor (1995, pp. 4-5; Dübgen & Skupien, 2019, pp. 70-71).

From this analysis, Hountondji observed that the phenomena of extraversion and ethno-studies need to be critically studied to understand global knowledge economy and the marginalisation of local knowledge systems. Despite the era of a reappraisal of local knowledges, extraversion's persistence is evident in the labeling of local knowledges as 'ethno'. While the prefix 'ethno' denotes the reconstruction of traditional knowledge conveyed through the oral tradition, ethno-studies remain the primary source of data for research done, in the interest of, by or/and for Global North scholars on Global South realities. In this sense, ethno-disciplines become mere appendages or extensions of the dominant western epistemic system. The global epistemic centre lies unchanged, fixed in an Anglo-European epistemography which views itself as liberal in its extension of its boundaries to accommodate these ethno-disciplines.

Foregrounding his analysis on the notion that science, the search for truth and efficiency, is universal, and cannot be constrained as the distinctive property of any culture, Hountondji adumbrates that local knowledge systems, epistemically undervalued as ethno-knowledge, should be targeted at their source communities and applied to aid the development thereof. These local knowledge systems form the scientific heritage of a society. Given that this heritage was utilised in efficient modes at the time they were discovered, it is only reasonable that Global South scholars critically appropriate their local knowledges in their research. They must also ensure that such research is targeted at members of their communities, scholars and lay alike, who act as arbiters in determining the validity or otherwise, dependent on how such research meets local needs. In this manner, the production of knowledge in the Global South would be targeted at meeting the needs of Global South societies, given that the research questions driving such research are formulated and drawn from their lived experiences.

Hountondji's critique of ethno-philosophy as a collective undertaking finds clarification in his critique of extraversion and scientific dependency. Ethno-philosophy is a mere appendage of western philosophy, the latter's primitive cousin, an anthropological rather than critical exercise. As Hountondji (1996, p. 37) argues, ethno-philosophy started as a form of extraversion, a mode of imperialist domination, with its primary target being intellectuals and scholars of the Global North. It is, therefore, best conceptualised as a form of epistemic objectification, a situation where the subaltern remains reduced to an object of research, one to be studied in accordance with pre-determined parameters (Dübgen & Skupien, 2019, pp. 13-45). It is on this premise that Hountondji makes a distinction between indigenous and endogenous knowledge systems. While the former presents an uncritical exposition of collective thoughts, the latter refers to the critically assessed version of the former. To this end, Hountondji asserts that endogenous knowledge is a better, scientific alternative to indigenous knowledge. Endogenous knowledge as the critically assessed version of indigenous knowledge has transcended the marginal limits of indigenous knowledge through a critical integration and can stand as a valid system to be assessed on its own merits, one that remains open to dynamic



changes. Having established the reality of local, or as Hountondji terms it, endogenous knowledge systems in relation to global epistemic inequality, the next section shows Hountondji's concept of endogenous knowledge finds relevance in contemporary quests for epistemic justice.

### **Endogenous Knowledge and the Search for Knowledge Democracy**

In reaction to the reality of global epistemic injustice, poststructuralist and postmodern attempts to rescue subaltern epistemologies have taken various forms. For the poststructuralist, knowledge is contextualised, dependent on existent power relations in society. Meaning and understanding in that sense do not refer to a universal, all-encompassing truth, but can only be known through the study of how knowledge is produced (Foucault, 1978, p. 93; Combs & Freedman, 2012). Postmodernists assert that knowledge is relative, derived from local sources and determined by local structures. The verisimilitude of any knowledge system is, however, incomparable with any other, given that knowledge in any particular system is created under conditions which are likely different from conditions in other knowledge systems, and they hold true under these conditions (Giroux, 2004).

While these theories have been variously criticised, it must be noted that the distinctive characteristic running through both theories is a rejection of the universalism of knowledge systems. This rejection has provided the impetus for the decolonial movement and its agitation against the hegemonic nature of dominant western knowledge paradigms at the expense of the knowledge systems and worldviews of the Global South.

