Between crisis and refusal: academic freedom as public argument

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Introduction

> [D]ecolonization, the postapartheid, is first and foremost, a resumption of interrupted history. A resumption not indeed of some original purities and essences before the Fall, but of interrupted dramas, indigenous and universal dramas; above all a resumption of our dialogue with one another, with ourselves. (Sekyi-Otu 2003)

Across a growing range of countries – both at the heart of empire and along its peripheries – the question of academic freedom has become an increasingly dangerous one. Yet the urgency of this moment, its sense of peril, can make it difficult to see what academic freedom is, or what it could become. In this piece, I want to approach academic freedom obliquely, to let the object of contemplation slide across the retina, rather than attacking it directly with my gaze. In that way, one is open to surprise, or at least, the possibility that one might be surprised.

It is for this reason that I return to a thirty-year-old debate on the nature of academic freedom during structural adjustment, a period of economic and political crises so bruising that African societies – and their universities – have yet to emerge from it.[1] To understand how dangerous and complicated academic freedom became, one must understand a little about structural adjustment.

I will tell this story in the way that African scholars associated with the pan-African organisation, CODESRIA (the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) tend to tell the story. It is from a perspective that remains salient today – that of a critical social science, undergirded by pan-Africanist and third worldist commitments (Bujra 2003). Their telling of this story understands structural adjustment not only as a crisis of economic and political sovereignty, but equally importantly as a crisis of intellectual sovereignty. In their telling, it begins with an oil crisis, not unlike one we face today. African countries lacked

[1] Thandika Mkandawire characterised this as the "Great African Depression", pointing out that by 2019, many African societies had still not recovered their per capita income of the 1970s (Meagher 2019).

sufficient dollars to import critical goods, and turned to the IMF and World Bank for emergency financing (Mkandawire and Soludo 1999). In exchange for dollar-denominated loans, governments were required to dramatically reduce spending on public goods, privatise state-owned companies, devalue currencies and reduce taxes and duties. It is difficult to convey the anguish of this period, the destruction it wrought on bodies and dreams. Perhaps it is enough to observe briefly here that the introduction of user fees for hitherto free and universal healthcare and education meant that many impoverished people died (Sanders and Sambo 1991; Rudin and Sanders 2011), and many children, particularly impoverished girls, were forced out of school (Stromquist 1999).

CODESRIA scholars would come to identify two discrete rounds in the restructuring of African universities. In the first round, universities were subject to the same funding cuts that other public sectors, such as healthcare, faced. While these funding cuts substantially weakened research infrastructure, the concomitant devaluation of currencies and increasing inflation meant that the purchasing power of salaries declined and many academics were forced into survivalist mode. The combination of these factors, scholars argued, eroded the material basis for African intellectual communities (Sawyerr 1997; Sall 2003; Zeleza 2003; Olukoshi 2006).

The World Bank then conducted a second, more penetrating round of programmes, which aimed to reform the institutional structure of African universities. This round was ostensibly intended to help rebuild African universities. Officials at the World Bank had initially argued that the private rates of return to higher education were low relative to primary schooling; African countries should therefore scrap local universities and outsource experts from richer countries or train graduates oversees (Psacharopoulos 1982, 1988; World Bank 1988). But as Mamdani observes, when the World Bank proposed this at "a meeting with African vice-chancellors in Harare in 1986 … [it recognised] that its call for a closure of universities was politically unsustainable; the Bank subsequently modified its agenda, calling for universities to be trimmed and restructured to produce only those skills which the market demands." (Mahmood Mamdani 1993, 10)

In return for earmarked funding then, the World Bank demanded that universities become more efficient.[2] This conceptualisation of efficiency typically included a reduction in

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[2] The World Bank's position paper on African higher education identified the following inefficiencies: "First higher education is now producing relatively too many graduates of programmes of dubious quality and relevance and generating too little new knowledge and direct development support. Second, the quality of these outputs show unmistakable signs in many countries of having deteriorated so much that the fundamental effectiveness of

staff and the demand that universities begin to source revenue from extra-state actors, through tuition fees, university businesses and consultancies.[3] One corollary of this was that universities were compelled to close down unprofitable courses and implement new courses that had greater market value. Furthermore, universities were only to purchase equipment from World Bank approved sources, such as the British Overseas Development Agency, while they would only be allowed to purchase books and journals sanctioned by the Bank. At the same time, upwards of ten percent of the loan would be used to top-up the salaries of expatriate staff (Bako 1990). In some cases, governments also used this as an opportunity to establish set curricula for all universities (Matlosa 1990; Imam and Mama 1994).

Faced not only with an assault on livelihoods, but with the prospect that the World Bank would gain control over what people could read and teach, many universities became hotbeds of resistance to structural adjustment programmes, and wave after wave of staff and student strikes took place across the continent. But instead of defending universities, the state typically responded with brutality. It was then that academics turned towards society for support, and discovered the extent of their social alienation, for the academic project appeared at best irrelevant, and at worst, a form of colonial violence.

Within this context that CODESRIA for the first time convened a continental gathering in Kampala in 1990 to ask: what does it mean to be free as an intellectual? Published four years later, *Academic Freedom in Africa* represents the first fruits of these debates, but has yet to be subjected to a close reading. I focus on a central claim in the volume: that the lack of freedom in the academic community is closely related to its lack of social relevance. Paying careful attention to contributors' debates over this claim, I argue, suggests a conceptualisation of the university as a potential space for society to argue with itself, where public argument is a critical component of an autonomous and flourishing society. As such, the book is an act of astonishing and fierce hope – that in place of the developmental university or its marketized counterpart, the democratic, sovereign spirit of a people could come to live within the university.

Our time is again a time of crisis, and academic freedom is again a dangerous question. Yet, as a close reading of this book shows, there is something about crisis, and the refusal to

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the institutions is also in doubt. Third, the costs of higher education are needlessly high. Fourth, the pattern of financing higher education is socially inequitable and economically inefficient." (World Bank 1988, 5)

[3] In particular, the World Bank demanded that "radical measures [be implemented] to improve quality, reduce cost for each student and graduate, constrain output in fields that do not support economic development, and relieve the burden on public sources of financing by increasing the participation of beneficiaries and their families." (World Bank 1989, 82)

give in to it, the refusal to flee intellectually and politically by retreating from self-critique. In the dance between these two, between crisis and refusal, we might find a way to think deeply and carefully together.

I am still thinking through this work. There are other things I might say alongside this, about how there is value in attending to the space between thinkers, rather than the thinkers themselves. I might say that there is something about how we conceptualise academic freedom, less in negative terms as freedom from all restraint, and more in positive terms as the freedom to serve society, where such service might take the form of public argument. I might say something about the relationship between the materiality of academic freedom and its regulatory dynamics. Or indeed, something about the problems posed by intellectuals who seek to legitimate themselves by serving power and thereby render academic freedom profoundly contradictory. I might yet develop these themes. But it is this dance between crisis and refusal that I want to hold onto, that I want us to learn from.

Faced with the existential precarity of the academic project in Africa, and its deep institutional contradictions, the choice of scholars to respond by engaging in intense collective reflection is a remarkable one. For many, it must have been tempting to react by critiquing the external agents driving this assault to the exclusion of all else, or, when faced with the sheer scale and depth of the assault, to resign themselves to the situation and opt out by leaving the continent. CODESRIA's community chose to respond differently by engaging in collective reflection. This could not have been an easy path to take, but it contributed to a flowering of new ideas and ways of thinking, not least a distinctive articulation of academic freedom as bound up in universities' social responsibilities and capacity for public argument that, if anything, resonates more deeply and widely as the years pass. How do we, facing this moment, begin our own dance between crisis and refusal?

