

## Who's Afraid of Afrocentrists? Counter Histories, Political Correctness and the Critics' Silence<sup>1</sup>

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### Resumo

Durante as últimas décadas, a abordagem afrocêntrica à história, sociologia, antropologia, filosofia, artes e música tem ficado bastante influente entre os afro-americanos. Afrocentristas acreditam fervorosamente na excelência acadêmica de seus trabalhos. Esta auto-avaliação, no entanto, não se encaixa bem naquilo o que se define como científico nas disciplinas acadêmicas. Um debate crítico entre afrocentristas e representantes de ciências 'ocidentais', contudo, até agora não foi realizado. Este artigo explora as razões por esta falta de diálogo e chama a atenção para alguns problemas que surgem ao tratar o afrocentrismo de um ponto de vista antropológico. O autor afirma que todo um novo conjunto

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de questões aparece quando, em vez de pesquisar ‘de baixo para cima’ ou ‘de cima para baixo’, a situação de pesquisa é caracterizada por estudos paralelos.

**Palavras-chave:** afrocentrismo; comunicação científica; teoria antropológica.

## **Abstract**

Over the last decades, the Afrocentric approach to history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, art, and music has become quite influential among African Americans. Afrocentrists strongly believe in the academic excellence of their work. This self-assessment, however, does not quite fit in with what established academic disciplines define as scientific. A critical discussion between Afrocentrists and representatives of ‘Western’ science, however, has hitherto not taken place. The article explores the reasons for this absence of dialogue and addresses some of the problems arising when dealing with Afrocentricity from an anthropological perspective. It argues that a whole new set of problems arises, when instead of studying up or studying down, the research situation is one of studying parallel.

**Keywords:** Afrocentricity; scientific dialogues; anthropological theory.

## **Introduction**

In the United States, the last decades have seen the emergence of an academic and political discourse defining itself as ‘Afrocentric’. Whereas Afrocentricity (or Afrocentrism, as critics would have it) has become quite influential among African Americans, it went widely unnoticed by the European scientific community. In the US, representatives of the established disciplines still struggle to adequately deal with it. To this day, a critical dialogue is more or less non-existent, and even

renowned publishing houses like Sage or Routledge tend to be amazingly undemanding when it comes to proofreading Afrocentric publications. To put it bluntly: Afrocentric books contain a significantly larger number of mistakes than the average academic publication, and many of them are of a nature that would not even require specialist knowledge to correct. One can only wonder why this is so. It might be a safe guess, however, to assume that the critics' silence and the surprising tolerance of publishers is due to the fact that Afrocentricity is not just an ordinary scholarly discourse (that at least is what its proponents claim it is). It is also a minority discourse. And what's more: a discourse of a minority that has the moral heavy weight of several hundred years of slavery and suppression on its side and does not hesitate to silence critics by accusing them of a willful continuation of racism by other means. Primarily between 2001 and 2004, I have followed up Afrocentricity as part of a combined literature and field study on African American identity discourses (Reinhardt 2002; 2003; 2007)<sup>3</sup>. Some of the problems I experienced in this context shall be described below.

### **Afrocentricity as science?**

One major focus of Afrocentricity is to raise questions concerning the role of Africa and her inhabitants for the whole of human development, or (to use a term in capital letters) for World History. Without any doubt, this question is legitimate. Equally undoubted, unfortunately, is that in Western historical disciplines African contributions to Man's history are still marginalized and lead a somewhat shadowy existence. It might be true that Europe's knowledge of its Southern neighbor has grown significantly since the time of Herder who, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century resignedly stated that it only comprised the continent's coasts. And even those often "not further inland than the range of the European naval guns" (Herder 1995:166). Still, in the broad public awareness, the idea of Africa as a "continent without history" has proven exceptionally resistant to all attempts of adjustment. Even more: large parts of

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<sup>3</sup> The study (with field stays in New York, Philadelphia and Ghana) was funded by Stiftung Volkswagenwerk.

