



Monteiro-Ferreira, Ana. *The Demise of the Inhuman: Afrocentricity, Modernism, and Postmodernism*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2014, pp.238, ISBN: 978-1-4384-5225-8. Reviewed by Aaron Smith (asmith10@temple.edu), Assistant Professor, Department of African American Studies, Temple University.

In a serious essay on the nature of knowledge in contemporary society the author decided to slay old cows and bring into existence a new approach to the cultural pasture. Her book *The Demise of the Inhuman: Afrocentricity, Modernism, and Postmodernism* introduces us to a critical reading of Western discourse utilizing Jean-François Lyotard's (2007) double concept of *inhuman* and Molefi Kete Asante's *Afrocentric* critique.

Drawing upon a critique of the difference between individualistic and collective orientations to phenomena, Ferreira identifies key elements in the historical development of Western discourse from the time of Descartes, Kant, and Hegel. She emphasizes the isolating tendencies of the European advances in epistemologies such as modernism and postmodernism, and suggests that Africana Studies (Africology) might provide innovative ways to address the questions of knowledge.

The book has five chapters, each one clearly outlined and developed to demonstrate that Afrocentricity can be used to critique and analyze the inability of most Western ideas to deliver a robust response to diversity, multiculturalism, and the growing importance of African epistemologies in scholarship. Consequently the book is one of the best examples of Afrocentric applications to theoretical issues. No other book has delved into the territories of Afrocentricity and African theories of knowledge like this work.

In the first chapter, "Context and Theory: Molefi Kete Asante and the Afrocentric Idea" Ferreira argues that Afrocentricity "materialized as a theory of knowledge" and introduced in the African American a "cultural panorama as a set of premises that would account for the understanding of an African sense of totality and wholeness." Chapter two "Reason and Analysis: Africana and New Interpretations of Reality" takes the reader to the historical roots of modern Western culture and Afrocentricity. What Hegel may have been for concepts and ideas in Europe; Diop may have played a similar role in modern thinking in Africa. To be left with Hegel and to not know Diop would make the reader bereft of a basis for genuine dialogue. All criticism and analysis should demonstrate that the reader or writer has reflected on what Ferreira calls in Chapter three "Afrocentricity and Modernism: Innovative Encounters with History and Ideology." But this is not enough because the reigning epistemology of the day appears to be a form of postmodernism, and hence the author seizes the opportunity to challenge in Chapter four "Afrocentricity and Postmodernism: The Moment of Truth." Thus, what can the reader do but seek to determine the criterion for agency and location?

In Chapter five “The Paradigmatic Rupture: Critical Africology” Ferreira advances the notion that Afrocentricity might offer a new direction for thinking about human relations. This is a remarkable path to travel since the opposition to Afrocentricity by numerous authors, many who have never read any Afrocentric books, is that it has little to offer. Nevertheless, a Portuguese scholar from one of the most Western of European countries and a person who has articulated a great affection for her own culture has suggested that Afrocentricity has something to teach the world. Scholars such as Boaventura Santos de Sousa and the late Martin Bernal have also seen the possibility that Afrocentricity, a paradigm that suggests agency and location as key elements in action and values, might point to a critical rupture in the universalist idea that Europe is the center of the world. There are many centers and some have been explored and interrogated and others have remained unknown even to the people from those cultural centers. Ferreira understands that just because a person is of African birth or lives in Africa does not make that person Afrocentric. It is a conscious, ethical decision, to choose to see the possibilities for harmony, order, and balance in a reciprocal world where there is no othering of human beings. Afrocentricity offers the idea of a world that can abandon neoliberalism, Marxism, capitalism, and other forms of individualism promoted by the reigning Western conceptions of society in search for a new understanding of reality.

Perhaps more of Monteiro-Ferreira’s unique personal story as an Afrocentric scholar from Europe could have been implemented to enhance the text.

The current academic activity is intellectually refreshed by this potentially paradigm shifting work. Monteiro-Ferreira boldly asserts the liberating power of Afrocentricity stating, “Actually there is no liberation for a materially and mentally colonized people unless they will be able to exist outside the prison box of the European paradigm (Pg. 89). Compared to works on similar topics, this book takes a step in a different largely uncharted direction focusing thoroughly on the juxtaposition between Afrocentricity, Modernism and Postmodernism. Readers will enjoy the thorough (including an extensive bibliography), informative applicable information offered in this book.

Some may see the use of Afrocentricity to critique major Western ideas as reason for panic. But there is no cause for panic in Ferreira’s intelligent and wise counsel that the West and indeed other parts of the world might usefully consider examining what African thinkers and African thought has to offer the world. In fact, like a persistent seepage the world has already been introduced to many African ideas and the boldness of Ferreira’s account is a mature confrontation with Western theories. Monteiro-Ferreira is on a mission to address “...the catastrophic outcomes that the Eurocentric ideologies brought to humanity...” I see this book as one of the seminal works in the field of anti-racist conceptions of creator theories. This brilliant book has challenged any notion that the West is the sole creator of ideas and that others are simply users of those ideas.