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From Complexity to Context: Rethinking the South African Academic Discipline Beyond Apartheid

Abstract

This *Briefly Speaking* addresses the question on whether there exists a South African academic discipline beyond apartheid. Several disciplines examined this question on the precipice of democratic rule in the country. The question derives from the disciplinary architecture under apartheid, which was either styled in opposition to the state—referring to the English universities—or as extensions of the state and its apparatus, in the case of Afrikaans medium universities. The Afrikaans universities contemplated how the discipline endures without apartheid, as apartheid was its *raison d'être*. The disciplines were either in opposition to the state or complicit—a position that then necessitated the question of what becomes of it in the wake of the demise of apartheid. Inadequate responses to the discipline inaugurated disciplinary meanderings that attempted to respond to the calls for change in the higher education sector and the country. Consequently, the claim that this Briefly Speaking makes is that the university in South Africa does not function as a driver of change, as envisioned and outlined in the Education White Paper 3 of 1997. The crux of this contribution lies not in providing an answer but in illustrating the implications of not addressing this question adequately.

Keywords: Apartheid, democracy, disciplinary knowledge, higher education, South Africa, university

Introduction

Exploring the role of the discipline in the post-apartheid era facilitates an examination of the stagnation of the debates that currently define the university in South Africa. In a previous publication by the author of this piece of *Briefly Speaking* (see Kumalo 2024), a distinction was made between a university in South Africa and a South African university. It was argued that the university in South Africa is detached from the realities of the South African context and is rather concerned with global rankings and an excellence discourse (*cf.* Readings 1997) that undermines institutional responsiveness. Readings' (1997) *The University in Ruins* makes for an excellent analysis of the problematics of the university as an institution that chases after the excellence discourse while ignoring the challenges that define it. Put differently, a university in South Africa is an institution that happens to be situated somewhere within the geographical boundaries of South

Africa but which does not embody the values, aspirations and other attributes that define South Africa as a nation. A university in South Africa is detached from the realities of South Africa. In contrast, a South African university is one that is concerned with the political conditions of possibility, which means it considers the social, political and economic conditions that shape life in the country. Such a university is responsive to the realities that shape the context. In a South African university, knowledge is not pursued for its own sake; rather, it is situated, responsive, and adaptive to the conditions that define the worlds it intersects with and helps to shape.

Kumalo (2021) examines how the Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997) sets out the political, social and economic ambitions of redress that were intended by the restructuring of higher education at the dawn of the democratic dispensation. In other words, the Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997) spoke to a South African university that was envisaged to develop after colonialism and apartheid. This would be a responsive university that would integrate into its teaching and learning programmes, and its research agenda, questions that examine the socio-economic realities of its environs. This should not be misconstrued as the instrumentalisation of higher education but should rather be read as a form of social reflexivity. Responsiveness, then, can be seen as the position recently been taken by, for example, Rhodes University in its attempts to solve the water crisis (*cf.* Velaphi 2025) in Makhanda. However, Rhodes' response suffers from institutional insularity, as the university is concerned with insulating itself from the dysfunctions of the local municipality and its mismanagement.

Failure to be conversant with and aware of the conditions that define the political life of South Africa are a characteristic feature of the university in South Africa, which hides behind the principle of academic freedom, while neglecting its social obligation. It is a direct consequence of failure to create a South African university, and it is symptomatic of the stagnation of the intellectual debates that define our country. Decolonial debates, for example, appear not be going beyond rhetoric instead of being centrally situated in the longue durée of how the sector has sought to respond to the post-apartheid 'dawn'. Simply, the call to decolonise the South African university began with the democratisation of universities, evidenced in the open admissions policy that was spearheaded by the University of the Western Cape, under the leadership of Professor Jakes Gerwel (*à la* Anderson, 2002). The openly defiant position adopted by the University of the Western Cape (UWC) not only initiated the call for institutional decolonisation but also openly challenged the race-based institutional admissions that were instituted by the apartheid state. This move was not in isolation. It was accompanied by the disciplinary calls to reform the disciplines with the work of Kunene (1992), as but one example.

