

On the Meta-Theoretical Orientation of Daudi Azibo's Nosology: Placing the Development of his African-Centered Diagnostic System against the Methodological Crisis Argued for by Dr. W. C. Banks

by

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Introduction

Since the introduction of Daudi ya Azibo's Nosology model in "African-Centered Theses on Mental Health and a Nosology of Black/African Personality Disorder" (1989), Azibo's nosology has been well noted in the scholarly record (Anderson and Stewart 2007, Warfield-Coppock 1995) and engaged for its relevance in clinical practice (Abdullah 1998, Atwell and Azibo 1991, Azibo and Dixon 1998, Dennard 1998, Dixon and Azibo 1998, Richard 2002). Whereas multiple articles have utilized Azibo's Nosology for its practical interventions into the theory and practice of Black psychology, to date no articles have inquired into the methodological and theoretical genealogy of Azibo's system. To some psychologists and Black Studies scholars to pose such a question at the 25 year mark of the theory seems silly, or useless given its representation in the literature, but it is precisely the archival history of Azibo's nosology, specifically the special edition of the 1998 *Journal of Black Psychology* edited partially by Dr. Azibo himself that brought this question to mind.

The *Journal of Black Psychology* 24.2 (1998) begins with eulogies by Ewart Thomas and Howard Hall to the late W. Curtis Banks, who died January 14th of that year; and ends with a smaller section edited by Dr. Daudi Azibo himself on the clinical efficacy and theoretical intervention of his now popular nosology. The contrast of these two sections in this edition impressed me, and reignited an argument I developed as an undergraduate student in an African American Psychology class at Southern Illinois University Carbondale when I was asked to read Azibo and Banks works on African-centered thought. On the one hand, we see the death of one of the most philosophically astute and critical methodologists in Black psychology, next to the rise of a (then) young radical theorist who adamantly disagreed with Banks, but nonetheless was influenced by his intellectual opposition.

Many scholars do not know that Daudi Azibo was a post-doctoral student of the late Dr. W.C. Banks at the Educational Testing Service in the Fall of 1983 (Azibo 2002, 72). In fact, Daudi Azibo not only documents this in his article “Some Reflections on My Interactions with the Late Dr. W. Curtis Banks,” but makes clear that he and Banks were from sharply different and oppositional intellectual traditions. In thinking about his post-doctoral position under Banks, Azibo recalls that:

More than one Radical School psychologist advised me not to take the postdoc with Curtis, fearing an inevitable clash of perspectives. Although our perspectives indeed differed—me from the Radical School and Banks not—we clicked on an intellectual level. Curtis appreciated my theoretical skills, but really liked my bringing empiricism to Radical School theory (e.g., Azibo, 1983, 1991), which in the early 1980s was overall absent. (Azibo 2002, 72)

In this same article, Azibo cites his own work, specially the “Perceived Attractiveness and the Black Personality” (1983) and “An Empirical Test of the Fundamental Postulates of an African Personality Metatheory” (1991) as evidence that he was seeking to bring an “empiricism to radical school theory,” a practice that was seemingly absent in the early 1980s. Six years later, Daudi Azibo would carry this empirical intervention forward, and present his nosology as “an African-centered diagnostic system of psychological functioning as opposed to the one African-centered diagnostic system” (Azibo 1989, 206) to the world in his now famous “African-Centered Theses on Mental Health and a Nosology of Black/African Personality Disorder.”

What is most interesting about this essay is that Azibo concludes his 1989 article with a tribute to two seemingly divergent aspects of intellectual thought one paradigmatically African-centered and the other empirical. Azibo argues that his nosology; “this diagnostic system and the personality theory underpinning it are two examples of how the clarion calls of Wade Nobles and W. C. Banks for enrichment of our discipline and practice can be answered” (206).

From Wade Nobles reflections on Black psychology as a *discipline*, Azibo takes seriously the need for “autonomous paradigms...designed to advance the discipline of African psychology as a science” (Azibo 1989, 206), but from W. Curtis Banks’s reflections on *practice* Azibo makes an interesting move and reads his nosology into Banks’s empirical paradigm. Azibo quotes and revises Banks to say: “the most crucial issue [in treating African clients] is a policy mandate [like this nosology] that emphasizes the group realities of blacks but allows for attention to the intrapsychic difficulties of the individual” (Azibo 1989, 206). Though Azibo only quotes W.C. Banks’s “The Social Context and Empirical Foundations of Research on Black Clients” (1980) something many would find strange given their personal relationship, Azibo nonetheless seeks to respond to the methodological arguments against African-centered methodology that gave Banks his notoriety. Azibo deliberately reads his nosology as a system that can cope with the “most crucial issue” of African-centered psychology in practice namely the psychical variations and developments of the individual.

