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Souls-Souls Dialectic: A Proponent of Ubuntu Philosophy in Fostering Critical Solidarities

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Abstract

The *Master-Slave Dialectic* has been used to understand the colonial influence that still permeates society today. It has also been used to understand the nuances of history and the dynamics between the oppressed and the oppressor. This article seeks to reframe, re-theorise, and re-place the *Master-Slave/Lord-Bondsman Dialectic* with the *Souls-Souls Dialectic*. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to dismantling colonial ways of being, practices, and terminology that continue to plague Africa and the rest of the formerly/currently colonised world, instilling Ubuntu and the ethics of care into research practices. This paper, informed by post-structuralist, critical, and interpretive theoretical framings, uses problematisation as a method to deeply evaluate and develop more nuanced understandings of the ideas that underpin other ideas. Dialectic interrogation is used to engage the *Lord-Bondsman Dialectic*. This engagement goes beyond the view of the powerful and the powerless. It encourages recognition and respect of the Souls of the parties involved, tapping into depths beyond skin colour or social status. This paper argues that unless there is a transition toward a postcolonial space, the continued retention of destructive colonial norms will further erode the human soul.

Keywords: *Decolonisation, Ubuntu, Souls-Souls Dialectic, Critical solidarities, Fieldworker, Lord-Bondsman Dialectic*

Introduction

In the process and aim to systematically conscientise Africans and the world and steer beyond the colonial ways of being, we need not tire of the process. Naturally, colonial rule has drenched all sectors of society and, beyond, has embedded itself deeply in the minds and hearts of all its former colonies (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012; wa Thiong'o, 1998). In these former colonies, there are ripple effects and colonial perpetuations that remain active and influential today (Andrews, 2021). Due to hundreds of years of being saturated in the colonial shadow, it may take just as many centuries, if not more, to fully decolonise (Capielo Rosario et al., 2024; Celeste, 2023).

Thus, decolonisation is not a state easily achieved by formerly colonised countries, at least not in these initial stages, but rather a continuous process of redress and resistance against complex colonial practices (Adefila et al., 2022; Bissell, 2013). Although it is important to decolonise, it is not without its difficulties, such as the systems in place to maintain the status quo of colonial extractive and exploitative power and the ideologies that persist in society, where all who want to progress in society must be complicit in the colonial systems to some degree (Abdelnour, 2022). Decolonial thinking requires tremendous reflexivity and self-knowledge, as well as knowledge of the spaces and lands we rise in and the importance of problematising dominance (Akama et al., 2022). We must understand that the fields and the air that we breathe are the prizes of colonisation, won/stolen from the native inhabitants, as they lost the wars in the end (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2023; Mandell, 2010). Furthermore, those who inhabited the land and tended their livestock were themselves treated as prizes of colonisation, with many sold into the Americas via the Gold Coast or enslaved locally by settlers (Chady, 2011; Sparks, 2013).

With this brief pretext on colonisation, oppression, and slavery, I propose that we further engage in the work to reclaim those spaces, those beings, and the more-than-human—our souls. Although the land issue is still debated, we ought to start decolonising minds and conscientising African psychologies (Bhabha, 2015; Oelofsen, 2015). Colonial terminology and practices ought to be revised and possibly removed from our everyday lingua franca, fostering a full awareness of their roots and effects on the nonprivileged people of the world. This paper aims to

introduce a possible postcolonial way of relating to one another across many levels. The study draws upon a foundation that combines Ubuntu philosophy, Frantz Fanon's theories on decolonisation, and an ethics of care to address relational and systemic harms.

Rationale and Significance

This paper aims to problematise the Master-Slave Dialectic, propose a new dialectic, and dismantle colonial terminologies and practices that subconsciously propel colonial/neocolonial practices. It also seeks to demonstrate how the adoption of colonial thinking has led to many violent acts across the globe and how important it is to unlearn certain ways of relating, perceiving, and connecting. Through this problematisation, this paper propels forth the mission of creating and fostering critical solidarities. This need stems from the pursuit of decolonising spaces, languages, and disciplines, and how we, as human beings, relate to one another in society and in the work we do. Key to developing critical solidarities is going beyond the ideas of who is deemed powerful and powerless, rooting these solidarities in the theoretical framings of Ubuntu philosophy, Fanonian philosophy, and the ethics of care.