"In the long run the most radical criticism is hollow if it does not lead to an alternative and practicable ideal." Amin Kahn (1994, 297)

Academic Freedom in Africa is the edited collection of papers from CODESRIA's first conference on academic freedom, the *Kampala Symposium on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility*. The book has been described as the first scholarly treatise on academic freedom

in Africa (Penna 1996; Drewett 1997), and has been characterised as introducing distinctive and influential debates on the relationship between academic freedom and social responsibility (Zeleza 2003; Mama 2006; Du Toit 2007; Appiagyei-Atua et al. 2015). Despite this, however, it seems that the book has yet to be subject to a sustained critical analysis. This piece aims to help address this gap. I first describe the intellectual genesis of the book and then analyse the ways in which the contributions inform and complicate each other. Despite substantial variation, I argue, contributors' conceptualisations of the academic project flow from an understanding of intellectual freedom as a component of social flourishing, and as shaped by political and economic struggles within broader society. As such, the book reflects the broader turn amongst CODESRIA scholars towards a more sociological analysis of the academic project under structural adjustment. However, contributors extend this analysis by developing conceptualisations of the academic project that begin to indicate an alternative to both the logic of the development state and the market. Their contributions, I contend, suggest the potential of the academic project to function as a space for society to argue with itself, where public argument is a critical component of an autonomous and flourishing society, and therefore, a counter to colonial logic. As such, the idea of the palaver and that of the public sphere often hover on the edge of their writings, unstated but prescient.

The *Kampala Symposium* in 1990 was in part intended to develop the debates from CODESRIA's 1988 General Assembly, which largely focused on analysing the collapse of universities within the broader disintegration of the political and economic underpinnings of African societies (Hountondji 1988; Nyong'o 1988; Mkandawire 1988; Imam 1988). The *Dakar Declaration* emanating from the General Assembly suggests that the defence of the academic project is part of broader social struggles for democracy and emancipation:

> The task of resolving the African crisis imposes a specific responsibility on the African social science community. To meet this responsibility it must take stock of its own shortcomings and pool its energies for concerted action … the research process must not only seek to achieve self-reliance within the international social science community … but should also focus on the issues and relations that are of concern to the vast majority of the toiling peoples of Africa as they engage in their daily struggle for existence. These struggles must be for the basis for scientific conceptualisation, and the focus of scientific analysis. This re-orientation of research will serve to free the social scientific progress from extraversion, elitism, neglect of the environment and

> gender bias. It will also serve to put social science knowledge at the service of the vast majority of the African population, especially the movements for the democratization of the continent and the full emancipation of its people. ("Dakar Declaration" 1988)

What is of particular interest is the way in which the *Dakar Declaration* indicates a new kind of consensus within CODESRIA, regarding not only the negative impacts of adjustment programmes, but also the need for African scholars to respond by re-orientating the academic project to one of service, in which popular struggles for emancipation and democracy provide the normative underpinnings of African scholarship.

When the *Kampala Symposium* was announced the following year, the call for papers framed the conference in more explicitly sociological terms, describing it as an opportunity "to direct … attention to the nature of the research environment on the continent, that is, to reflect on the social context of research as an intellectual activity." (1989, 1) In this regard, they wrote, reflections should "critically examine the roles of the various actors in the social sciences – the state, researchers, donors, the civil society etc." (1989, 1) Indeed, members from all of these groups were invited to the conference. The *Kampala Declaration* that was adopted at the conference therefore reflects not only a sociological approach to the academic project, but locates this project within intellectual communities more broadly. The preamble begins:

> African people are responding to these intolerable conditions by intensifying their struggles for democracy and human rights. The struggle for intellectual freedom is an integral part of the struggle of our people for human rights. Just as popular forces are waging a struggle for democracy and human rights, so are African academics. Intellectuals, students and other members of the intelligentsia are deeply involved in their own struggles for intellectual and academic freedom." ("The Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility" 1994)

Following on from the *Dakar Declaration*, the *Kampala Declaration* explicitly links intellectual freedom and social responsibility in its title, and suggests that intellectual freedom is necessary for intellectuals to fulfil their responsibilities to society. In this regard, Article 22 stipulates: "The intellectual community has the responsibility to struggle for and participate in the struggle of the popular forces for their rights and emancipation." The *Kampala Declaration*

further specifies the economic and political conditions required for the exercise of social responsibility, including the right to participate in the democratic governance of universities, the right to freedom of movement and security of tenure, and the state's responsibility to provide sufficient funding to higher education institutions. The *Kampala Declaration*, Zeleza (2003) notes, therefore departs in a number of ways from international declarations of academic freedom from this time, such as the *Lima Declaration* (World University Service 1990). Unlike the *Kampala Declaration*, the *Lima Declaration* focuses narrowly on academics rather than intellectuals more generally. It sets out academic freedom as an element of universal human rights; in doing so, however, it abstracts the realisation of the right to academic freedom from the political and economic struggles of the academic community. Thus, it makes no reference to the need for government funding to sustain the material conditions for academic freedom, nor does it make reference to the need for democratic procedures within the university. Furthermore, while it contains a clause noting the responsibility of academics to address the problems of society, the analytical relation between the concepts of responsibility and academic freedom is not made explicit. Finally, while the *Lima Declaration* provides a negative definition of freedom in terms of the absence of restraint, the *Kampala Declaration* provides a positive definition of freedom in terms of the capacity to serve society. However, the relationship between intellectual freedom and social responsibility is not uncomplicated or uncontested, and its conceptualisation in the *Kampala Declaration* was an outcome of heated debates at the conference, many of which were published in a more polished form in *Academic Freedom in Africa*. It is to this which I now turn.

Many of the contributors to *Academic Freedom in Africa* provide accounts that suggest African universities are in the process of moving from one historical period to another, where structural adjustment is a catalyst of this historical change. For many of them, the starting point of this analysis is the notion of the development university in the post-independence period. This is because the majority of Africa's universities were established by nationalist governments. For instance, as Mamdani observes, in colonial Nigeria there was one university with a thousand students; by 1990, Nigeria had 31 universities with 141,000 students (1994a, 2). These universities, Mamdani argues, were established within the narrow confines of state logic, with the aim of providing "a training ground for personnel that would manage the process of 'development.'" (1994a, 2) For Ayesha Imam and Amina Mama, states were able to do so, since movements for "national liberation and the winning of independence created a limited consensus over national interests and the functional role of academics in this. Intellectual labour was therefore highly instrumentalist, harnessed as a means to an end, rather than to

determine what those ends should be." (1994, 78) The development university was therefore conceived within a statist logic, so that Mamdani observes, "it was but a short step to the conclusion that the independent state must have a key role in the very management of the university. In this context, the demand for 'autonomy' seemed not only quaint, but even had the aura of a bygone era." (1994a, 2)

George Hagan develops this theme in his analysis of universities in Ghana from the era of Nkrumah to Acheampong and Rawlings. By treating universities as the training ground for political elites, he argues, the state invariably incubated its own opposition, so that while university activism contributed to political transitions, each successive administration came to view universities as sites of dissent. Nkrumah's writings on the topic provide a clear illustration of the dilemma that the development university generated for political elites:

> We planned to encourage the growth of industries, and we needed all the technical and administrative talent we could lay our hands on. This led me to consider the work of the University College and the Kumasi College of Technology. It pains me to have to say that these institutions are not pulling their weight. The returns which we are getting for the money poured into these institutions is most discouraging … Over 90% of the student body is being maintained by government scholarships. It costs us more to produce a graduate at Legon than in many other universities abroad. We have provided with unparalleled lavishness all the facilities necessary. It is a common opinion that our students are 'feather-bedded'. And what is the result? With few exceptions University College is a breeding ground for unpatriotic and anti-government elements." (Nkrumah 1961 cited in Hagan 1994, 47)

Given this analysis, Nkrumah would come to see academic freedom and institutional autonomy as a fig-leaf for a counter-elite project:

> I want my present observations to serve as a warning. We do not intend to sit idly by and see these institutions which are supported by millions of pounds produced out of the sweat and toll of the common people continue to be centers of anti-government activities. We want the University College to cease being an alien institution and to take on the character of a Ghanaian University, loyally serving the interests of the nation and the well-being of

> our people. If reforms do not come from within we intend to impose them from outside, and no resort to the cry of academic freedom (for academic freedom does not mean irresponsibility) is going to restrain us from seeing that our university is a healthy university devoted to Ghanaian interests. (Nkrumah cited in Hagan 1994, 47)

The political telos of the development university therefore generated a polarisation between the values of relevance and loyalty to the state on the one hand, and the values of academic freedom and institutional autonomy on the other hand.