Moreover, Nyoka (2020:xvi) characterises the state of the human sciences as defined by stale intellectual debates when he argues that "[at] the moment South African intellectual debates are stale. This is partly because we do not reflect on old ideas, and to freshen up our debates we should revisit the ideas of intellectuals like Mafeje…". His diagnosis derives from our failure to engage with the intellectual debates that were revived by the call for decolonisation because the call to

decolonise is not new. It was first heard in the wake of the resistance writing of *amagqobhoka*, who were challenging the changing political order since the arrival of settler colonialism in the 19th century. One can go further than this and state that the debates have also neglected to sufficiently reflect on the scholarship of thinkers like Mafeje, on the premise that we aim to invent the disciplines anew. The central philosophical problem that this piece of *Briefly Speaking* is dealing with, then, is the unresolved question of disciplinary legitimacy and purpose in a post-apartheid society. What is the South African discipline after its apartheid imbrications?

This problem manifests in the epistemic and institutional continuity of disciplines that were either complicit with or opposed to apartheid, without adequately reconceptualising their foundations, aims, and social functions in the democratic era. Such a reconceptualisation would further aid the university in South Africa in becoming the South African university, in the sense of how the term bas been unpacked earlier. The dilemma is, therefore, ontological and normative: meaning that what ought a discipline to be and do in a democratic South Africa, when its historical formation was tied to either resistance or complicity? In a context where the historical legislation underpinning the sector had ambitions for redressing the historical imbalances of the past—the question gains more urgency. In the wake of inadequate responses, the university—particularly in its disciplinary formations—has failed to reorient itself as a transformative institution, instead becoming mired in recursive reformulations that do not achieve the structural and epistemic overhaul envisioned in post-apartheid policy frameworks such as Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997).

The argument presented herein proceeds in the following ways. It starts with drawing attention to a forgotten epochal moment - the contestations that define(d) what the discipline would become under democratic rule. Subsequently, it examines how these contestations and consolidations became definitive of the call for decolonisation. Later, the conclusion examines what the failure to answer this question means for the university more generally, in the context of South Africa.

Disciplinary Crises and Consolidation

Borrowing from Nyoka (2020), this piece of *Briefly Speaking* has argued that our disciplinary discourse is stale. This is further argued here with reference to literature. In literary studies, the question of a South African literary culture began to emerge as early as the 1970s. Gordimer's (1976) examination of the role of the author in a conflictual situation like South Africa started to frame the scholarly debates regarding how English-language literature would define itself, contextually. This examination led to the conceptual framing of the question posed by Coetzee (1988:9) of an Adamic language, which he described as "[…] one in which Africa will naturally express itself, that is to say, a language in which there is no split between signifier and signified, and things are their names." At the core of Coetzee's (1988) question was the concern of whether an authentically South African literary tradition exists outside the conceptual boundaries of the *Plaasroman*. This question must be qualified by outlining its ignorance, albeit innocent. Coetzee's existence in the hegemonic linguistic

domains of English and Afrikaans renders this question moot when examined against the orature of indigenous languages. Through their composition of poetry and praise in indigenous languages, things are their names, and no distinctions exist 'between the signifier and the signified'. The Adamic language that Coetzee (1988) is after already exists, and the disciplinary quagmire is created because literature and literary theory have ghettoised African languages. Ghettoisation is seen in the disciplinary distinctions that locate African languages as altogether alternate to literary theory and literature departments. No university in South Africa has sought to marry the two, even as the two (African languages and English literature) use the same tools of analysis when examining literary texts.