The paper is intended for academic institutions, fieldworkers, researchers, nations, communities, professors, and scholars at all levels. This paper highlights how common linguistic practices in research environments have fostered problematic notions that must be addressed as we move towards decolonisation. This paper serves to unroot one of the many underlying factors that disrupt or hinder the development of critical solidarities. Through these insights, how we manage and create critical solidarities can be enhanced by installing the Souls-Souls Dialectic. This paper engages with one of those language uses and practices by interrogating the term 'fieldworker' and how, as we decolonise, we risk perpetuating the very thing we seek to disassemble and discard – colonial theorising and practices. As we still hold dear colonial references, concepts, and ways of being, we risk doing a disservice to the critical solidarities we aim to create and uphold.

The general outline of this paper has introduced its importance and defined decolonisation, expanding on its rationale and significance for the broader research community. This paper will also explore the Master-Slave Dialectic and explain why we ought to strive to decolonise. Secondly, this paper explores, through the mapped-out path to post-colonality, how it defines the soul and roots the Souls-Souls Dialectic in Ubuntu philosophy.

It also delves into the Souls-Souls theorisation in practice through the interrogation of the fieldworker and how the ethics of care can help usher in a more compassionate approach to research. Lastly, it will explore the effects of failing to dismantle colonial ways and the negative effects of failing to establish critical solidarities.

Through this outline and approach, this paper aims to provide insight into why it is important to be deeply aware of colonial terminologies and practices, and how, as decolonial scholars, we may unconsciously contribute to the perpetuation of colonial conceptions and practices. This structure facilitates the excavation of colonial layers and proposes an alternative framework, aiming to implement a more compassionate approach to research and to establish critical solidarities.

Decolonisation: Why is it important?

In its most basic form, decolonisation refers to the transfer of power and the removal of a ruling foreign authority, allowing a nation to emerge as an independent and recovered entity (Gopal, 2021). Gopal (2021) further states that, over time, the idea of decolonisation gained new meaning and approach through anticolonialism and resistance to imperialism. This reapproach is seen through Fanon's later work, leading to a "radically transformed future for denizens of both the colony and metropole" (Gopal, 2021, p. 881). This radical take has manifested in moves to decolonise the curriculum and not just diversify the staffing or students accepted into institutions but dismantle and provide space for new knowledge forms to develop from the knowledge base(s) of the previously disadvantaged and colonised – decentring, and destabilising the colonial systems (Begum & Saini, 2019).

To decolonise is to also end the destructive and oppressive imperial ways of metropolises, and it is needed to centre Indigenous knowledge. As such, decolonisation is needed across all sectors and societal spheres, as colonisation has infiltrated and mutated every aspect. This paper explores the decolonisation of relationships between researchers and fieldworkers by interrogating how language often shapes professional practice, whether consciously or unconsciously. It also engages with the importance of using the Souls-Souls Dialectic to foster critical solidarities. As it goes beyond language and moves towards deep care practice, this paper serves as a form of resistance to imperialism, using decolonisation as a radical guiding force in incorporating Ubuntu philosophy into the practices of data collection, community building, and solidarity formations.

Master-Slave Dialectic: Its Importance In Decolonial Understandings and the Need to Transcend It

Scholars discuss the Master-Slave Dialectic and expand on its effects, which can extend beyond race to become a class or rank tussle (Bowman, 2023; Snelgrove, 2021). In other words, the master can be Black, and the slave white, or both can be mixed race. Cole (2014) quotes Hegel, who writes, “The master is in possession of a surplus, of what is physically necessary; the servant lacks it” (p. 75). This brings forth the notion of the haves and the have-nots, more so, shedding light on the excessiveness of the master’s possessions. These possessions were brought forth by the slave, who benefits not from them. This dialectic explores the idea of consciousness and speaks to the idea that each is not who they think they are, as Cole (2014) puts it, “the master is really the slave, dependent upon the slave to recognise his or her mastery” (p. 79). In other words, the ‘lord’ is a ‘bondsman’, and the bondsman is the lord—a dramatic reversal of self-consciousness and realisation that the lord is the one who is dependent on the production of the bondsman.

There is an interdependence between them, but there is an independent consciousness that the bondsman develops over time through this realisation of the lord’s dependency on them (Jaarte, 2024). This pursuit and desire for self-consciousness do not just occur between two or more people; they can also occur within a person. Though the Hegelian dialectic speaks to the interdependence between the Lord and the Bondsman, Jaarte (2024) emphasises that Hegel used these arguments in his book, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, to bring about an end to colonial slavery. Alexandre Kojève (1969), as cited in Fukuyama (1989), argues that once this Hegelian dialectic between lord and bondsman ends, it marks the ‘end of history’. Leo Strauss (1981) critiques this, stating that it could end philosophy, the possibility, and the search for wisdom. In interpreting Kojève’s (1969) reading of the master-slave dialect, this paper argues that history did not end but rather took a different direction, or, if it did end, a new one based less on Eurocentric views was resurrected.