In hindsight, perhaps, this may appear to be a false dilemma. However, questions of relevance and loyalty to the state were often deeply tied to notions of sovereignty and intellectual emancipation, not only for the state, but also for the academic community. While Mamdani only touches lightly on these debates in his contributions to the book, the richness and political urgency of this debate becomes clearer in his detailed reflections on his experiences at Makerere University (Mahmood Mamdani 1993). On Mamdani's account, the question of relevance versus freedom became particularly acute in students' struggles to Africanise their universities. The rapid expansion of African universities in the immediate post-independence period required a large number of scholars to teach African students, and to this end, states often employed scholars from former colonial powers and the United States. Once metropolitan scholars had trained the first cohort of graduate students, however, African students demanded that the profile of the teaching staff change from metropolitan to African scholars. Consequently, at independence, Makerere "was sharply divided between a senior expatriate staff and a junior local staff. The expatriates called for the university to be autonomous, free from direct state interference. The local staff was just as firm that, as a national asset, the state had a responsibility to give the university a national character. The expatriates stood in defence of academic freedom, the locals wanted the state to override senior expatriate staff and appoint locals to leading positions in the university." Students waged similar struggles across the continent, from Cheikh Anta Diop (Bathily et al. 1995), to Ahmadu Bello (Mustapha 1995a), Ibadan (Ake 1982) and Dar es Salaam (Shivji 1993).

The academic community's appeal to the state to intervene in universities, Mamdani argues, was shaped by the statist logic within which they operated. Across ideological and theoretical divides, scholars tended to share the perspective that "African societies need to be transformed from above;" that is, "to see social transformation not as the outcome of a popular process, but as the result of a state initiative." (Mahmood Mamdani 1994b, 252) Thus,

regardless of whether they articulated "ideologies of nation building (by which was meant no more than state-building) or conceptions borrowed from dependency theory (which also saw the state as the major agency of transformation), the intelligentsia on both sides of the political divide remained married to a statist orientation." (1994b, 253) As a consequence, the academic community tended to understand "relevance from the point of view of the relation between the university and the state as the custodian of the developmental process", and seldom "queried what it would mean in terms of the relation between the university and the community in which it was embedded." (1994a, 2)

For Mamdani, this statist orientation derived at least in part from the sociological dimensions of African universities. These were designed to produce technical managers of the state, and since the state was a Europhone entity, universities were likewise Europhone. Mamdani argues that this resulted in a double alienation from the popular classes: a linguistic divide and a class divide, where the two have become mutually reinforcing insofar as access to state power requires competency in European languages and habits. "To expect the intelligentsia to function as bearers of social criticism in such a context," he reflects, "would be to expect them to indulge in self-criticism." (Mahmood Mamdani 1994a, 10) Thus, even "when they denounced inherited privileges, students and academics were most reluctant to renounce the true privilege of the intellectual, to be the bearers of a new order." (1994a, 11) On his account then, no matter the claims to ideological radicalism, the development university embodied a hierarchical, paternalistic and anti-democratic ethos.

In this sense, the predicaments of African scholars in the development university mirrored, to some extent, the predicaments of Africanist scholarship in the metropole that Olukoshi (2006) identifies. If metropolitan scholars had courted a close relation with their policymakers, then African scholars had courted a close relation with the post-independence state. And if the instrumentalisation of scholarship had harmed the quality of metropolitan intellectual work then, by the same measure, it had harmed the quality of African intellectual work. Yet, African scholars arguably came to this predicament from a fundamentally different position to that of their northern counterparts. This was something that scholars would only later become attentive to. Thus, for instance, in his contribution to *Academic Freedom in Africa,* Joseph Ki-Zerbo castigates African intellectuals for playing roles "identical to those of their colonial predecessors [so that the] result was often a tragi-comic drama staged against a scarcely retouched backdrop." (1994, 29–30) For Ki-Zerbo then, the failure of intellectuals to imagine beyond a narrow state nationalism indicated fundamental contiguities with the elite function of those educated in Europhone schools under the colonial state. However, in a later

piece that revisits these arguments, Ki-Zerbo recalls his situation as a student on the eve of independence quite differently:

> For the handful of us university students in the late 1950s, however, the nationalist option was not really a matter of choice; it was structurally programmed as a dialectic and antagonistic break with the realities, interests and values of the colonial nation-state whose intellectuals, drawn from the colonial school, had precisely to contribute to their permanent maintenance in power. Among intellectuals, the nationalist option – not to be mistaken for aggressive and hegemonic nationalism – was initially a refusal, a rebellion and a phenomenon of rejection that, by definition, assumed a precedence and priority that outweighed those of a myth or a postulate. (Ki-Zerbo 2005, 80)

The precarity of African independence therefore acted as the bedrock against which the possibilities of committed scholarship were articulated. Since a close alignment with the state often seemed necessary for safeguarding the autonomy of the state and contributing to the flowering of society, African scholars faced a situation in which the meaning of committed scholarship and the potential avenues for pursuing it appeared tightly circumscribed by their historical context. As a consequence, Ki-Zerbo argues, "the most insidious trap awaiting nationalist intellectuals is the appeal for their professional skills, which they cannot deny their fatherland, whatever the reason … How could they have turned a deaf ear to such an offer which satisfied an aspiration, a secret yearning, the apparently uncompromising realization of self? 'Silence! We are developing!'" (2005, 81)

Archie Mafeje's two contributions to the book further nuance this view. In the first instance, he notes that a significant number of African intellectuals had renounced their class privileges. In some cases, this may have been out of choice, but in other cases, this arose out of the contradictory and confrontational relationship between the development university and the state. "Although they remain petty-bourgeois by virtue of their social birth," he contends, "it is an unwarranted distortion to treat them as part of the ruling class." (Mafeje 1994a, 201) He therefore cautions against "class analysis that ends up in class determinism, especially in societies in transition or in crisis such as those of Africa or the Third World in general." (1994a, 201) Moreover, he argues, the Europhone nature of development universities has not introduced a meaningful divide between university-educated intellectuals and the popular classes. This is because intellectuals typically speak both Europhone and vernacular languages,

and are therefore well-placed to act as intermediaries between these different linguistic worlds. Taking aim at culturalist arguments for using African languages, articulated by intellectuals such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1994) and Ali Mazrui (1994), he argues that language does not fundamentally shape thought, but is rather an instrument of communication. As counter-examples to the argument that true intellectual development requires the use of indigenous languages, he points to the successful use of Latin in Western Europe, Arabic in North Africa and the Maghreb, and Amharic in Ethiopia (Mafeje 1994b, 65). The problem, he argues, is not one of class or language. The problem is one of a lack of democracy. The university context, he suggests, is characterised by a lack of democracy stemming at least in part from the lack of creativity and rigour of African intellectuals. But, this lack of democracy also flows from a broader anti-democratic historical context:

> The African tragedy in its contemporary sense does not begin with lack of intellectual or academic freedom. As has already been pointed out, it starts with the African colonial heritage. At independence Africans inherited a society characterized by intellectual, cultural, and economic poverty. These are enough in themselves to forestall any development of social democracy. But as it happens, one of the strongest points of the colonial state was undemocratic political control. It would have been inexplicable, sociologically and historically for African governments to inherit everything from their colonial predecessors but this. Rather, the great puzzle is how African intellectuals could have expected the realization of intellectual or academic freedom in a society which had no democratic foundations of any kind? (Mafeje 1994a, 198)

The answer, he suggests, is that African intellectuals imported the idea of academic freedom from European universities. "It can be supposed that after independence," he remarks, "African intellectuals had thought that, in the manner of the aristocratic transcendent intellectuals of 400-500 years ago, they would by virtue of their superior knowledge lead their societies into the new era. If so, they must have perceived of intellectual or academic freedom as a natural privilege rather than a democratic right. In the meantime, unlike their European forerunners (aristocratic or high bourgeoisie), they had no vintage social capital to draw from." (1990, 199)

This view, however, is complicated by the contribution of Uzodinma Nwala (1994), who argues that freedoms in European universities have never been considered natural

privileges, but have rather been the outcome of struggles within very specific historical conditions. Moreover, James Mittelman (1994) observes, these struggles are never complete: tensions with the state, with centres of financial power, and with conservative elements of society render academic freedom in the North deeply precarious.

As a consequence, Claude Ake argues, "It does not help to think of academic freedom or anything else for that matter in terms of simple dichotomies such as existence and nonexistence, presences and absences. To my mind, the point is not whether academic freedom exists or not, but how much of it exists and in what form and content." (Ake 1994, 17) In cautioning against viewing academic freedom in abstract terms, Ake seeks to draws attention to the underlying political economy conditions of academic freedom that at once give it meaning and at the same time constrain it. On his account, capitalism generates a situation in which those who control the means of production enjoy broad intellectual freedoms, which they have no need of. In contrast, scholars lack academic freedom, but they are the ones who require it in virtue of their position as "the proletariat of the knowledge industry." (1994, 18) For Ake, academic freedom in the African context is distinguished by the state's attempt to gain control over the means of production, thus forcing scholars into a confrontation with state capital. Unlike Mafeje then, Ake sees the development university as the institutional expression of a particular form of capital relations, where capital relations in general (and not just in post-colonial societies) at once require and constrain academic freedom. However, Ake shares with Mafeje the view that it is a mistake to place "greater value … on freedoms than on the struggles of which they are a product. This is an ideological reflex which leads to the substitution of agitation for struggle. If, in the present social crisis in Africa, freedoms were seen not so much as a necessary condition for the resolution of outstanding problems, but more as an inevitable outcome of successful struggles, the emphasis would be more on the struggles themselves than on complaints about lack of freedom." (Mafeje 1994b, 69)

These contested views of the development university, however, work solely within the parameters set in place by colonial rule – the Europhone state, the Europhone university and the forms of capitalism that emerged through the process of colonisation. African intellectual history is broader and deeper than this. Mamadou Diouf's historical analysis of Senegalese intellectuals provides an indication of the ways in which older African intellectual traditions did not simply disappear with the slave trade and colonisation, but instead entered into a complex dialogue with post-colonial Europhone traditions. In doing so, his chapter prefaces the body of work that CODESRIA would begin to publish on the history and ongoing role of non-Europhone intellectuals in West Africa and the Maghreb (Jeppie and Diagne 2008; Kane

2012; Diagne 2016). Diouf's point of departure is the "trader-intellectuals" of the Sahel-Sudan, for whom the profits of trade provided the material basis for their intellectual work. Thus, whether they chose to deploy their scholarship to legitimise the state apparatus or destabilise its legitimacy and replace it with a new state, Diouf argues, they made their choices according to the extent to which the state would strengthen the financial basis and political freedoms necessary to pursue intellectual work. By the time that the Songhay Empire reached its height under the Askia dynasty, trader-intellectuals had therefore become key protagonists within the state. Although the attacks by the Kingdom of Morocco, and the subsequent trans-Atlantic slave trade substantially weakened this class of intellectuals, this ushered in a new period of theocratic states led by warrior-intellectuals who instigated social revolts against the slave trade and local aristocracies. These intellectuals introduced "a shift from a ruling class of the learned to a ruling class of heirs", which in turn heralded the emergence of "a caste of 'learned families'" (Diouf 1994, 219). While they gained their power from opposing the slave trade, these learned families tended to maintain their power through their accommodation with the colonial state. The colonial state aimed to integrate and thereby neutralise them by assigning them the role of intermediary between the state and the peasant population within the largely rural Protectorate. In this respect, Diouf remarks, these Muslim-Wolof intellectuals played a similar role to the Europhone intellectuals of the urban Communes in Senegal.

For this reason, Diouf characterises Muslim-Wolof and Europhone intellectuals as constituting "two poles of the Senegalese intellectual movement [that] have acted as two parts of a single continuum." (Diouf 1994, 239) However, unlike the learned families, Europhone intellectuals "produced a rhetoric and a scale of true and false values incomprehensible outside of their own circle, and that circle got established as the sole agent capable of putting learning to work in the service of development. This was a community that arrogated to itself the exclusive right to decipher the meaning of reality, and to reach conclusions on the basis of the ensuing consciousness." (1994, 227) This vanguardist orientation was based on an "anthropological viewpoint derived from the colonial ideology," and in this, Europhone intellectuals shared with the state an "ideology of progress: the old idea of a civilising mission in a new disguise." (1994, 225) On Diouf's account, the popular classes were variously seen as ethnographic references for adorning poetry (Leopold Senghor's Negritude), a people who had lost their sense of civilisation and therefore needed, in some sense, to be re-civilised (Cheikh Anta Diop's Neo-Pharaonism), or instrumental tools for establishing a socialist state (Marxism). In the post-independence period, it was therefore natural for the state to absorb intellectuals into organisations that were established under the auspices of the ruling party.

In general then, since intellectuals often saw the state as the prime mover of history, it was fairly easy to co-opt them, regardless of whether they were Muslim-Wolof intellectuals with roots in pre-colonial political structures, or Europhone intellectuals with roots in colonial institutions. As the junior partners of political elites, a role they carried forth from the precolonial era, intellectuals across the spectrum were put to work in the service of sustaining political hegemony. Where the two groups differed was in their relationship to the popular classes: while Europhone intellectuals were alienated from them and tended to view them in anthropological terms, Muslim-Wolof intellectuals were deeply intertwined with them insofar as they constituted an important political and economic base. Moreover, in their accommodations with the Europhone state, they had become adept in moving between multiple linguistic codes and social milieux. Unlike their Europhone counterparts then, Diouf argues, they were "poised to profit fully from evolving contingencies." (Diouf 1994, 239) Still, while they may have been more politically dynamic than their Europhone counterparts, he observes, Muslim Wolof intellectuals occupied a similarly narrow intellectual realm. While Europhone intellectuals practiced self-censorship in their efforts at accommodating state power, Muslim Wolof intellectuals were stuck within an intellectual tradition that had ossified as a consequence of its hereditary and theocratic turn under colonial rule.

Diouf's genealogy of Senegalese intellectuals therefore seeks to make clear that intellectuals' close relationship to the state in the post-independence period is not only a function of the development university and its statist logic, or of the colonial regime's profoundly anti-democratic functioning, but is also a more general feature of intellectuals' role in legitimising power. In this regard, he draws attention to the Gramscian notion that intellectuals tend to be "the dominant group's 'deputies' responsible for the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government." (Gramsci 1982 cited in Diouf 1994, 215) It is precisely in respect of this role as agents of hegemony that intellectuals' freedoms come to be circumscribed, since intellectual work must constantly be shaped and reshaped to the purposes of power.