How then, does Hountondji's analysis of endogenous knowledge fit into the decolonial discourse, given his foundational stance on the universality of science and technology? This paper avers that Hountondji's criticism of extraversion situates him as a forerunner of decolonial theory, a precursor to contemporary debates on epistemic inequalities and knowledge democracy. His notion of endogenous knowledge in particular builds on the contextualisation of knowledge concerns. This notion resonates with decolonial theories which critique the hegemonic nature of the dominant Western episteme and proffer differing solutions to resolving the epistemic injustice inherent in such hegemony. As such, Hountondji's theory fits neatly into epistemic decolonisation, the call for the decentralisation of the global epistemic space to accommodate local knowledge systems across the globe as well as the restructuring of local curricula to reflect the community's existential realities.

Hountondji's critique of extraversion is also echoed in Santos's analysis of the epistemicide of Global South epistemic systems. Santos (2014), asserts the existence of an invisible line of demarcation between the Global North and South, one where knowledge production in the Global South is distinctively 'othered'. Othering in this sense occurs where such produced knowledge is rated as invalid, as "beliefs, opinions, intuitions, and subjective understandings, which, at the most, may become objects or raw materials for scientific inquiry" in comparison with the 'valid' epistemography of the Global North (p. 183).

This paper, however, notes that Hountondji's valoration of scientific universalism is difficult to reconcile with his acknowledgment of the essential nature of knowledge democracy. If, as Tandon et al. (2016) enumerate, knowledge democracy is based on the notion that knowledge can be gotten, created and transmitted through various forms and methods, how do we reconcile this with Hountondji's continuous reliance and emphasis on science and the scientific method as the sole method to valid knowledge?

Hountondji's stance on philosophy as science is well known. Derived from Husserl's concept of philosophy as rigorous science, Hountondji argues that valid knowledge is that arrived at through strict science. Strict science in this sense is critical, empirical, experimental and methodical. Reactions to this stance include Owomoyela's, Yai's, and Bruce Janz' among others. These reactions all highlight Hountondji's indiscriminate defense of western scientism and its use as a tool to prove his ideological position, presenting in that case as poststructuralist criticisms of Hountondji's universalism (Yai, 1977, p. 14; Owomoyela, 1987, p. 94; Janz, 2010).

It is therefore difficult to reconcile both seemingly contradictory ideologies espoused by Hountondji. On the one hand, he acknowledges and emphasises the notion of situated knowledge, knowledge arising from the local, as produce of particular contexts, arising from such contexts by asserting that

African scholars involved in African Studies should have another priority, which is to develop first and foremost an Africa-based tradition of knowledge in all disciplines, a tradition where questions are initiated and research agendas set out directly or indirectly by African societies themselves. Non-African scholars will then be expected to contribute to solving these questions and implementing these research agendas from their own perspective and historical background (2009, p. 129).

On the other hand he had earlier noted that

Ideally speaking science and technology, as cultural values, are not the property of anybody or any particular culture. They are universal, insofar as the search for truth and efficiency permeates every culture. We, in the Third world, have to remember this, and get rid of all sorts of inferiority complex vis-a-vis what some people tend to consider, abusively indeed, as "Western" science (1987, p. 389).

How best do we then explain these two disparate opinions?

Hountondji's attempts to reconcile these disparate views can be seen in his 1997 book, *Endogenous Knowledge: Research Trails*. This work seemingly accounts for how to, using the scientific structure, utilise local knowledges to counter the effects of scientific extraversion and dependency. For Hountondji (1997, as cited in Dübgen & Skupien, 2019), endogenous knowledge is a more scientific option to folk knowledge, packaged as indigenous or traditional

knowledge. Endogenous knowledge is the resultant effect of the dialogue between local knowledges and existing ‘modern’ knowledge. As a critical assessment of indigenous knowledge, it is the re-appropriation of local knowledges to meet local needs. Thus, it is the integration of local and exogenous knowledges to arrive at the synthesised endogenous knowledge.