This is possibly the reason why Kunene (1992) and Mphahlele (1984) diverged on the question of the use of the English language. Their debate must, however, be understood in the broader intellectual debates that sought to understand the place of colonial langues in the face of the shared experience. Fanon's (1986) seminal publication *Black Skin, White Masks* is a critical intervention in tracing such a genealogy of language's implication in the colonial project. The question that preoccupied local intellectuals was whether Africans should domesticate the language—English—and was defined by the opposing positions held by Mphahlele (1984), who advocated for the adoption and domestication of the English language, and Kunene (1992) who contended that this was the very language responsible for the death of many of our ancestors. Primarily and at stake was whether a South African tradition of literature exist(ed), prior to and beyond the Afrikaner literary tradition and English literature. Language, in this instance, is central in the constitution of the nation. Coetzee was ignorant of the indigenous languages and their contribution to the staying power in processes of naming the landscape, encoding history and sustaining traditions that had long existed prior to the advent of colonial languages on the continent.

Importantly, though, this *Briefly Speaking* contends that Afrikaans is not a colonial language. Afrikaans has borrowed from those who found themselves, in the country, as indentured labourers, with the first recorded written texts of the language, written in Arabic (*cf*. Davids 1987; Dangor 2008) by the Cape Malay slave population. The language can be classified as birthed on the southernmost tip of the African continent. Moreover, irrespective of the reality that the language became the main linguistic functionary of an exclusionary governance system, the reality that it continues to be the language of many who, themselves, were excluded from the state apparatus that was apartheid, cannot be refuted. It is based on this reasoning that the claim of English as the only language of the coloniser is made. Importantly, Boucher (2022:29) argues that "[t]he emphasis upon distinctiveness and originality of creole cultures became more pronounced in the 1970s as part of a decolonising ideology analysing the origins of a common creole culture constituting the process of nation building." To be sure, the classification of Afrikaans can be conceptually construed in line with this framing as found in the work of Boucher (2022).

In articulating (or searching for) an authentically African literary tradition, both Gordimer (1988) and

Coetzee inspired Nkosi (1989) to present the concept of an 'African Vocabulary'. His analysis explored the potential for South Africa to express itself in innovative literary forms: the Adamic language that was inherently South African. Certainly, then, the two Nobel laureates were also pursuing the same. This inquiry led Ndebele (1986) to initially propose a shift towards rediscovering the ordinary, moving away from writing about the spectacle of apartheid. His suggestion was that the South African story can be discovered in the granularities of life, that the magic of writing should be viewed as existing in the everydayness. Lalu (2022), however, details that the burden of apartheid was in the attempt of the totalitarian state to control the very ordinary. He complicates, then, Ndebele's suggestion that we can find the magic of the South African story outside of the spectacle of apartheid. Apartheid was apartheid insofar as it determined—even—who we could fall in love with, through legislation such as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) or Immorality Act (1950), which became known as the Miscegenation Acts of the land. This history is important to illustrate the point that in literature, as early as the 1970s, the state of the discipline was regarded with renewed urgency, as intellectuals sensed the impending end of the apartheid era.

In other disciplines, such as sociology, the question emerged on what the discipline would be, if not an extension of the apartheid apparatus through an instrument that gave us the Group Areas Act and segregated town planning that sought to manage the poor Afrikaner—read white—problem (*cf.* Thumbran 2022). Institutions like the University of Pretoria were seminal in developing research that was at the forefront of managing the poor white problem, while dispossessing Blackness/Indigeneity of its land. Van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1994) is central in detailing this very story of dispossession that was aided by disciplines like sociology.

History and historiography were also in crisis regarding the South African national narrative, beyond the apartheid state. Wicomb (2018) is a vital contributor to this discussion, as her scholarship explores how cultural workers endeavoured to narrate a national story without clear definitions of 'official culture'. What emerges, because of this lack of parameters that define what is official culture, are appropriations and modes of amalgamating the national story using the stories from all and sundry. This mesh is what delusionally gave us the concept of a rainbow nation. To frame the rainbow nation as a delusion is premised on two things. First, the proposition in the prosecution of the crimes of the apartheid state. This call is seen in the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into delays in investigating and prosecuting Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) crimes, as stated by the presidency on 29 May 2025. Second, by the contestations that have subsequently defined the lack of effective change and integration in the contemporary education system in South Africa. Macqueen (2019) traces how South African historiography confronted a compelling set of considerations in the wake of democracy's promise. His intervention is marked by a difference in his pursuit of cultivating new historiographers and historians who would stitch the national story from alternative sources. Macqueen (2019) takes issue with how white historiography has been in the country, suggesting the need to look to alternative sources as a method of filling in the gaps in the national story.