We speak about dismantling colonial ways, and to do so, we ought to continuously propose sufficient alternatives that are healthy, sustainable, and progressive to advance the decolonial mission. Fanon (1970) speaks of “restoring to the other” (p. 217) through recognising and mediating one’s human reality, which differs from the natural reality of things at the time, a mutual recognition of each other. This speaks to the encouragement of both to fully express and immerse themselves in the

“universal consciousness of self” (Fanon, 1970, p. 217) – what can also be referred to as Ubuntu.

This article proposes that we should reimagine the dialectic referred to above with a Souls-Souls Dialectic. This encourages the most profound level of communication between individuals from all backgrounds and experiences. We need to dig deeper within ourselves and reclaim our souls and voices under colonial possession. This is not to discount the significance of the Lord-Bondsman Dialectic – the more accurate dialectic, according to Cole (2014), more so to transcend and shift into a frame of relation that is more interconnected with others. There are difficulties in transcending this dynamic due to the ways the Master-Slave Dialectic expresses and sustains itself, even after the abolition of slavery. This speaks to the deep-seated ideas of inferiority and superiority that regularly manifest in many developing and developed nations. According to Lee (2022), these are expressions of antiblackness, characterised by an internalised desire to be white. The Master-Slave Dialectic has helped decolonial scholars understand history and how it affects us today, and history will always play an important role in understanding the world and its people. The transcendence of it comes from the desire and need to shape a future with fewer claws in colonial practices and philosophies—an Afrocentric future of knowledge production.

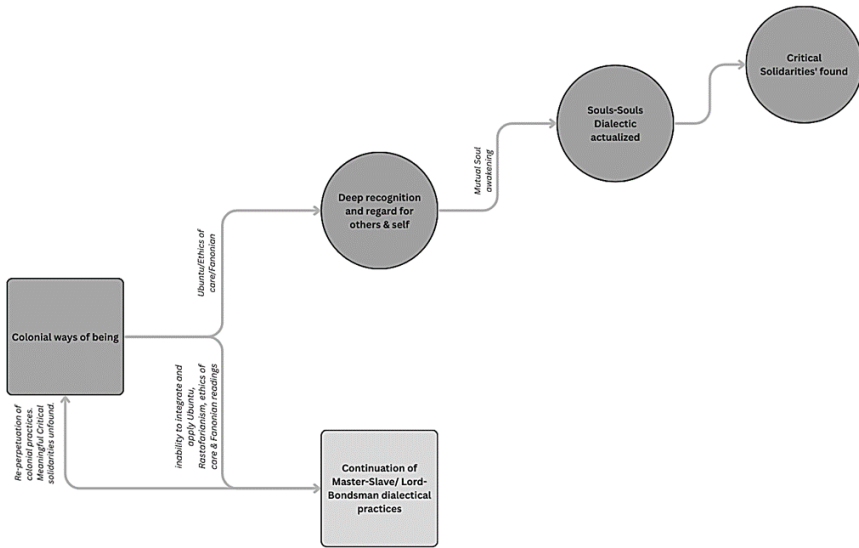
Mapping the Transcendence: A Path to Postcolonial Practices

The journey towards decolonial practice and thought requires constant effort and deliberate action to reshape the structures and practices of the social order. By incorporating a decolonial lens across all our work as scholars, we ensure we are on that path. With the papers’ foundations informed by post-structuralist, critical, and interpretive theoretical frameworks, the journey of transcendence begins. Post-structuralism refers to the movement beyond the structuralist ontologies that exist in the social world, with an interrogation on how knowledge has a role in sustaining power relations as they exist (Fox, 2014); Critical theory seeks to engage beyond the descriptions of social reality, towards unearthing insights on how forces of domination work in society, and how through those insights, practical action can lead to change (Celikates & Flynn, 2023); Interpretivism refers to the notion of social reality being shaped by human experiences and their subsequent social backgrounds (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Engaging with the above theoretical underpinnings offers emancipatory, critical, and deconstructionist approaches to understanding