The present article argues that Azibo’s nosology utilizes metatheory as a way to address the methodological crisis of the Africentric paradigm introduced by the work of W.C. Banks. This debate or exchange in the theoretical products of Azibo and Banks has not been addressed in any previous research. It is my view that Azibo’s nosology not only creates a diagnostic system that synthesizes the previous accounts of Black mental health under white supremacy made by generations of Black psychologists under the a scientific African-centered theory, but also presents itself as a theoretical alternative to the alleged crisis of the Africentric concept announced in the works of the late W.C. Banks, albeit through some currently contentious premises given the dominance of anti-essentialist accounts of race and culture. It is my view that Azibo’s nosology relies on a architectonic schema—an organizing structure—that directly responds to the methodological problems of racial comparison and teleology identified by W.C. Banks in “The Theoretical and Methodological Crisis of the Africentric Conception” (1992), and a book chapter entitled “Theory and Method in the Growth of African American Psychology” (1999). This article aims to establish the intellectual genealogy and problems Azibo tries to respond to through the development of his nosology system as well as demonstrate the methodological significance of Azibo’s normative endeavors. It is the view of this author that Azibo’s nosology points out the significance of philosophical analysis of the organizing-idealist structures behind theory making, and as such should be read as a conceptual analysis of theory as much as a practical theoretical account of Black personality and mental health. Though the current focus is on the original Azibo Nosology (Azibo 1989), Azibo’s updated Azibo Nosology II (this issue) should also be scrutinized from both the practical tool and the conceptual analysis of theory perspectives.

The Theoretical and Methodological Concerns of the Africentric Concept as Articulated by W.C. Banks

William Curtis Banks is most well-known for his now infamous challenge to the Africentric paradigm articulated in “The Theoretical and Methodological Crisis of the Africentric Conception” (1992). This essay is an attempt much like his previous article “Deconstructive Falsification: Foundations of a Critical Method in Black Psychology” (1982) to address the complexities involved with the production of theory and the use of empirical methodology to buttress the legitimacy of the positions adopted. It would not be inappropriate to call Banks and his view of scientific methodology postmodern. Rather than believing in a positivist conceptualization of the world where the role of empiricism or empirical methodology is to test and prove the theoretical constructs proposed are real and can be actually verified, Banks begins with a dismissal of the verificationism held sacred by positivists, insisting that theory is merely a program of justification for ideological beliefs or ideals that are not proven by proof or evidence but rather protected from falsification by proof or evidence. Following the interventions into scientific methodology introduced by Thomas S. Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), specifically the role of the paradigm in directing and in many ways determining inquiry, and taking Banks’s argument suggests an incompatibility of Eurocentric-empirical methodology and Africentric theory relegating the Africentric concept to the Kuhn’s preparadigmatic stage, or the level of thought defined by a community of scholars who share similar ideological programs, but lack clear—scientific—theory and method.

“Like a system of politics, science has sought foremost its own preservation,” says Banks (1992,265), and as such the consequence of the epistemological disarray of the West is more about the failing of Western theory to sustain its ideological program than an actual crisis of science and its possibilities. According to Banks:

Theory does not advance ideas (as the positivists asserted in the early part of this century), theory *justifies* ideas. Empirical methodology is not a tool of revelation and verification, but rather a tool of refutation and a shield of obstruction behind which the ideas a theory justifies are operationalized as programs immune to self-interested criticism. Therefore, the most crucial considerations in the development of theory are (1) the ideological programs that theory is capable of justifying; and (2) the methodological framework its protection and preservation demand. (Banks 1992, 265)

As such the crumbling universalism of white humanity, the view that objective science in fact only expresses the cultural and racial specifics of white Europeans, spurred intellectual and political critiques that demanded a concession of (white) science’s cultural/racial relativism. In an effort to respond to and move beyond the ideological program of the West and theoretical-methodological crisis of Western science, Black psychologists among others sought to construct an alternative conception of humanity that could be studied and formulated as the basis of scientific inquiry and the end of normative social and political theory.