Philosophy was also at a crossroads. The desire to reshape the legacy of the discipline at institutions like the University of Pretoria led to the adoption of Black Consciousness-informed studies at the graduate level. These studies were undertaken by students complicit in the state-sanctioned terror of intelligence and surveillance (*à la* Kistner 2021). Kistner's (2021) argument details how graduate students of philosophy, who were also intelligence officers, were pursuing philosophical studies *aligned* with Black Consciousness. These studies were framed as a contribution of the Afrikaners to the post-colonial/liberation aims—even as they persecuted the founders of Black Consciousness, such as Steve Biko. Meanwhile, Black philosophers were advocating for their inclusion in the discipline, promoting debates around disciplinary Africanisation and the necessity of centring philosophies such as *Ubuntu*. To be sure, their petition to be included in the discipline was premised on their having trained outside of South Africa and being denied entry into the South African Philosophical Academy—a matter that led to the call for the dissolution of the Philosophical Society of Southern Africa in 2016. Archie Mafeje's case of receiving training at the University of Cambridge and being denied tenure at the University of Cape Town in 1968, insofar as the university upheld the apartheid state's reversal of Mafeje's appointment, demonstrates the call for inclusion. It was this very *Ubuntu* that would later inform the transition—from apartheid to democracy—under Bishop Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which, Christianised *Ubuntu*. Philosophy, then, was a central discipline in the theorisation of such terms as *Ubuntu*—insofar as it was conceptually misconstrued—that undermined the rainbow that became the South African democratic state.

These crises of disciplinary definition and the call to reposition the disciplines on the southernmost tip of the African continent led to an arrested position. One wherein the South African university became the university in South Africa—aiming for comparable standards established by global disciplinary developments and not arrested by the insularities of the vulgarity of apartheid. Insofar as the Afrikaans universities were wedded to the theorisation, conceptual imaginings and practical articulation of racist laws, as in the case of sociology at the University of Pretoria and Stellenbosch University, there existed a South African university. Its misalignment with the imperatives of an inclusive and *just* political agenda should not be construed as a failure to articulate an authentically South African institution. Such an institution existed, and our forgetfulness of it speaks only to the desire to erase the historically violent acts that the university was complicit in and with. Its imbrication with a system that was declared a crime against humanity is what, necessarily, vindicated the English liberal institutions. These universities had always distanced themselves from the apartheid state, through traditions like the Academic Freedom Lectures, which defined all of the English universities—University of Natal, University of the Witwatersrand, Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town's famed TB Davie Memorial Lecture, even as these lectures did nothing to practically resist the laws of apartheid, with the case of Mafeje cited above being a useful example to demonstrate the point. The university, resultantly, sought to relinquish

its ties to the state, which necessitated the encoding of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, constitutionally.

To conceal the complicity of the Afrikaans universities with the apartheid state, all formerly traditional universities distanced themselves from the state. Asking socially relevant questions was construed—and continues to be—as an attempt to revive the apartheid state's instrumentalisation of higher education. Resisting a commitment to a *just* political agenda finds substantiation in the claim that, under the guise of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, institutions will not drive a state-sponsored agenda. The white intelligentsia of the country, liberal and conservative, frame such socially responsive research as undermining the objectives of the academy and against the principles of academic freedom. Claims such as these are what led to the eruption of historically white universities, with their violence vehemently confronted through calls for decolonisation and the demand that African intellectuals be part of the disciplinary canon. Abjuring instrumentalisation of higher education is envisaged in claims that frame literature, philosophy and art as apolitical disciplines, with the proposition, 'art for art's sake', 'literature for literature's sake' being demonstrative of the desire to divorce knowledge from politics. What these claims ostensibly forget, however, is that in South Africa – these disciplines, literature, art, and philosophy were always political, which is why Godimer's (1988) literary criticism comes to consider the *Essential Gesture*. She asked how the writer, by necessity, negotiates the complexities of politics in the context of South Africa—what was to be the essential gesture? As a method of shutting down this persistent question and its implications, universities secured academic freedom and institutional autonomy as a constitutionally protected right. To insist otherwise was framed as an encroachment, a case that saw Makgoba fighting an uphill battle with the amalgamation that would form the University of KwaZulu-Natal (*cf.* Chetty and Merrett 2014; Benatar 2021).