historical discourse are still characterized by a deeply rooted eurocentrism that grants only marginal significance to events happening outside the centers of the North. The wish to counter such hegemonic claims is reasonable and appropriate. And at least since postmodernism has shaken all pretensions of a universal truth and has opened the door for *counter histories*, counter-models to mainstream assumptions are no longer epistemologically precarious. At least they *need not* be. Basic epistemic premises have changed too often and too radically over the course of the last centuries for anybody to still believe in the silver bullet of gaining knowledge unaffected by institutional and social contexts. We can easily imagine a science that builds on other premises than the one currently taught at universities worldwide, and Afrocentrists never fail to assert that they have found exactly such an alternative way of knowledge production (Asante 1987:14-17; 1988:80; 1990:141). Even a brief glance at today's Afrocentric practice, however, reveals this self-assessment as overly optimistic. What has been published under the label Afrocentric to this day is hardly likely to challenge the historical sciences claim on interpretive dominance of the past. If Afrocentricity in its current form is science at all, then only too often it is 'bad' science, pseudo-science, a parody of science that qualifies as something like science only by a series of institutional framework conditions and formal compliances (one can study Afrocentricity at college, get an academic degree, there are professional journals, academic meetings and awards, publications come with references, footnotes, and bibliographies, etc.). Much, however, (if not most) of what is published under the label Afrocentric today, is characterized by a renunciation of the inductive method, an extremely ideological and selective handling of sources and empirical data, the untenable intermixture of circumstantial evidence, analytic proof, and pure presumption, a widely uncritical dealing with the texts of Afrocentric colleagues, an unshakeable hubris of many authors, and a surprising generosity when it comes to handling historical sources and orthographic conventions. Thus, for example, the Nazi *Regenspropagandaministerium*, introduced 1980 in Molefi Kete Asante's founding document of Afrocentricity (his book of the same name) made it through two major revisions and expansions into the latest edition of the book<sup>4</sup> (Asante

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<sup>4</sup> Ama Mazama, a colleague of Asante in the Department for African American Stu-

1988:34; 2003a:45). And the same author asks his readers in all seriousness: “Did Aristotle write over 1,000 books or were they stolen from an Egyptian university?” (Asante & Mazama 2002) There is talk of Afrocentric ‘re-centering’ as a means to ‘cure’ homosexuality (Asante 1988: 57-8), and the 22 Yala of the West African Dogon are read as spiritual representations of the human genetic code with its 22 chromosomes (William-Livingston 1998:119). The name Robin Hood is etymologically linked to an ancient Egyptian celebration called, Hruben-Hud (Asante 1988:23), and the cultural achievements of regions as far away from each other as Greece, Mexico, Sumer, and China are more or less exclusively attributed to the cultural impact of African travelers and explorers (Winters 2002:123-51). Unfortunately, this list of well-intended speculations and absurdities is far from complete<sup>5</sup>.

On the methodological level, Afrocentricity cultivates a series of unfortunate anachronisms. Thus, most Afrocentric authors take a very limited number of European sources from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as *pars pro toto* and state of the art of European occupation with Africa and devote themselves with almost admirable tenacity and persistence to a refutation of Hegel’s and Hume’s unfavorable ideas about the continent. And worse still, large parts of the Afrocentric text production are – even though this is emphatically denied in almost all publications – based on barely covered racist assumptions that (apart, of course, from reversing the respective values of black and white) are not much different from the scientifically embellished European racisms of past centuries. It is true that Afrocentric authors never tire to state that the *Afro* in ‘Afrocentricity’ refers to cultural phenomena and not to blurry biological categories. They, however, thwart this statement of culturality in the very moment they declare *blackness* the “ultimate reality” of the African person (Asante 1988:42-3). While Europeans, Asians, and White Americans are more than welcome to adopt an Afrocentric focus for their work, Africans or African Americans are not free to maintain ideological or epistemological “centers” of their choice. “Imitators of the worst

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dies at Temple University, Philadelphia, in her translation of the book into French manages to get the wrong term even wronger. Here, the *Reichspropagandaministerium* becomes: “Regenspropaganadministerium” (Asante 2003b:71) [*Regen* means ‘rain’].

<sup>5</sup> For more examples see Reinhardt (2007:223-279).

qualities of the white world”, so Asante’s verdict on African Americans who take a critical stance towards Afrocentricity:

Individualistic, materialistic, and willing to sell their souls for white approval these Africans tend to criticize any idea that speaks of African liberation, whether political, cultural, or economic. Devoid of thought of their own, they find their only source of support for their individualistic forays into the land of opinion buttressed by neither common sense nor scholarship (Asante 1995:1-2).

Africans that deny their Africanity, in other words, could at best be considered as victims of a white brain wash. Nevertheless, they are condemned as “anti-black”, “unblack blacks” who, as a result of their “mentacide”, have become “racists against themselves” (Asante 1987: 165; 1988:91).