and reshaping social reality. This paper uses problematisation as a method. Alvesson and Sandberg's (2013) "idea is to use problematisation as a methodology for challenging the assumptions that underlie not only others' but also one's own theoretical position and, based on that, to construct novel research questions" (p. 48). These questions that emerge from the examination of the Lord-Bondsman Dialectic allow for the plotting of new pathways for post-colonial practices. In problematising the Lord-Bondsman Dialectic paradigmatic assumptions in the previous section and in efforts to adhere to Alvesson and Sandberg's (2013) notion of dialectic interrogation, this paper further engages with the nuances that, in their amalgamation, form what the paper coins as Souls-Souls Dialectic. The problematising process as described by Alvesson and Sandberg (2013) consists of six methodological principles: "(1) identifying a domain of literature; (2) identifying and articulating the assumptions underlying this domain; (3) evaluating these; (4) developing an alternative assumption ground; (5) considering it in relation to its audience; and (6) evaluating the alternative assumption ground" (p. 56). They also emphasise that this process is more iterative than linear (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). As such, these are explored throughout the paper (Also see table 1).

This section will explore how the paper plots out the definition of the soul; it will also expound on how Ubuntu provides a solid underpinning for the Souls-Souls Dialectic. Furthermore, this section will explore the proposed conceptualisation of the Souls-Souls Dialectic and how it provides a way forward in research. Below is a diagram mapping the transcendence, providing a simplified visual representation of the sections to follow.

Figure 1.
The path of the Souls



Note: This figure was created by the author using Canva as a visual representation of the key tenets of this paper.

Defining the Soul

The figure above (Figure 1) illustrates how failing to implement Ubuntu risks repeating colonial practices that keep the soul in a state of perpetual bondage. In developing a working definition for this paper, a few definitions will be explored to examine how the soul is defined differently or similarly. These definitions will stem from a personhood perspective and religious, African spiritual points of view. In exploring personhood, the Souls-Souls Dialectic expresses a notion that goes beyond function and refers to people by essence (Moreland, 2014). Religiously, the soul is generally seen as more important than the body, although it is synonymous with the mind, or the self; in other words, it still forms part of the body (Ciocan, 2020). Religion has always placed the soul and its awareness at its centre, viewing it as an everlasting essence (Ciocan, 2020). In African tradition, as exemplified by the Akan of Ghana, the soul is understood as a vital life force that animates the physical body and sustains all individuals (Akesson, 1965; Boaheng, 2024). The Akan, especially when a new baby is

born, view the soul as either an ancestor-soul emanation from the paternal or maternal kinship group or as someone from the same cultural group (Akesson, 1965; Boaheng, 2024). The Akan people refer to the Soul as Kra or Okra, which means ‘goodbye,’ and this term encompasses both pre-existence and post-existence concepts (Akesson, 1965; Boaheng, 2024). The pre-existence concept holds that the soul is with Nyame (God) and then incarnates into a body to take on its nkrabea (destiny) on earth and say goodbye to Nyame for the time being (Akesson, 1965; Boaheng, 2024). The post-existence aspect is when one is nearing death—Kra lingers for a while before departing from the body as the individual takes their last breath (Akesson, 1965; Boaheng, 2024).

In South Africa, the soul is often referred to as Umoya/Umphefumulo (spirit/air) in isiZulu and isiXhosa. There is no distinction between soul and spirit, for they are one. Like air, the spirit permeates all that exists, forming the nodal point of existence (Murove, 2023). Murove (2023) describes the socioeconomic and political climate as dire, necessitating an urgent shift towards a new spirituality grounded in humanity and ethical principles. As such, the incorporation of this paper's definition of the soul aligns with a culmination of these definitions. More definitively, this paper sees the soul as the essence of human existence, encouraging others to strive for that deep recognition in themselves and others. The soul, alongside the religious and spiritual views, aligns with the notion that all souls have a destined existence, grounded in ethical care and compassion rooted in Ubuntu. This orientation mode encourages a way of being and expression that does not hinder the other (as seen in the Lord-Bondsman Dialectic), but rather an Ubuntuified one.