This poses the question of the conditions under which intellectuals are able to act outside of their role as agents of hegemony, and thereby expand their freedoms. For Diouf, female intellectuals in Senegal provide an indication of these possibilities. They were neither caught within an inflexible religious aristocracy, nor were they alienated from the popular classes, since they "established relationships and some dialogue with the have-nots of colonial and post-colonial society." (1994, 233) However, he argues, male intellectuals and political elites were often effective in silencing them by invoking rules of etiquette "prescribing female

reticence" except on "topics declared by men to be women's issues." (1994, 233) These observations suggest that an important part of expanding intellectual freedom is to open up intellectual spaces so that the haves and the have-nots of society can enter into meaningful conversation with each other. It also suggests that those with less power may have a greater capacity to expand intellectual freedoms.

This theme is taken up in detail by Ayesha Imam and Amina Mama. Their chapter focuses on the ways in which African scholars limit academic freedom through their own practices. They detail a number of gatekeeping practices, from the dogmatic reproduction of dominant paradigms to forms of both intentional and unintentional censorship in publishing and research funding. Hierarchical and anti-democratic practices in teaching and administration, they argue, also narrow the space for academic freedom within the university. Their point, however, is two-fold. First, unequal gender norms within the academy and society in general create a situation in which female scholars are minoritised and politically marginalised within the university, so that they tend to bear the brunt of these forms of censorship. Second, they seek to demonstrate the potential for African feminism to free intellectual work on the continent from its close relationship to power, insofar as feminist scholars (women and men) are accountable not only to the academic community but to the women's movement. Their extensive review of feminist literature in the global South shows how this expanded accountability encourages work that is more empirically minded and less dogmatic, while at the same time generating less hierarchical and more inclusive methods of teaching and research.

Given this account, it is surprising that some contributors to the book paint African scholarship in very broad brushstrokes as overly statist and mimetic. The clearest indication of this is the critique of scholarship at Dar es Salaam, which has often been considered to be one of the more radical universities on the continent. On these accounts, the university was generally staffed by "neophytes" of Mwalimu Nyerere's administration (Mafeje 1994a, 205), while even the most radical of students and scholars at Dar es Salaam were unable to connect their anti-imperialism to thinking that goes beyond state nationalism (Mahmood Mamdani 1994b, 254). Yet, these accounts elide important work at Dar es Salaam in the form of the Women's Research and Documentary Project (WRDP). Founded in 1978, it arguably provides a clear counter-example to these statist and mimetic forms of thinking. Like other feminist collectives on the continent, scholars at WRDP pioneered the use of participatory research methods "as a non-hierarchical form of political praxis which generates knowledge in the process of effecting change." (Mama 1997, 422) In order to bridge the linguistic divide between

the language of research and the language of the people, the WRDP deliberately used both Kiswahili and English to conduct their research and disseminate it via popular theatre and radio. They also established the women's press TAMWA, which commissioned and published research in *Sauti Ya Siti*, a bilingual women's magazine (Meena and Mbilinyi 1991). Moreover, Ruth Meena (1991) explains, given an institutional culture of hostility towards women, which manifested not only in terms of explicit violence against women, but also in terms of their minoritisation and marginalisation, feminist scholars began to work thematically across disciplines in order to shore up support and increase intellectual resources. The combination of these two political strategies resulted in a distinctive tradition of African feminist scholarship, which is at once avant-garde and popular, and thereby tends to avoid statism and mimicry. The point, as Imam and Mama argue, is that male scholars have often simply ignored the existence of feminism, and in other cases, explicitly attempted to censor and suppress it.[4] The critique of African scholarship as lacking democracy and creativity therefore misses bodies of African scholarship that provide counterpoints to the general trend, counterpoints which offer concrete examples of the ways in which intellectual freedoms could be expanded within the specific historical constraints facing African universities. It also serves to underscore Diouf's suggestion that the exercise of power is not always consistent with the capacity to expand intellectual freedoms.

Read against this context, Mkandawire's (1995) observation that the crises of structural adjustment could act as a spur to more autonomous research gains significant traction. In the first place, as several contributors note, the political and economic crises of the period profoundly undercut the social consensus that had marked the immediate post-independence period regarding the legitimacy of the state to determine national interests (and by implication, the interests of the development university). As a consequence, the instrumentalised understanding of the development university as a means to a state-defined end was increasingly put under pressure by a "climate of skepticism about these given ends." (Imam and Mama 1994, 78) This climate of scepticism often gave way to outright dissent, as scholars and students became aware of the extent to which the state's agenda was being set by international financial institutions. As Bako (1994) argues, university protests against the state were therefore in part an attempt to assert and protect national sovereignty. Examined from Diouf's more Gramscian

[4] Indeed, as Mama later observes, although she and Imam had initially aimed to explore the way in which gender inequality threatened academic freedom, this idea was considered too "controversial" and they were therefore forced to rework the topic under the rubric of self-censorship for their contribution to the conference and the book (Mama 2011, 5).

perspective, university intellectuals did not so much revolt against the state as discover that they were no longer able to play a role in legitimising the state, since the state was in crisis as a result of the external assault on its sovereignty as well as the internal contradictions of post-coloniality. Intellectuals' relationship to power had therefore become fundamentally unstable and unpredictable. In an account of Algerian intellectuals marked by deep historical sensitivity, Amin Kahn observes that by the advent of structural adjustment:

> The state of Algeria has used up the legacy of credit inherited from the national liberation war. Now under straitened circumstances, it is forced to confront the issue of modernity at the head of an ill-prepared society. The old consensus has come under attack; yet so far there is no clear future alternative. It is under these unpromising circumstances that the intellectuals face the double challenge of making up their minds about identity and modernity. (Kahn 1994, 294)

Reflecting on this period, Mamdani would later remark that that relationship between higher education and nationalism was contradictory: "On the one hand, higher education was a fruit of nationalism; on the other hand, nationalist power tended to stifle critical thought" so that the crisis of the development university was not only a crisis of structural adjustment, but was also a part of the larger crisis of nationalism (Mahmood Mamdani 2008, 6).

The uncertainties of this period arguably mark an interregnum, a pause between historical periods and ways of seeing. In subsequent years, scholars in CODESRIA would go on to characterise this as a transition from the development university to the commercialised or marketised university (Zeleza 2003; Mkandawire 2005; Mahmood Mamdani 2007). In this volume, however, contributors are deeply aware that structural adjustment signals a fundamental reconfiguration of the development university. As Mamdani writes, the "World Bank stepped onto the university scene in Africa, with a carrot in one hand and a stick in another. The carrot was the much-needed injection of financial resources; the stick was the demand for budgetary discipline & academic relevance … The Bank's demand for academic relevance, however, was a return to the developmental logic of the independent state, but without its ambition or vision." (1994a, 3) However, Mamdani argues, these struggles against the narrow vision of the World Bank tended to remain within the university, and seldom spilled out to broader society, precisely because the development university had been the training

ground for future elites, and its community was therefore isolated from rural and working class politics:

> Driven into a corner, we discovered local communities, communities which we had hitherto viewed simply as so many natural settings. Forced to address these communities, we were compelled to look at ourselves from the standpoint of these communities. We came to realise that universities have little relevance to the communities around us. To them, we must appear like potted plants in greenhouses – of questionable aesthetic value – or mere anthropological oddities with curious habits and strange dresses, practitioners of some modern witchcraft. (Mahmood Mamdani 1993, 11)

The political and economic exigencies of this period therefore forced the question of intellectual freedom to become simultaneously a question of social responsibility:

> To academics who had come to see themselves as leaders-in-waiting, and to students accustomed to being cajoled as 'the leaders of tomorrow', these were indeed harsh realities. And yet, it is these realities – and no dose of political education – that chipped away at the rock of academic elitism. New survival strategies had to be fashioned, ones that called for a new self-understanding, however gradual. The demands of academics came to be based less and less on the claim to leadership; more and more on that of rights. Alongside this shifting claim was a nagging feeling that rights are never absolute, they never exist alone, but always in a couple, alongside obligations. But is this obligation to be construed as the responsibility that governments habitually remind academics of, or is it to be understood as a broader accountability? And, if the latter, to whom? (Mahmood Mamdani 1994a, 4)

As Mafeje remarks, much of this pressure has come from African intellectuals themselves. But he cautions, while "it is a good omen for African intellectuals to feel guilty about their failures and acts of omission, whether real or imagined … the question of social responsibility cannot be approached from a purely subjective point of view. Why responsibility and, socially, who

apportions it? This is a sociological and a historical question which cannot be answered arbitrarily." (Mafeje 1994a, 96)

In this regard, contributors provide different ways of conceptualising the relationship between intellectual freedom and social responsibility. On one account, intellectual freedom is not a right but instead a responsibility to society. This can be glossed in two different ways. First, intellectual freedom can be understood as a necessary condition for intellectuals to fulfil their social responsibilities, so that the freedom of intellectuals is justified insofar as they aim to fulfil their social responsibilities. In this regard, Ake asks:

> How can we justify academic freedom beyond our own self-interest? Only by showing that it is in the interest of the larger society. That requires on our part the transformation of academic freedom from a right to a responsibility. Responsibility to whom, to do what? It seems to me that the answer must be responsibility to the public interest. If that is true, then academic freedom must somehow engage the interests, values, aspirations and potentialities of our people – and bearing in mind that 'our people' are typically peasants who are abjectly poor, malnourished, unschooled and in poor health, confronting nature in its crude immediacy in a strenuous struggle for survival which yields at best the most elementary necessities." (Ake 1994, 22)

This view, as Mamdani notes, reconceptualises freedom "away from a narrow notion of freedom as 'immunity' to freedom as 'service'." (Mahmood Mamdani 1994a, 13) It is tied not only to a normative view of intellectuals as potential agents of emancipation, but is also located in strategic considerations about how academics, and intellectuals more broadly, require the support of society to defend their freedoms successfully. As Mamdani puts it, "If we are to think of the possibility of African universities drawing resources from communities of working people, then it will be necessary that the universities nourish these communities in a thousand and one ways." (Mahmood Mamdani 1994a, 14–15)

Another way of thinking about intellectual freedom as a responsibility to society is to emphasise that, in pursuing their social responsibilities, intellectuals' freedoms are expanded. This is so because accountability to those who are more vulnerable in society helps to unhinge intellectuals from their function as legitimisers of power, and thereby encourages more creative, democratic and rigorous forms of knowledge production. This is in part the direction suggested by the contributions of Diouf, Mazrui, Imam and Mama. These two interpretations

are consistent with each other insofar as they emphasise the different beneficiaries of what André du Toit calls the "social compact for academic rule." (Du Toit 2007, 143) While the first interpretation emphasises the benefits to society, the second interpretation emphasises the benefits to intellectuals. This view is reflected in Article 22 of the *Kampala Declaration*: "The intellectual community has the responsibility to struggle for and participate in the struggle of the popular forces for their rights and emancipation."

These ways of thinking about intellectual freedom *as* social responsibility, however, rely on the idea that working and rural people have a vested interest in developing a mutually beneficial relationship with intellectuals. As Amin Kahn (1994) and Nadia Farah (1994) argue, this idea simply cannot be assumed to have an *a priori* truth. In both Algeria and Egypt, they observe, working and rural people have often been deeply suspicious, and sometimes outright hostile, towards intellectuals. The reasons for this are complex. In the Egyptian context, Farah argues, society's mistrust of intellectuals is in part an outcome of the specific forms of interpenetration between religious civil society and the state. On her account, the Sadat administration elevated religion to a state ideology in order to legitimise its deconstruction of Nasser's nationalist programme. One of the elements in this programme was the cultivation of student groups that coalesced around political Islam in order to counteract Nasserist nationalist groups on campus. The success of this strategy meant that intellectuals across the spectrum typically had to employ a religious discourse in order to frame their arguments. Thus, for instance, if elites appealed to the Qur'an to justify inequality, then opposing thinkers would appeal to the Qur'an to prove otherwise. (Farah 1990, 271) The result of this exercise of hegemony, Farah contends, is that "[c]ivil society is the main custodian of these unequal power relations and academic research can only proceed by working within the accepted paradigm. Any research that challenges this is labelled as atheist and is rejected by the public." (1990, 271) This imposes specific restrictions on intellectual freedom, ranging from self-censorship to explicit and sometimes forceful censorship by civil society. Thus, gender inequality is a taboo, as are secular studies of religion. Within this context then, intellectual freedoms are constrained by the influence of civil society working both through and outside of the state.

In the Algerian case, popular hostility towards intellectuals has its roots at least in part in the war against France for independence. The anti-colonial movements, Kahn argues, tended to cultivate consensus, for they were worried that debate and dissent would split nationalist ranks. Thus, intellectuals who served the anti-colonial movements often did so as technicians

following orders, rather than critics.[5] Moreover, anti-colonial movements tended to be suspicious of intellectuals, since, in their literacy and bilingualism, they were perceived to be too closely aligned to the language and culture of the colonial state. As a consequence, France's psychological warfare campaign successfully cultivated an atmosphere of paranoia about the extent to which urban Algerians were collaborators.[6] Under the command of Amirouche Aït Hamouda, who "n'hésita . . . pas à faire subir, au nom de la terreur sacrée, les pires souffrances à des compatriotes innocents et à en liquider sans doute un ou deux milliers, peut-être plus," a campaign of torture and massacre was waged mainly against students, teachers, journalists and doctors. (Meynier 2002 quoted in Landers 2013) Suitably cautioned by the massacre, then, intellectuals in the post-independence period confined themselves within the bounds of accepted public discourse, shaped by the habits of discipline and self-censorship that the war for independence had cultivated. But the legitimacy of the state was a fragile one, grafted out of a consensus built on the "taboo on any open discussion or examination of cultural contradictions," orientated both towards political Islam and Marxism. (Kahn 1994, 284) These contradictions were deepened by the advent of the oil crisis in the 1970s, where the state's previous emphasis on public goods began to be supplanted by increasing privatisation, coupled by rising unemployment and falling wages. In this context, the state turned to the language of religion to justify its political and economic decisions, while civil society increasingly looked to the utopianism promised by political Islam as a salve against the crises. However, Kahn argues, Algeria had lost touch with the culture of critique that had characterised the flowering of Islamic civilisation, and the increasing turn towards political Islam was therefore accompanied by increasing rigidity and a fear of questions and curiosity. In this context, "Algerian intellectuals, whether trained in French or Arabic, are the living antennae of this all-embracing migration to schizophrenia." (Kahn 1994, 289) The decade in which Kahn wrote

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[5] A painful example of this was the assassination of Abane Ramdane, a key thinker in the Algerian revolution, and Frantz Fanon's close friend. While the FLN's newspaper *El Moudjahid* announced that Ramdane had died "on the field of honour", he had in fact apparently been dead for five months, strangled by a rival faction in the FLN. Adam Schatz notes: "Fanon, who was close enough to the intelligence services to know the truth of his friend's murder, said nothing. Shaken, he made his peace with the army of the frontiers, both for the sake of the revolution – the military leadership, in Tunisia and Morocco, was increasingly the dominant force – and to protect himself: according to [Mohammed] Harbi [a fighter and historian of the revolution], his name was on a list of those to be executed in the event of an internal challenge to the FLN leadership."(Shatz 2017)