This kind of rhetoric is already unpleasant to deal with in discourses on identity. It becomes completely unbearable when brought forward with the claim to academic excellence. The lip service paid by virtually all leading Afrocentrists to open, pragmatic definitions of terms like “Africa”, “African”, or “black” thus only scarcely covers the fact that under a thin layer of culturalism, it is an untimely and outmoded biological determinism that builds the breeding ground for Afrocentric theory and practice.

## **The critics’ silence**

Considering Afrocentricity’s ludicrous flaws one has to wonder why the traditional disciplines have not taken a stand against the appropriation of whole fields of research. The most abstruse and bizarre theses and reasonings seem to be accepted without objection, and the same seems to hold true for the absurd postulate of an Afrocentric interpretive monopoly for anything dealing with Africa or Africans. With lots of good will one could describe the experts’ reaction (or better: non-reaction) as a result of polite disinterest. There is reason to suspect, however, that a critical debate on Afrocentricity is avoided mainly for fear of being

accused of political incorrectness or, even worse, racism. This fear is not entirely ungrounded. The blanket allegation of racism against each form of critique is implicitly inscribed in the very theory of Afrocentricity, and tentative beginnings of a debate in the past have shown that, when it comes to silencing their critics, Afrocentrists don't hesitate to bring it up.

What, however, are the alternatives? Is it really better to draw a veil of silence over the challenges of Afrocentricity? Or is it not exactly the seemingly unopposed toleration of Afrocentric theory and practice that invalidates its justified questioning of Eurocentric positions as the insignificant niche discourse of an insignificant minority? Couldn't it be that the attempt to dodge the rebuke of racism raises in fact far more problems than an open and sincere critique of individual aspects of Afrocentric ideas could ever cause? In other words: Can it be legitimate to ignore the inadequacies of Afrocentricity just because its goals are desirable and because the motifs of those pursuing them are noble? Or even worse: because Afrocentric authors are usually black?

How can one deal appropriately with a discourse that claims to be the spearhead of science and at the same time denounces the methodological principle of value-freedom and accepts only such results as legitimate that are politically desirable? How can one react adequately to an extremely ideologically charged discourse that claims to be completely free of any ideological entanglements and to be rooted solely in facts?<sup>6</sup>

The bottom line seems to be that there is only a choice between Scylla and Charybdis. Criticizing Afrocentricity, one runs the risk of being accused of being a racist. And, as already said, this is not just some abstract threat. Past examples show that it is only all too real (Kitwana 2001:57-59). On the other hand, remaining silent about the limitations and shortcomings of the Afrocentric project, one concedes (at least implicitly) that what is labeled Afrocentric science these days might actually be the best form of scholarship African Americans are capable of. And it entails another unfortunate side effect, evident from the most cursory glance at Afrocentric publications: Afrocentrists seem to be only too willing to read the critics' silence not as a sign of denying Afrocentricity

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<sup>6</sup> For example when Molefi Kete Asante denies the existence of 'black racism' by pointing out that "racism is based on fantasy; black views of whites are based on fact" (Asante 1988:34; emphasis in original; see also Luke 2002:93).

any criticability, but rather as a form of tacit approval (Asanta 2009:29). Thus, instead of seizing the chances of a critical dialogue, the already polarized positions are entrenched even further.

### **Problems of approaching Afrocentricity anthropologically**

A whole new set of problems arises when trying to approach Afrocentricity from an anthropological perspective and with ethnographic methods. Now, of course, Anthropology has a long tradition of dealing with systems of knowledge that cannot be seamlessly connected to Western practices and ideas. Usually, this is not really considered a problem but rather a stroke of luck. After all, one major motivation for doing anthropology in most cases is exactly the wish to encounter the different, the distant, the 'Other'. Accordingly, there is nothing problematic about the fact that members of alien societies *believe* things the anthropologist does not believe in. Quite the contrary, the more alien the anthropological object's worldview, the more appealing it is. Hence the comment that a certain idea of this or the other group is *wrong* is not something one would expect to find in an ethnographic text (at least not in any published since the 1920s). One can hardly think of an ethnographer recording, say, an indigenous creation myth, then closing his notebook saying: "Alright folks, nice story, but now I am going to explain to you how things really were with the big bang..." Almost as unlikely is one who, after returning to his desk, starts to publicly refute the worldview of the group he has done his fieldwork with.