Tracing decolonial histories

The implication of constitutionally embedding academic freedom and institutional autonomy into the Constitution was the resistance that was mounted by academics who did not want to see the disciplines change. Put differently, white academics determined the disciplines as unbothered by the vagaries of poverty due to an untransforming economy. Blacks/Indigenous people were not the concern of researchers, insofar as the disciplines were not determined to ask questions that would change the lot of the majority. Black communities were merely useful as participants in studies that demonstrated how HIV/AIDS was ravaging our communities, and, how we were determined to reproduce without adequate family planning, for example. More recently, the 'conspicuous consumption' of Blacks, obsessed with climbing the social ladder through consumer patterns that were focused on materiality, became the central question of a study by Posel and van Wyk (2019), who failed to pay attention to the wealth hoarding methods of white capitalist consumption. The disciplines saw associating with the state as an apartheid era preoccupation that had to be shrugged off immediately. All of which happened as the disciplines classified their transformation on the

premise of hiring more white women, which was the measure of their transformation.

At the core was, and continues to be, the question of what the South African discipline is, beyond apartheid. Responding to the vacuum of an undefined and undefinable conception of the discipline, there was the desire to see the disciplines and the university more generally become oriented towards Africa. Kumalo and Reddy (2021) have framed this evolution as one that began with the demand for Africanisation in the 1980s and 1990s, which became a call to transformation in the early 2000s. Those familiar with the development of this debate will recall the establishment of institutional directorates of transformation, offices that were established to metrically determine how well universities were doing in meeting their transformation targets. These two preceding iterations became decolonisation in 2015.

The establishment of transformation offices, which was accompanied by the introduction of the 'transformation barometer', arose from the disciplines' failure to establish their identities beyond apartheid. As argued above, the apolitical framing of disciplinary questions aimed to absolve the democratic university of its obligations to rewrite and right the wrongs of the past, in which this institution was complicit. The crisis arises from the question of what the South African discipline will be, insofar as it is not in feigned opposition to state sanctioned brutality and violence, evidenced in the English liberal universities claiming that they were against apartheid but not practically resisting its laws for it (apartheid) provided the freedom to continue the exclusion of the natives. The Afrikaans conservatives, on the other hand, were happily wedded to the state agenda and were its conceptual/intellectual driving engine. The contention, here, is that if the disciplines had determined their ontology as commensurate with democracy, the necessity for these mechanisms—such as the transformation barometer—would have been obsolete. Such an alignment would mean that the university in South Africa would once again become the South African university, however, in a reimagined format that embraces the ideals of non-racialism, non-sexism and democratic inclusion. The English liberal institutions wanted to continue to exist without an awareness of the political conditions of possibility that define our country, while the Afrikaans universities wanted to forget—altogether—their complicity in driving apartheid. To frame the measuring mechanisms, such as the transformation barometer, as obsolete would have come from the South African university embracing the Education White Paper 3 of 1997 and adopting horizontal accountability—accountability to the communities wherein we are ensconced.

The demand for decolonisation emerged from the disciplines' resistance to a democratically aligned self-definition. This is also witnessed in how we will celebrate the 'first black female PhD graduate in philosophy', or the 'first black female PhD graduate in pure mathematics', since the dawn of democracy. Our celebration of these achievements fails to account for the implicitly unexamined questions, such as what was deterring Black/Indigenous academics from pursuing academic careers in these disciplines, if indeed, the disciplines had achieved the objectives of

transformation as set out by the transformation barometer? Or better still, as set out by the Education White Paper 3?