This paper contends that Hountondji’s notion of endogenous knowledge further confirms his own intellectual scientific dependency. Knowledge democracy rests on epistemic pluralism and not epistemic hegemony, with each episteme valued on its own basis, not lorded over by any so-called ‘universal’ method. Science, which Hountondji upholds as the crucial methodological framework for philosophy, is a singular form and method of knowledge. Despite recent interventions by postcolonial and gender scholars, it remains a tool of imperialism, one which upholds the ‘white male’ as the norm of scientific research. As Whitt (2009) argues, science has attained hegemonic status in knowledge production such that its method is regarded as the only valid one and it is constituted as the prime determinant of which episteme gains admission to the global epistemic space. From the foregoing, it is trite to state that knowledge democracy contradicts an emphasis on a universal form and method of knowledge. An emphasis on a singular, universal approach to reality presents at best as a one-sided approach and at its worst, a fragmented view of reality. This is what Hountondji seems to advocate for, that Africans must produce knowledge in a manner that is patterned after Western epistemic paradigms, if such knowledge is to be relevant to Africa’s development. By advocating thus, he has foreclosed on the reality of the cultural context of knowledge as well as possibility of alternate ways of knowing.

Hountondji’s distinction between indigenous and endogenous knowledge does not also satisfactorily convey any distinction between the two. Indigenous knowledge derives from local knowledge practices, but does not necessarily imply just an exposition of such local knowledge practices. Contemporary decolonial discourse highlight the essential nature of decolonial, local/indigenous knowledge systems as modes of repairing the distorted and alienated African identities occasioned by the colonial experience (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 18; Getachew, 2020). In that manner, ethno-studies, as the study of indigenous knowledge systems, practices and concepts, necessarily depends on the uncritical exposition of collective worldviews as source-materials from which cultural conceptual schemes can be drawn at the first instance. However, relevant scholarship on indigenous knowledges evince critical reflections on the exposed worldviews. Given the western nature of the educational system which such scholars went through, it is only rational to presuppose in that sense a ‘scientific’ bent to their intellectual activities. One must therefore ask, in the light of the above, at what point indigenous knowledge becomes endogenous?

This critique also spills over to his critique of ethno-philosophy and on a general note, ethno-studies. As he argues, philosophy can never be found in the collective worldview of people, given its nature as an individual analytic activity, in comparison to collective spontaneous

worldviews (1996, p. 63). His arguments imply that there is nothing critical or analytical in collective worldviews presented as indigenous knowledge. While acknowledging his analysis of how such collective worldviews have been exploited through extraversion, this paper avers that his criticism is based on a strict and outdated understanding of ethno-studies and indigenous knowledge systems. As noted above, contemporary research reference indigenous knowledge systems as foundational to understanding authentic African knowledge practices, understandings devoid of the distorted views derived from extraverted studies. As such, scholarly reflections as presented, demonstrate evidence of individual and collective critical analysis.

Furthermore, this paper contends that the notion of collective is not synonymous with being uncritical. Suffice to say that the global epistemic space is replete with examples of particularised and contextualised concepts and theories, most of which began at the level of individual reflections, but have now attained global or regional acceptance. Ideas arise from individual minds, but the process of attaining collective assent depends on critical assessments of how such ideas prove relevant to local needs. Conclusively, it submits that pertinent aspects of Hountondji's philosophical inklings need to be reviewed in line with contemporary advancements in research on indigenous knowledge systems.

### **Conclusion**

Paulin Hountondji's critique of ethno-philosophy is derived from his notion of extraversion. Holding that ethno-philosophy comprised only of uncritical, collective worldviews, he argued that such philosophy presented as a tool for extraversion. This argument provided justification for his concept of endogenous knowledge as the scientific, integrated version of indigenous knowledge, an acknowledgment of the essential nature of knowledge democracy.

However, this position is contradicted by his valorisation of scientific universalism, a claim that reinforces the Eurocentric hegemonic 'valid epistemic method.' This valorisation exposed Hountondji's intellectual scientific dependency and as such, this paper argued that Hountondji's critiques of ethno-philosophy and indigenous knowledge systems are based on strict and outdated understandings. However, given that a critical analysis of his notion of extraversion proves that his concept of endogenous knowledge is recognition of the imperative of knowledge democracy, his notion of endogenous knowledge remains an influential precursor of decolonisation theories, differing only in its insistence on the universality of science.

Following from the above, this paper called for a review of Hountondji's ideas in the light of contemporary research on indigenous knowledge systems, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and valuing different epistemes and their critical reflections. It also argued that collective ideas are not inherently uncritical, as some ideas have attained global or regional acceptance through the process of critical assessment and relevance to local needs.

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