One doesn't need to look far to see why this is so. The key word is: objectification. The *lebenswelt* of the objects of an ethnographic study is located on another discursive level than the one of the researcher, respectively the research. The chimerical double figure of *participant observation* tries to take this imbalance into account by constantly oscillating between its two conceptual poles. Ethnography, for the last almost forty years, has distinguished between *studying up* and *studying down*. It has distinguished between a research situation with a hierarchical incline from the researcher to his or her object or vice versa (Nader 1972). Both



approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, and it is by no means always easy to decide, in which direction the gradient runs. Usually it tips over anyway several times during the research, depending on whether the ethnographer is trying to learn the basic rules of decent behavior in the group he is working with or whether he writes up his results with the authority of having observed things *with his own eyes*. Much more important than the *direction* of the incline, however, might be the fact that *there is* an incline at all. For in the end it is rather irrelevant whether the anthropologist works *upwards* or *downwards*. In both cases there is an irresolvable distance between the discourses of the researcher and the researched that enables the former to adopt an *external* point of view and get the outsider impression that is the base of all interpretation.

What happens, when the line between the discursive levels is blurred? When the incline of discourses collapses and researcher and researched find themselves at equilibrium? When the research setting is no longer about *studying up* or *studying down*, but about *studying parallel*?<sup>7</sup> In the past, this usually meant the end of research. The term *going native* captures exactly such a blurring of discourse levels. Because *going native* describes the lasting adoption of *the native's point of view* by the researcher, it usually entails that all research efforts come to a stop. A sorcerer is interested in the fact *that* his magic works. He doesn't write articles on *how* it does. Studying social phenomena really from the inside, inhibits the objectifying view of the external interpreter. And it does so even more when – as is the case with Afrocentricity – the internal perspective forbids any attempt to view the object from a meta-level.

One could think of the reverse case as well, of course. That the researched adopt the system of values and research interest of the researcher and “*goes anthropology*”. Unlike in the case of *going native*, however, such a study is quite likely to be continued – if need be under modified premises. After all, the researcher's research interest remains intact. What changes is only the object of the study. Thus, even though one might wish this object to be more ‘savage’, more ‘traditional’, less affected by globalization, there are no epistemological obstacles to study it ethno-

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<sup>7</sup> In her article, Nader (1972:292) briefly touches the possibility of “studying sideways”. The term, however, does not cover the case of overlapping and intermingling discourses (Reinhardt 2007:19).

graphically.

This, however, is not the most urgent problem when doing research on Afrocentricity. It has already been mentioned that Afrocentrists claim an interpretive monopoly for everything African. Since Afrocentricity is considered a politico-philosophical school with roots in the *African* Diaspora, this claim extends to Afrocentricity itself as well. In other words, Afrocentricity, so the postulate, can only legitimately be studied Afrocentrically. This does not exclude non-Africans as potential researchers. As mentioned above, non-Africans are free to adopt an Afrocentric stand for their work. Such cultural defectors are extremely welcome. And their existence is registered and acknowledged with considerable pride – just as if Afrocentricity needed an external valorization by Europeans or Asians embracing Afrocentric positions.

One might ask why these ‘postmodern subjects’ are free to adopt ideological centers of their choice, whereas Africans are not. Why should Europeans, Asians, and Native Americans be allowed to view the world Afrocentrically, while Africans and African Americans dealing with ‘European’ questions are considered misguided “racists against themselves?” (Asante 1987:165; 1988:91). And there is one more problem stemming from the circular nature of the Afrocentric project: Since Afrocentricity is a rather closed set of dogmas and beliefs, individual studies are judged almost entirely with respect to their results. When they comply with the axiomatic principles of Afrocentricity – e.g. when they show “the Africans on the slave ship winning” (Asante 1988:51) – they are considered legitimate, valid, and correct. As soon as they differ, they are denounced as un-Afrocentric, Eurocentric, and racist – regardless of skin color, ethnic background or nationality of their authors.