The call, then, to decolonise the university, which seeks to make a South African university of the university in South Africa, has not yet confronted the most important aspect, which is about the disciplines aligning themselves with the democratic project. The continued resistance to this alignment is well protected under the auspices of academic freedom, where the disciplines can continue to be racist, exclusionary and fundamentally abjure the very people that the democratic university was intended to serve. Simply, insofar as the call for decolonisation does not confront this complicity of the discipline, and the disciplines continue to position themselves as globally aligned without a concern for local realities, the next iteration from Gen Z will emerge on our campuses still proposing fundamental institutional change.

What then is the discipline in South Africa, beyond apartheid? What the apartheid state can and must be commended for is its ability to gather the English universities in their opposition while instrumentally using the Afrikaans universities to drive its agenda. Moreover, the fears of the past, that is an instrumentalist approach to knowledge has been so well preserved in the modern era that any attempt to use knowledge in methods that are purposive with respect to undermining the legacies of the past, is resisted valiantly, as a brave act of warding off a return to the dark days of apartheid. The discipline beyond apartheid is not democratically aligned and subsequently forms an institution that is a university in South Africa and not a South African university. Our failure to confront this reality is what is examined below.

An undefined discipline: Exploring the implications

"If you are looking for new ideas, read old books".

Kumalo (2020) contends that South Africa suffers from a form of disciplinary decadence—to borrow from Gordon (2006). This is tied to the use of language, wherein we are the only country whose scientific system is advanced and yet we use a foreign language to express and develop science. Justifications of this misalignment are often heard in the expressions that seek to frame indigenous languages as lacking the scientific vocabulary to be deployed in the academy. The baseless and illogical claims and 'progressive recommendations' that come from scholars who know nothing about our languages suggest that we translate works of literary genius into our languages as a method of capacitating our languages for scientific use (*à la* Mamdani, 2017). To frame this point as baseless and illogical is premised on the reality that Plaatje (*cf*. Schalkwyk and Lapula 2000) has long been known for his literary genius in translating Shakespeare into the vernacular. However, because he does not write in English, not only is he marginalised, but he is also completely erased.

The point about disciplinary decadence is made to demonstrate that scholarship that is not written in the languages of officialdom in South Africa, namely English and Afrikaans, is not considered scientific. This tendency is what leads to the classification of millions of South Africans as illiterate, a claim made without considering that the English language is but one language in the

multiplicity of linguistic artillery at the disposal of many South Africans. Moreover, it is one among many of the languages in which we have written since the arrival of the press in the country in 1823. The arrival of the press came with the inaugurations that would split the majority between those who were men and women of letters and those who rejected this modality of life, while clinging to the modes of life that existed prior to the arrival of the press. Kumalo (2023) deals with this ontological split and its implications for the political constitution of the nation. The press brought tremendous changes among and for the indigenous people of South Africa. The matters of decolonisation have historically been articulated in the press of this country.

Those who claim that we have not been able to define what is required in the demands of decolonisation speak from a place of both epistemic arrogance and intellectual ignorance, as they are not familiar with the traditions that have defined native life since Black intellectuals began petitioning for their adequate representation in the state that came to be known as South Africa. Put simply, African intellectuals have long demanded inclusion in the nation and have defined what that inclusion would look like as it pertains to education, citizenship, representation in politics and the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves.

The failure, then, of the South African discipline to define itself beyond the era of apartheid has meant two things. Firstly, that this tradition of intellectual labour is not only buried, but it is treated as though it never existed. The fundamental curiosity with this forgetfulness is that it aims to then style the disciplines in contemporary ways that continue to distance them from a confrontation with the realities of South Africa, as a nation. Secondly, and more dangerously, this lack of disciplinary definition that derives from the erasure of Black intellectual contributions has meant the orchestrated miseducation of the majority. Traditions are being invented on the spot in the disciplines, when they have long existed in the articulation of Black intellectuals who contested the epistemic racism of South Africa as a nation state and as a body that would claim to produce knowledge.