Several years later with Banks's authoring of "Theory and Method in the Growth of African American Psychology" (1999), he reiterated his concern that the "Africanist thrust has been toward a deep appreciation of the role of theory in the justification of ideological programme, with only the barest attention to the protective demands of theory for a methodological framework" (6). Ultimately, Banks (1999) argues that empiricism imposes categories of thought that even Western science has abandoned and only reifies a decadent notion of essentialism.

By implication, the only ideological programme associated with the empirical school is that of traditional Western thought, the attainability of certainty, and the viability of ultimately universal psychological constructs—all of which have been abandoned already by Western thinkers themselves. Theoretically, this school seeks the human core which lies beneath the African American veneer and White veneer of African and European peoples, a pursuit which ironically appeals to the most misguided of rationalist endeavors—the search for essences—the antithesis of empiricism and positivism (6).

The categories of thought that are forced upon Black psychology seek to refute the specificity of Black existence by appealing to caricatures of modern rationalism. Banks brings our attention to the reality that the stake in refuting African-centered thought is not rooted in an incoherence of methodology, but ultimately from the incompatibility between the ideological communities of scholars conducting the research and perpetuating the mythologies of empirical research. This program is pursued against the African-centered position even when it risks contradiction.

"Growing out of a largely vitalistic ideological perspective of African American life, the Africanist theoretical school has advanced constructs that focus upon the unique characteristics of African peoples" (Banks 1992, 265), but this idea has been challenged or rather attempted to be assimilated within conventional empirical science through comparative frameworks which argue that one cannot claim that Blacks are in fact unique without comparing this group to a white reference group that are without these allegedly unique Black characteristics. The Africentric claim to uniqueness or rather a strong cultural or racial distinctiveness, while probably correct according to Banks, remains fraught with several methodological problems. The first problem Banks articulates as concern is the absence of a teleological method, or a theory of development that does not collapse what Black people are taken to be as all they can be. Banks believes the Africentric concept lacks a developmental explanation; it "must acknowledge a dimension of determined self-assertion that the Africentric conception fails to incorporate, namely, the determination to become. The absence of a dimension within the Africentric framework of what traditionally is called teleology deprives the framework of an essential source of justification for programs of African American self-development" (Banks 1992, 266). Related to the problem of *becoming*, Banks argues "at a different and somewhat more problematic level, we encounter a dimension of the Africentric theoretical conception that invites a crisis in methodology: the concept of distinctness" (Banks 1992, 266).

He continues that while “distinctness, from physical appearance to artistic creativity, has long been a feature of African identity; but when set forth as a theoretical principle, the observation and conclusion of distinctness become a presupposition and requirement of differentiation. Ultimately, it becomes a prescription for the comparative study of African peoples and others” (Banks 1992, 266-267). A prescription that condemns Black people to be defined analytically by the allegedly synthetic propositions to be studied, or as Banks says “the fundamental problem with comparative methods in the study of African American populations is that comparative research is unscientific, owing to the logical structure of the hypotheses it seeks to test” (Banks 1992, 267).

Azibo’s Nosology as Normative Endeavor: On the Teleological and Developmental Aspects of Azibo’s Model

Azibo’s “African-Centered Theses on Mental Health and a Nosology of Black/African Personality Disorder,” begins with an announcement that the paradigm utilized aims “to present an analysis of the breakdown or disorganization in African or Black personality using a theoretical framework for personality conceptualization that is explicitly Africentric” (Azibo 1989, 171). The nosology, which means the study and classification of disease, introduced by Azibo seeks to create a more accurate depiction of the mental ailments that affect African descended peoples than Euro-centric models claiming the same subject of study. Foundationally, Azibo distinguishes African centered psychology from Eurocentric psychology by the role that Black personality theory plays in the two schemas. According to Azibo, his nosology, which “diagnoses order and disorder in the African personality” (1989,171), assumes three key tenets (advancements) from the radical school of African psychology: “taking the Black perspective (cultural, historical, and conceptual analysis that employs and affirms principles deriving from the African social reality) as the conceptual base for addressing the psychology of African people, positing that personality has a biogenetic basis..., and positing that there is a natural order of things (that is, an underlying principle upon which the cosmos and all therein operate is order)” (175). These underlying assumptions constitute a basis from which Azibo theorizes the normative orderings and delineations between mental health and mental illness.