That such an attitude does not encourage critical debate is not surprising<sup>8</sup> (Reinhardt 2007:274-6). Which form could critique possibly take, when its only legitimate base is *in* Afrocentricity and requires a complete (and uncritical) acceptance of its axiomatic principles? More pressing in the current context, however, is yet another problem: To what extent is a researcher required to enter a scholarly *dispute* with his or her ethnographic counterpart in the field. In fact, this seems to be a

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<sup>8</sup> For an exceptionally uncritical ‘critique’ of the Afrocentric paradigm see Ziegler (1995).

rather tricky and inextricable dilemma. For anthropologists it has become more or less compulsory to treat the worldview of the people they work with as legitimate lifestyles with a value of their own. In the case of studying Afrocentricity, this requires initially nothing more than accepting the object's claim of academic excellence. As long as Afrocentrists maintain that what they are doing is science, it can hardly be the anthropologist's task to tell them it is not (just as we wouldn't tell a sorcerer that his magic was in fact not *real* magic but a complex interplay of beliefs, practices and actors). Once the claim for academic excellence is accepted, however, it is no longer possible to simply register the eccentric ideas of many Afrocentrists without objection. "No", one would have to say: "the ancient Egyptians have not (at least not to our current knowledge) anticipated Darwin's theory of evolution by more than 2,000 years. They have not discovered the particle and wave paradox of light, and they had neither steam machines nor antennas, nor did they travel in airplanes"<sup>9</sup>. Since beliefs do not require proofs, of course, everybody is free to accept these ideas as true. Nevertheless, I would like to insist that whatever such a person is doing then, it is not science in the conventional sense of the term. Therefore, as soon as one accepts the Afrocentric self-assessment ("we are doing science") and applies the same standards to Afrocentric publications that one would apply to any other scholarly text, much of what is called Afrocentricity today must simply be rated as 'unscientific'. In short: At the same time one accepts Afrocentricity as science, it ceases to be one.

This alone would not pose an unsolvable problem. There are countless examples of discourses that make the world accessible and manageable for the people believing in them without complying with the requirements of what Western modernity calls 'science'. The scientific language-game is only one among many, and there is no reason to always and under all circumstances prefer it to all others. If Afrocentricity doesn't work as science, then why not treat it as an identity discourse for which a completely different set of rules applies? Such a discourse would not have to *prove* anything. In such a discourse, it is sufficient to *claim*. Its

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<sup>9</sup> All examples are from a curriculum for the use in schools visited primarily by African Americans, the *African American Baseline Essay* for "Science" (Adams 1990: 19-55).

supporters don't have to slavishly adopt the dates of "factual history" and can delete unpleasant memories *ad libitum*. Striving for "factual accurateness" (Fried 2004:148) may be part of the historian's business, the collective memory of a group can very well do without. Viewing Afrocentricity as an identity discourse, one would no longer be required to judge its theses and assumptions according to criteria like true, false, plausible, etc. Even when in open contradiction to the commonly accepted dates of factual history, one could still see them as legitimate parts of a discourse of "Africans in America". Well, one could...

Unfortunately, however, one of the basic assumptions of this discourse consists precisely in the unshakable belief in Afrocentricity's academic excellence. Thus the (*etic*) suspension of the Afrocentric claim to being science, inevitably re-introduces it on an *emic* level. The situation is like the one just described, just from a different angle: Assuming that Afrocentricity follows another language-game than science and trying to adopt an *emic* view on an 'ethnographic' phenomenon, it *becomes* science, and the play begins again.

## Now what?

Is there a way out of this dilemma? Not as long as one tries to study Afrocentricity from an exclusively Afrocentric perspective and accepts that such a perspective has to abstain from criticism for the sake of political correctness. Studies of that kind exist in large numbers<sup>10</sup>, and adding yet one more promises little or no new insights. In that regard the only option is in fact to distance oneself from Afrocentricity. Nevertheless, there is no need to reject the Afrocentric project as a whole. After all, Afrocentricity is more than just a bizarre claim for an inter-

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<sup>10</sup> In addition to the book by Ziegler (1995), see for example large portions of the Ph.D.-theses submitted at the Department for African American Studies at Temple University, Philadelphia. In most of them, Molefi Kete Asante's theory of Afrocentricity not only provides the theoretical base and underlying topic but Asante himself acts as supervisor (this holds true for approx. 70 out of the almost 100 dissertations accepted between 1992 and 2002). For more detail see Reinhardt (2007:270-3).

pretive monopoly on all things African. Much more important is what Molefi Kete Asante calls the principle of "centeredness". And even though Afrocentricity currently tends to make the African center absolute and privilege it over all other centers, the theoretical draft at least acknowledges the existence of "centric pluralisms without hierarchy and without seeking hegemony" (Asante 1990:12). Equal to the Afrocentric perspective on the world are in this view the Asiocentric, Americocentric and: Eurocentric. It goes without saying that this refers exclusively to a "good Eurocentricity that rejects hegemonic claims and recognizes the other 'centricities'" right to exist (other than the "bad" Eurocentrism who denies them just this) (Keto 1994:50-63). Instead of "being centered" one could speak of acknowledging the "implicit discursive premises" of one's work. It's more or less the same thing, meaning that scientific studies can never be completely free from ideological and epistemological constraints and that these vary according to the societies the researcher comes from and works with.