The exclusion of Black/Indigenous intellectuals is premised on the fact that they write in the languages of their birth. Arrogantly, those who cannot read these languages, and yet are the vanguards of academe propose their ignorance as an avenue to invent traditions anew. It is for this reason that the decolonial critique is called upon to transcend above its current arguments and start looking to the Black Archive for innovation. Simply, the Black Archive has not only proffered the critique, but it also provides—through the historical work of the intellectuals contained therein—new avenues that would facilitate innovative methodologies.

The implication, therefore, of a discipline undefined is the reality that the discipline is constructed as a site of confused inventions that undermine the historical tradition of Black intellectualism. Moreover, any attempt to define the discipline and have such definitions align with the democratic project is construed as a return to an apartheid(esque) institutional governance that instrumentalised knowledge for the purposes of oppression, exploitation and injustice. The dangers

of this are replete and have often been witnessed as the modern South African university attempting to style itself on the premise of global rankings criteria that do little to respond to the realities of the woman in Soshanguve, whose water supply has been intermittent since 2010.

This is all to suggest that the call for the decolonisation of the university is fundamentally preoccupied with a simple question, a question that asks, 'what is the South African discipline beyond apartheid?' The failure to answer this question has further resulted in the creation of a university in South Africa—an institution misaligned with the developmental goals of the state and fundamentally objectionable in its abjection of those it is meant to serve.

Conclusion

In the face of the picture painted by the foregoing analysis and discussion, it would appear that the adoption of a disciplinary disposition that is predicated on a multiculturalist approach is recommended. That is, in view of the competing interests that aim to define what South Africa becomes in its democratic era, the easiest option would be to recommend a university that fosters and develops multiculturalism through its disciplines—specifically those of the human sciences, inclusive of law, education, economics and the humanities and social sciences. In his argument outlining '*Black Consciousness Philosophy' and the 'Script of Man'*, however, van Bever Donker (2025:4-5) reminds us that "[…] there can be a third way that resists a slide into the 'neoliberal piety of multiculturalism' (and we should never forget that apartheid defined itself as a system of multiculturalism) and instead produces a 'new us'." His argument cautions against a wholesale adoption of multiculturalism, forcing a rethink on the recommendation to adopt multiculturalism.

The definition of the South African discipline, then, may very well rest in looking to the Black Archive if it is to shrug off the vagaries of an apartheid state that persists with a neo-apartheid as classified by thinkers like Madlingozi (2017). In the Black Archive, we find the scholarly innovations of Black intellectuals who had conceptually outlined the future of the country, in their hopes of a non-racist society. Through an interrogation and excavation of the artistic, poetic, literary and musicological contributions of Black intellectuals, the disciplinary architecture could possibly innovate new disciplinary methodologies that are aligned with the democratic objectives of our modern society. This recommendation is fraught, however. With contemporary universities grappling with massification that threatens the very idea of what it means to read at a university, the encroachment of artificial intelligence and a stagnant economy – all these factors point to the incredible challenges that confront current administrators. Not to mention the financial crisis that confronts the sector.

To be sure, the thinking of Black intellectuals might facilitate innovation that responds adequately to this myriad complexity of problems. The recommendation must be understood in view of the complexity that defines this archive, however. It is a fraught recommendation because, in the traditional sense, the Black Archive is one that is to be purposed through state functionaries and

officialdom. The works that exist in this archive, exist as always historically marginal and this is precisely because Blackness/Indigeneity was excluded from formal sites of knowledge production. Moreover, the work that makes up this archive comes from intellectuals who we negotiate the past with, as they became intellectuals (some of them) who were trained in the very colonial institutions that they came to critique and call for revisions, in their formative years.

This piece of *Briefly Speaking* points out the reality that in its failure to define itself, post-apartheid, the South African discipline has resultantly arrested the articulation of an authentically South African university, while possibly compounding the challenges of the social, political and economic conditions of possibility through the systematic miseducation of our country's future.

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