Azibo sees mental health as a symbiotic balance between (hu)man and nature. He specifically defines mental health as “the achievement in the psychological and behavioral spheres of life of a functioning that (a) is in harmony with and (b) embraces the natural order,...[where] the natural order (the third advance) is the ultimate regulator of all life and, therefore, that the criterion of mental health/illness is grounded therein” (176). As the most basic anthropological assertion of Azibo’s nosology, he posits the human as being in harmony with and not opposed to nature. This premise directly responds to the primary assumptions of modern philosophy and scientism which holds man to be contrary to nature insofar as humanity sought civilization.

The Kantian rejection of Rousseau's pre-social human articulated in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798/2006) makes human freedom, the very ability of self-actualization at odds with the natural world, its geography, and the peoples found within nature opposed to civilization. In sharp contrast to this model of humanity, Azibo, drawing from the theories of African cosmology summarized in Joseph A. Baldwin's "Psychological aspects of European Cosmology in American Society" (1985), suggests that "the fundamental assumption or ethos in African ... cosmology is that of Human-Nature unity, Oneness or Harmony with Nature Humanity or the self and nature are conceptualized as one and the same phenomenon. .. [whereas] the fundamental assumption or ethos upon which European ... cosmology stands may be categorized as an 'Humanity vs. Nature' orientation ... [which] defines an antagonistic and conflictual theme in so-called human-nature relations" (Azibo 1989, 176). Following what he takes to be the biogenetic constitution of African humanity, Azibo concludes that "mental health is that psychological and behavioral functioning that is in accord with the basic nature of the original human nature and its attendant cosmology and survival thrust" (177). Similar to the previous anthropological interventions made by Joseph A. Baldwin, Na'im Akbar, Cheikh A. Diop, and Wade Nobles, Azibo suggests that mental health is a reflection of the how the human, individually and collectively, engages the world. This engagement is not only psychological in the sense that it points to the privation of one's thoughts about the reality before said individual, but also cultural in that the engagement with the world is a reflection of how an individual engages the world from a specific worldview or historical group consciousness.

Azibo's nosology, by consequence of the anthropological/cosmological argument presented, sees mental illness and mental health as a situation (i.e. cultural, social and dynamic position) that implicates how the self, the individual, is self-aware and conscious of the cultural states and constructs they utilize and project upon reality. Unlike the transcendental/objective claims of Western science, Azibo simply acknowledges that his system is cultural, value-laden, and by consequence normative—designed to produce more optimal social outcomes—in the population of study. The social program Azibo announces interestingly makes use of the theoretical interventions by Banks's displacement of the "mind of the scientist" articulated above as well as the more abstract methodological interventions into science as a cultural and ideological program popularly developed in Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) and Paul Feyerabend's displacement of the necessity of Westernism for a method of inquiry to be deemed scientific in *Against Method* (1975/1993). Stated simply, Azibo's nosology seeks to create a culturally relevant psychological system that does not pretend to be universal; a pretense dispelled by the works of Kuhn, Feyerabend and the seldom acknowledged contributions of Banks, but distinct. The normative of Azibo's project is clearly stated in his understanding of mental health and its relation to behavior. "It is assumed that behavior follows from the psychological components of the Black personality for the most part...Operationally, then, correct orientation is the conscious manifestation of African-centered psychological and behavioral functioning in genetically Black persons" (Azibo 1989, 182).

It is relevant to note that Azibo's diagnostic system is functional; aiming to engage the problems of racism and Black mental health from the historical moment Black people find themselves ensconced within. While Azibo's model is in fact sympathetic to the various worldview analyses that have long been the foundation of African-centered psychological models, his nosology resonates a social acuity that is not traditionally thought of as psychological but more so associated with the political. Azibo sees the individual as susceptible to change, while race is biogenetic in his system (a claim still under debate decades later) his work does not fixate upon the inability of Black people to be otherwise than their genetic predispositions. In fact, he normatively situates Black humanity (the particular racialized humanity of Africans) as the goal of Black individuals. Similarly, we find similar accounts in philosophical anthropology of modern humanity from Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy and pragmatic anthropology to Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807) extending all the way to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic interventions in idealizations of human development in *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (1913) and of course *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). In short, Azibo simply offers a different philosophical anthropology that serves as the basis from which thought, political theory and optimal social development occur. In fact, Azibo states this very thesis in an article written two years after the publication of his nosology paradigm entitled "Africentric Conceptualization as the Pathway to African Liberation" (1999) arguing that:

A people's social theory is, in turn reflected and realized in their "survival thrust," which may be defined as the characteristic ways a people negotiate the environment (i.e., to extract material sustenance from the physical universe). A more erudite definition is that survival thrust is "the condition and process of survival maintenance that is indigenous to and thus characterizes a racial-cultural group's genetic and geo-historical pattern under girded by their Cosmology (Azibo 1999,1).