Strictly speaking, thus, the only obstacle to approaching Afrocentricity from a Eurocentric perspective is the Afrocentric claim that the only legitimate way of dealing with African phenomena scientifically is from an Afrocentric point of view. To disregard that claim actually has not been too difficult a task. I hope readers believe me, when I say that I have not done so in order to defend the dominance of the Eurocentric paradigm against the challenges of Afrocentricity. It may well be that I lack that "degree of humility" (Asante 1990:141-2) that after centuries of greed, exploitation and enslavement would do credit to Europeans and White Americans. However, I do not believe that there are no alternatives to the (Eurocentric) scientific tradition. I would just like to be convinced of their practicability before adopting them. Racist motives have definitely not been involved when I decided to name some of the shortcomings of Afrocentricity in its current form. If I did, then precisely because I see Afrocentricity as a valuable addition to history (and especially the history of Africa) as it is taught today. Thus it is because I take Afrocentricity seriously, that I struggle with its wholesale generalizations of *the* harmony of *the* African way (Asante 1987:65), with its manifold anachronisms and its implicit biologism. And it is because I ultimately accept its claim for academic excellence, that I am so disenchanted to see how Afrocentricity (with all its normative differentiations and axiological

charges) lags far behind the epistemological humbleness and modesty that characterizes large parts of the Western writing on alien societies today. That is why I am so dissatisfied seeing how, in the name of an absolute truth, thousands of years of Egyptian history become reduced to the realization of a set of ‘traditional’ African principles. How, by making ancient Egypt the central reference point for everything African, the continent’s contemporary societies are deprived of their history, their creativity, their dynamics, and their autonomy. How Afrocentrists seek escape in anagrammatic games<sup>11</sup> and, by invoking a higher moral, presume to promise overall redemption (Asante 1988:57-8).

A couple of years ago, Jürgen Habermas (2004) has pointed out that talking about “moral knowledge” always entails a problematic imbalance. While empirical or factual knowledge are of a descriptive nature and fit their opinions into cognitive patterns whose central reference point is formed by the category “true”, moral knowledge is first of all normative. It is not about “truth” but about “rightness”, not about how things *are*, but about how they *should be* and how human actors position themselves with regard to them (Habermas 2004:300).

It is in this domain of “practical knowledge” that Afrocentricity demonstrates its strength. There is no doubt that it supports its followers in dealing with the political and emotional pressures of a still racialized society like that of the US. And it is one of the undeniable merits of Afrocentricity to have put African and African American topics back on the agenda of science. It’s been long since Temple University was the only university to offer a Ph.D. in African American or Black Studies. Other schools have followed<sup>12</sup>. In these departments, scholars from diverse disciplinary, ethnic, and national backgrounds demonstrate day by day how it is possible to deal with African and African American issues from a non-hegemonic, non-Eurocentric perspective.

In the realm of ‘theoretical knowledge’ the outcome is far less rosy. I am convinced that an Afrocentric approach to history *can* bring about

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<sup>11</sup> Asante (1990: 155-158), calls this “sciencing”. Strictly speaking it is little more than looking for anaphones: “Africa becomes” “Af-Ra-Ka”, negro becomes “Knee-Grow”, human becomes “Hue-man”, and so on.

<sup>12</sup> Other than at Temple University there are corresponding degree programs at Yale, Berkeley, Amherst and Ann Arbor.

new and probably sometimes surprising results. That the founding fathers and pioneers of Afrocentricity can achieve this, however, must be doubted. What had begun as an amplification of cultural perspectives, for most of them soon has become confined to just the rim of *another* teacup. But then again, it has always been the fate of signposts to never reach what they point at. Afrocentricity certainly has the potential for a renewal of the cultural sciences – even though for its “scientific” branch as practiced by Molefi Kete Asante and the close-knit circle of his followers still applies what Mahatma Gandhi once said when asked what he thought about Western civilization: “It would be a very good idea”.

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