[6] The French strategy was to turn a small number of Algerians into double agents, often through torture, and use them to infiltrate the FLN network during the Battle of Algiers. The French would then manufacture false evidence and place this on Algerian corpses to give the impression that the number of Algerian collaborators was extremely large. This fermented an atmosphere of paranoia and suspicion between various nationalist groups, and culminated in the torture and killings of a large number of people, many of whom were literate. For a review of the contested memories of this massacre see Naylor (2013)(2013)(2013).

this piece would come to be known as the 'dark decade' in Algeria, during which approximately 200,000 Algerians were killed by religious civil society, where intellectuals were overwhelmingly the targets of executions. Reflecting on this period, Karima Bennoune notes that there were also external dimensions to the violence: "The U.S. and Britain … only made things worse by pumping money into the anti-Soviet jihad in faraway Afghanistan which had a direct effect on Algeria; the worst killers in the 90s conflict were known as 'Afghans' for their experience as foreign fighters in that 'jihad.'" (Bennoune 2013). Many of these fighters were the peasants "abjectly poor, malnourished, unschooled and in poor health" that Ake urged intellectuals to form alliances with. Within this context, Kahn cautions us, the assumption that disenfranchised people will view intellectuals in a positive light is unwarranted. It suggests a romantic view of the disenfranchised, and precisely the kind of intellectual paternalism and instrumentalisation that Diouf warns against. For this reason, Kahn argues, intellectuals "have, on the one hand, to avoid the traps of imperial value systems masquerading as universal truths. On the other hand, they must steer clear of anthropological sentimentalism, stupidly glorifying societies sliding into ruin." (1994, 295) To do so, they have to "break through the vicious circle of censorship and self-censorship. After all, those forbidden to speak, as much as those denied a hearing, are ultimately forbidden to think." (1994, 295)

On the basis of this analysis, Kahn describes two positions with regard to intellectual freedom. One position advocates for a form of autonomy that is derived from the enhanced professional status of intellectuals, which he claims, boils down to "making intellectuals a more visible and recognizable part of the operational apparatus of social domination." (Kahn 1994, 296) The other position advocates autonomy for the proletariat, such that committed intellectuals become of service to "some collective intelligence," but this he says, perpetuates intellectuals' subservience to the holders of political power. He then offers a third way:

> It is the position of those intellectuals who aim neither at neutrality, nor at state recognition, nor yet at recognition by society. For the search for truth, by its very nature, transcends the need for recognition from any source of authority whatsoever, including the scientific and artistic establishments of the moment. Such a concept of the search for truth is certainly not 'objective'. However, in its independent self it offers a definition of the need for the genuine exercise of the right to risk making mistakes (heresy), for the right to assume, *a priori*, that truth may come in multiple forms – in other words,

> that different opinions may be right. For only from the interaction of countervailing opinions can truth emerge." (Kahn 1994, 296–97)

This is a subtle position. Kahn is in effect arguing that, in order to fulfil one's responsibilities to society, the intellectual must refuse to seek acknowledgement from society. Put differently, the broader social relevance of intellectuals is precisely their irrelevance, and therefore, their ability to engage in the heresies that societies may not want to hear, but need to hear. As Kahn writes, "intellectuals need to stay free of political power ties because it is part of their work to know their society. This means they have to be able lift the veils of ignorance not just from truths the powerful wish to cover but also from realities the society itself would rather hide." (1994, 297) Intellectual freedom, in this sense, is at least in part the freedom to *choose* whether to align with society or not.

What these different positions suggest is that the relationship between intellectual freedom and social responsibility is a historical one. It follows that each intellectual community needs to work out the relationship for themselves within their historical parameters.[7] It cannot be decided once and for all by definitional fiat or by appeal to moral norms. To do so, however, intellectuals must make clear which elements of society are under consideration. As the above discussion suggests, the appeal to "peasants", the "proletariat", "social movements" or "trade unions" is not specific enough to delineate the contours between intellectual freedom and social responsibility; after all, these social groups are neither politically homogenous nor ahistorical entities. Likewise the appeal to the "women's movement" is vague, since women's organisations have sometimes played important roles in propping up authoritarian regimes or disempowering those who are more vulnerable (Mama 1995).

Nevertheless, these different perspectives all seem to hold in common the idea that critique or heresy is a valuable component of both intellectual freedom and social responsibility. In his contribution, for instance, Ali Abdel Gadir Ali argues that, it is the job of intellectuals "to nurse scepticism and to apply it to established beliefs and the present order of things. Education and research must be intellectually and socially dangerous. It is to promote and protect this quality that academic freedom is needed." (Council for Academic Freedom

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[7] Indeed, these debates within CODESRIA are by no means unprecedented. Similar kinds of debates about the relationship between intellectuals and society played themselves out within the Frankfurt School, and were never fully resolved. Martin Jay argues that this was in part because finding a middle way between "the Scylla of unquestioning solidarity and the Charybdis of wilful independence" was contingent on historical factors, so that intellectuals in the Frankfurt School constantly had to renegotiate this path as the historical context changed. (Jay 1973, viv–xv)

and Democracy quoted in Ali 1994, 110) Echoing this characterisation of the need for intellectual work to be "socially dangerous", Nwala contends that the university ought to act as the "home of heresy" (1994, 179).

However, contributors tend to conceptualise the role of critique as a form of conversation, not only within the intellectual community, but between the intellectual community and the different social actors and groups outside of this community. On Diouf's account, for instance, the failings of Senegalese intellectuals lie precisely in their inability to establish a dialogue with broader society (Europhone intellectuals), or where such dialogue exists, for this dialogue to be insufficiently critical and open to heresy (Muslim Wolof intellectuals). For Hagan, this conversation takes place in terms of the flow of knowledge from academics to non-academics, such that "it takes a certain level of social freedom for societies to have the full benefit of the ideas emanating from universities. Freedom cannot be made exclusive to universities." (Hagan 1994, 56) But, as Joseph Ki-Zerbo notes, this is a monologue rather than a dialogue. "All too often," he reflects, "African intellectuals write for a tiny in-group, and both their language and their jargon are more arcane than the language of old Africa's sorcerers and secret societies." (Ki-Zerbo 1994, 37) For a dialogue to be established, he argues, thinkers outside of universities must be brought into the university. For instance, he thinks, griots could work together with Europhone historians, or agricultural scientists might collaborate with farmers to research seed selection. "The general principle", he argues, "is to bring the enterprise of research to a meeting with the productive processes of life itself, and so to connect it with grassroots groups in civil society, that they too might become partners in the production of knowledge." (1994, 37) In this, he echoes Imam and Mama's characterisation of trends in feminist scholarship from the global South. But this conversation can also take place when those within the university move out of it into broader society. In this regard, Mamdani emphasises the historical example of the Black Consciousness movement during apartheid South Africa, in which students moved out of the university to develop intellectual and political allegiances with black working people, and in the process, shifted away from vanguardist or statist understandings of change to focus on "the subjectivity of the oppressed, the possibility of the oppressed constituting themselves into a liberating force." (Mahmood Mamdani 1994b, 257)

While these contributors differ in their emphasis, all point to the positive potential for intellectuals to enter into broader conversations with different elements of society, and therefore, of the university to act as an institution that enables these conversations. Since these conversations are characterised by the right to risk heresy, they constitute a form of argument.

We can see a reflection of this idea in article 20 of the *Dakar Declaration*, which specifies that "Members of the intellectual community have a responsibility to promote the spirit of tolerance towards different views and positions and enhance democratic debate and discussion."