Azibo's nosology suggests that psychological adjustment, mental health, is necessary for truly understanding and characterizing political and social theory to address anti-Black racism and white supremacy. In an effort to substantiate his work beyond mere description, Azibo contends that Black social theory must be geared toward survival as well as group/cultural/racial development. The question of how "should" Black people react, think, and develop is based, or more accurately, *should be rooted* in a social theory that encompasses the totality of Black psychology's advancements. This is a developmental model whereby the value (x) in the worldview of African descended people is applied and developed by individuals in specific environment as part of the "ways a people negotiate the environment" (Azibo 1999,1). Azibo's concept of "social theory" directly responds to the teleological problem described by Banks where the individual is collapsed to some predetermination.

The Metatheoretical Orientation of Azibo's Nosology: Does It Address the Charge of Methodological Crisis Waged by Banks

The commentaries considering the role of Azibo's nosology model have historically failed to contextualize the concurrent projects that intersected with his original article "African-Centered Theses on Mental Health and a Nosology of Black/African Personality Disorder" (1989). In 1991, Daudi Azibo continued his development of his nosology in a co-authored piece with Irene Atwell entitled "Diagnosing Personality Disorder in African (Blacks) Using the Azibo Nosology: Two Case Studies," documenting the clinical efficacy of his model and its adoption in graduate curricula across the country. Azibo also published two theoretically focused articles the same year. The first publication was a shorter essay in the *Journal of Black Psychology* entitled "Towards a Metatheory of the African Personality," while the second which appeared in the *Western Journal of Black Studies* was titled "An Empirical Test of the Fundamental Postulates of an African Personality Metatheory." Azibo's formulation of his diagnostic system next to a theoretical deconstruction (metatheory) of African-centered methodology offers strong evidence that Azibo's system directly responds to the theoretical and methodological crisis articulated by the late W.C.Banks. These two articles clearly show that Azibo is engaging in a metatheoretical project; aimed at creating pre-theoretical premises from which theory and method flow.

In "Towards a Metatheory of the African Personality," Azibo reiterates his previous claim that advanced Black psychology theory is not comparative. Since advanced Black psychology relies on articulating principles from Black social reality, understanding a racial (biogenetic) basis of Blackness, and a cosmological teleology, it does not rely on comparing Black or African populations with white populations to demonstrate what "essential human" characteristics are to be found in white populations and by effect tenable characteristics that can be said to exist in the Black/African population under study. This problem of comparison originally introduced in Banks's "Deconstructive Falsification: Foundations of Critical Method in Black Psychology" (1982) is rearticulated a decade later in Azibo's chapter in *African American Psychology: Theory, Research, and Practice* entitled "Understanding the Proper and Improper Usage of the Comparative Research Framework" (1992). Banks understood that comparative methodology was fundamentally unscientific, because it claimed the existential synthetic statement as a principle of falsification. According to Banks,

For practical purposes, existential synthetic statements share an essential quality with analytic statements which the positivists, in their preoccupation with confirmation, do not acknowledge—that is, in Popper's terms, the attribute of "unfalsifiability." Because an existential synthetic statement is logically delimited to an instantiation of "one" ("There is at least one x, such that that x . . ."), no amount of accumulated evidence to the contrary of it ever suffices to disprove it. Comparative hypotheses, and the experimental designs by which they are tested, are essentially unscientific because they represent existential synthetic conjectures about the behavior and experience of a circumscribed subdomain of the universe.

Support of these hypotheses has been put forward as confirmation of the ascribed nature of the behavior and experience of African American populations as though the data domain of African American people constituted the entire universe of natural events in question. It is not universal synthetic conjectures about the natures of people of African descent which have been submitted to inquiry, but existential conjectures regarding their atypicality within the reference universe. That reference universe, for most comparative research on African Americans, is the human race, usually as circumscribed by European descent (1992, 267).

Comparing groups within a manifold of "humanity," ultimately tends to fail by an a priori similarity snuck in as an analogy based on likeness (the Black is like the white enough to be compared hence there is some x assumed to be shared), rather than external evidence of shared characteristics. This logical problem makes comparative methodology fundamentally unscientific, since an existential synthetic judgment (at least one x is p) can never be disproven with overwhelming empirical evidence. As such, comparative methodologies in theory as well as in practice contradict or rather obstruct a means by which an African personality, or an African worldview, or any notion of an African-centered value can be held and tested within an internally cohesive system. This is the same problem Azibo (1992) notices when he argues that researchers utilizing comparative frameworks for cross-racial/cultural comparisons "are either unaware of the inherent epistemological problem or disregard it assuming cultural monism between Africans and Europeans. The assumption may be convenient and indispensable for the comparative frame; nevertheless it is incorrect" (21). Similarly, Banks (1992, 270) notes that the existential synthetic behind comparative methodology represents "conjectures whose empirical content essentially relates to a characterization of the referenced universe. Therefore, comparative hypotheses represent conjectures concerning the empirical limits of constituted ideas regarding the behavior and experience of the reference population (again, usually White individuals)." Here the dilemma of substantiating difference outside of an agreed upon humanity (biological, historical or otherwise) where race or culture become mere accidents is of central methodological concern and risks the coherence of theory.

This problem of theory (how we justify cultural distinctiveness) and method (how we test theory) can be seen lurking behind the scholarship and constructs of Azibo's work. Remember Banks argues that African-centered psychology remains vulnerable to Western scientism, not because of the inadequacy or correctness of their attacks upon the modernist epistemology, but rather in being insufficiently destructive. And like an animal, only just injured, conventional Western science is dangerously capable of rising up against the tide of refutation, perhaps with new (and more violent) vigor. One sign of that renewed vigor is the emerging vitality of a "save empiricism" movement. Crosscultural psychology, ethnographic methods, and biculturalism are just some of the dying gasps of a conventionalist scientific community devoted to the preservation of relativistic theory, comparative methodology, and an ideological program of discriminate self-interest (1999,3).

How to substantiate actual distinctiveness is at issue for any African-centered system and is at issue in Azibo's framework. Seeing this problem, Azibo turns to metatheory to get at the ideological (foundational beliefs, ideas, and concepts) that his theory aims to justify. Now that we see the issue Azibo is confronting, what is metatheory and how does it actually address the aforementioned dilemma? Azibo gets his understanding of metatheory from Molefi Asante's (1987) *The Afrocentric Idea* and summarizes it as follows: (1) the character and content of theories in the sense that it prescribes what a theory should explain, as well as (2) what analytical methodology are required, which lead the researcher to conclude that (3) a metatheory, then, is the product of decision rather than discovery, and it is justified by the theories that are consonant to it (see Azibo 1991a, 38). Metatheory gets at the ideological underpinnings that theory aims to justify, but notice that Azibo seeks to formulate primary theses he seeks to justify and protect from external assaults of validity. By substantiating his Black psychology at the level of concept and foundational beliefs about the psychology of Black peoples, Azibo argues for a system that can only be verified within his own system. Azibo is not seeking universal human characteristics, but rather starts with the assumption that Black anthropology—the African concept of the human—is the standard and hence any other values external to composite formulation of Black humanity is external and less optimal psychological states. Biology, or the biogenetic, becomes a way to argue for a strong and rigid Black distinctiveness that avoids the scientific failure of comparative/humanist methodologies.

Conclusion

The nosology system proposed by Daudi Azibo is a much more complex and historically contextual response to the theoretical and methodological crisis argued for by the late W.C. Banks than much of the literature indicates. This essay is a brief attempt to suggest new inquiry into the intellectual history and intellectual debates that generated Azibo's thinking about metatheory, comparative framework analysis, and normative and developmental social theory. Azibo's nosology has generated clinical reports, sustained engagement in the literature, and debates that have lasted over two decades (his Azibo Nosology II in this issue might be considered a continuation). I believe the strength of his work is not only in its demonstrated endurance in the literature, but in its ability to show how the African-centered paradigm, its intellectuals and practitioners, continue to develop, respond to, and innovate systems of thought that point to the epistemic dilemmas of universal human essences hiding behind comparative methodology.

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