What is the meaning of the suggestion that the academic project *could* become one way in which society enters into conversation, into argument with itself? As Zeleza (2003, 155) observes, much of the urgency and poignancy of African scholars' writings in this period derive from their intimate acquaintance with the ways in which the disintegration of the fabric of society necessarily involves an assault on a society's ability to think autonomously.[8] The critique of structural adjustment, therefore, did not only rest on an analysis of the ways in which structural adjustment was inured from public deliberation, but that it fundamentally undermined the conditions for public deliberation by attacking the institutional basis for autonomous thought (Mustapha 1995b; Mkandawire 2005). But, as Ato Sekyi-Otu persuasively argues, attacking the basis upon which a society enters into conversation with itself is precisely what colonial rule was: "Colonialism as an episode in the life of a people, a rude interruption of the rhythms and idioms that sustain their local and common humanity, a digression from the terms of their moral argument with themselves." (Sekyi-Otu 2003, 11) It follows from this that "decolonization, the postapartheid, is first and foremost, a resumption of interrupted history. A resumption not indeed of some original purities and essences before the Fall, but of interrupted dramas, indigenous and universal dramas; above all a resumption of our dialogue with one another, with ourselves." (2003, 12)

It seems to me that one of the major contributions of *Academic Freedom in Africa* is to suggest that African universities and intellectuals have the capacity to help society resume its argument with itself. There are different ways of glossing this idea. Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba, for instance, characterises society's argument with itself in terms of the palaver, which "requires of and provides to each community member the right to carry out, and the obligation

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[8] It is worth quoting at length Rasheed's (1994, 116) analysis of this marginalisation of African scholarship in Africa Development as an indication of the anguish that marks CODESRIA's scholarship at this time: "At this critical juncture of Africa's history when the continent has lost, to a large degree, both the ability and initiative to think for itself and shape its destiny; when many governments … have chosen or were constrained to adopt reform programmes and political and economic conditionalities of dubious basis and often disastrous consequences; when the wisdom and expertise of indigenous think-tanks, researchers and experts are being wilfully ignored; when the existing indigenous capacities for policy research and policy analysis are being bypassed, allowed to rut, and on occasion, dismantled; when parallel institutions and research organizations are being created and financially buttressed by outsiders to influence thinking and research and orient them to particular directions; when all of this is happening, Africa's research community, institutions and organizations have an historic responsibility to think and act strategically to encourage policy-oriented research and enhance
the chances for its utilization by governments, the business community and civil society as a whole as well as to loosen the stranglehold of outsiders on research and minimize their influence on policy making.

to be subjected to, an integral critique of/by everyone without exception.” (Wamba-dia-Wamba 1985, 7) In order for this to occur, however, the palaver cannot be organised by the ruling powers, for a palaver under these circumstances “degenerates into a formal exercise without life and (de)void of mass spontaneous creativity: people speak, as it is said, with ‘tied tongues’ or with ‘tongues in the cheek’.” (1985, 4) It requires, therefore, distance from political power. In the context of scholarship, Paul Zeleza interprets the palaver as “a community conversation that is critical, creative and convivial, in which the production, consumption, and valorisation of knowledge are popular and public activities for any community’s self-understanding, self-definition, self-regulation, and social progress. From this perspective, then, any emancipatory project of producing … knowledge has to be a collective process.” (Zeleza 2005, 1)

In this, we can see a number of parallels with the idea of the public sphere. In his elaboration of the concept in contemporary African contexts, Raufu Mustapha (2012a) observes that the notion of the public sphere, and the related concept of a public good, is curiously absent from African political discourse. In contrast, he argues, the concept of civil society has assumed almost hegemonic proportions in political discourse following the collapse of the nationalist project and the ascendancy of the neoliberal Washington Consensus (which took its African form in structural adjustment). He argues that while both are European concepts, the selective application of civil society to explain and design public policy is reflective of the general demonisation of African states under structural adjustment. As a counter-project, he therefore seeks to articulate a concept of the public sphere in African terms. Like the palaver, Jurgen Habermas’ concept of the public sphere on which Mustapha builds is defined by a form of reason that expresses itself in critical dialogue, in argument. It too requires a disregard for social status and hierarchies. Moreover, participants in the public sphere must be autonomous and free from coercion, where those with power may not have a monopoly on interpretation. However, Mustapha departs from Habermas in arguing that, if the concept of the public sphere is to relate to African realities, it cannot be understood as a single public sphere built on consensus and equality. The multiplicity of overlapping publics and counterpublics is constituted not only through the dynamics of inequality, but also more positively through the plurality of soundscapes and cultures. (Mustapha 2012b) Like the palaver, the public sphere is “conceptually distinct from the state in that it is the site for the production and circulation of discourses that can be critical of or hostile to the state. It is also different from the economy in that it is not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations, “a theatre for debating and deliberating rather than for buying and selling.” (Awasom 2012, 71)

These two ways of thinking about the resumption of argument – as a revitalisation of palaver and as a reconstitution of the public sphere – imply two important conditions in the context of the academic project. First, the academic project must recognise the epistemic agency of each person and therefore the right of each to engage in intellectual labour. Second, it requires that each person has the responsibility to engage in argument or intellectual labour where possible. Indeed, this is the very first article in the *Dakar Declaration*: "Every person has the right to education and participation in intellectual activity." Taking this seriously requires that intellectuals renounce what Zeleza calls "the civilizational and conceptual conceits of discovery and abolitionism – the enduring fallacies of disciplinary innovation and social conscience – that [African intellectuals] are the intellectual progenitors of African history and the global interlocutors for African peoples." (Zeleza 2005, 1) By the same token though, it also requires a rejection of romantic views of the innately positive and progressive intentions of people who are dispossessed and engaged in profound struggles for survival. As Mafeje reminds us, our social position does not fully determine our interests or actions. On this view of the academic project then, intellectual freedom and responsibility are *constitutive* of argument. By implication, a careful examination of these contributions suggests that, rather than intellectual freedom being grounded in social responsibility, it is the broader project of enabling society to resume its dialogue with itself that gives meaning to and justifies both freedom and responsibility.

From this perspective, African scholars' critique of the academic project and their defence flow from an implicit recognition of the potential value of the academic project to function as a space for society to argue with itself. This conceptualisation draws a close analytical link between the academic project and broader social flourishing. It also intimates that intellectuals' participation in the more egalitarian dynamics of public argument could help distance them from their role as legitimisers of power, and thereby encourage more creative and rigorous forms of knowledge production. In doing so, scholars therefore suggest an alternative to both the development university and the marketised university, prefacing later work that examines the capacity for the academic project to revitalise palaver and reconstitute the public sphere.

This in turn poses the question of why the concept of the palaver or the public sphere is not explicitly invoked in the book. One reason for this might be that until the advent of structural adjustment, the African "university was synonymous with the *public* university." (Sall et al. 2003, 129 original emphasis) In this way, the idea of publicness would have been the background assumptions on which African scholars worked. However, as the contributions

demonstrate, the development university may have been funded by the state, but it did not function as a public sphere and was isolated from the broader debates of society. Another reason might be the ascendance of a neoliberal discursive hegemony under structural adjustment, which as Mustapha argues, demonises the state and the notion of public goods. Yet *Academic Freedom in Africa* is, if anything, an attempt to rebut such hegemony by emphasising the interdependent relationship between the state, social forces and the academic project. I think, instead, the answer is to be found elsewhere. The book represents the first attempt by scholars to systematically and collectively consider the role of the academic project in Africa. Moreover, they do so in a period of profound uncertainty, poised between historical periods and ways of seeing. As a consequence, the book can be understood as an attempt to create a new language, a new way of thinking about the academic project. This way of thinking emerges less from the individual contributions of the book, and more from the conversations between the different contributions. In this way, the book is an intimation of the ways in which social argument might resume. It is an act of astonishing and fierce hope – that in place of the developmental university or its marketized counterpart, the democratic, sovereign spirit of a people could come to live within the university.

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