Ubuntu Philosophy

The ideals of the Ubuntu philosophy are not merely geared towards a collectivist philosophy that neglects an individualistic one but rather serve to mediate and reconcile the two and provide a balanced ‘unity through multiplicity’ (Lutz, 2024; Seroto, 2021). Widely, Ubuntu is translated as ‘I am because we are’ (Chowdhury et al., 2021). Mabvurira (2020) notes that there is no Western philosophical equivalent of the African philosophy of Ubuntu. Ramose (2015) emphasises that Ubuntu is a regulatory principle of wholeness; more explicitly, the purposeful expression of self and others (the broader community) cannot be pursued without adherence to this principle and without deeply recognising a mutual, complementary foundedness between the two. This mutual foundedness illuminates and

further supports the notions of uniting through the multiplicities and the I am-ness that can only exist through the collective recognition of each other. This philosophy is not just a conceptual and practical one but also exists in a deeper realm, where it speaks to the metaphysics of oneness and to how this spiritual philosophy can ignite the African Renaissance (Ébalé & Mulemi, 2022). Through this process, conventional notions of power and powerlessness are transcended, allowing for the exploration of more profound philosophical questions.

This gives rise to the proposed theoretical framing of the Souls-Souls Dialectic in interpersonal relations. The Souls-Souls Dialectic also speaks to Africa's desire to tap into its long-forgotten power and return to the ancient African philosophy of Ubuntu. Grounding psychological and philosophical works in Ubuntu philosophy will illuminate a profound sense of soul-consciousness. The Souls-Souls Dialectic is an attempt to raise further awareness of that “mutual foundedness” that Professor Ramose speaks of (Ramose, 2015, p. 70). Through this, connections are forged towards the formation of the Souls-Souls Dialectic in its practical and theoretical existence. However, this is no new notion that has recently emerged, but rather one of the latest entries to the critical engagements of relations, one of which is Rastafarianism.

Rastafarianism and the Soul

Within the Rastafari way of life, the concepts and practices of deep recognition of both the self and the other constitute pivotal aspects of the faith. This “mutual foundedness” (Ramose, 2015, p. 70), is expressed through the conception of I(ai) and I(ai). In the Rastafari movement, this refers to the idea of “oneness between two persons and beyond...I and I means Jah (God) is in all men” (van de Kerkhof, 2024; Pollard, 2000). This idea of “oneness” speaks to a collective and mutual recognition of the divine within. As such, to see and treat another as a ‘slave’ and see oneself as a ‘master’ is akin to blasphemy. Rastafari has been key in this aspect of deep mutual connectedness and knowing, as they developed their own Iyadic language (or Dread Talk) (Pollard, 2000). This perspective acknowledges that the English language carries a protracted history of violence and the systematic oppression of various nations across the globe. Thus, their intentionality in the examination and modification of the English language to truly reflect Rasta ways of life (beliefs, culture, spirituality, and identity) by removing those English connotations linked to oppression (van de Kerkhof, 2024; Pollard, 2000). The Souls-Souls

Dialectic continues this intentional effort of shifting and changing the words we use to more positive ones and knowing the power words have both energetically (vibration/spiritually) and psychologically (oppressive ideations and connotations). Rastafarianism does this quite profoundly; through their constant chipping away of oppressive connotations in language, the soul of an oppressed being shines through.

Souls-Souls Dialectical Theorisation

A Case of Fieldworkers – the Shift to Data Collectors

Part of this journey away from the Master-Slave Dialectic is towards a decolonial and postcolonial era. In the case of field workers, this paper proposes moving away from referring to those who collect data as field workers. The phrases have come to take on multiple meanings beyond their original references to farming employees or slavery (Turner, 2017). Nevertheless, it still reenacts and reiterates the functions of the Master-Slave Dialectic that has infiltrated the deep psychology of the world. To this day, slavery still exists, with figures being around 50 million people still enslaved worldwide (Global Slavery Index, 2023). It is paramount to note that the mere evolution of words and their meanings does not remove their original conceptual definitions, which may still carry negative connotations and denotations.

To avoid forgetting that those in the field are also human beings, we must approach our research and interactions with genuine care. I propose that all scholars strive for the works of the Souls-Souls Dialectic, where we recognise the Divine and preciousness in all, where we go beyond seeing others' preciousness as a commodity that can and should be claimed and exploited, but treat others with the Divine dignity that we would like ourselves to be treated with. I'll admit that my proposition is rather religious or spiritual. Still, we ought to have faith that shifting from old ways to new, progressive ways of being and relating to others will be the unifying factor, hero-led, in the Ubuntu philosophy. As Black Skin, White Mask says, "the juxtaposition of black and white bodies are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity" (Fanon, 1970, p. xxi). This higher unity proposed by this paper is a Souls-Souls Dialectic, rooted in Ubuntu philosophy and the ethics of care, and placed in opposition to the master-slave/Lord-Bondsman Dialectic as an alternative to adopt.

Ethics of care highlight the importance of putting care and compassion into practice, encouraging a more responsive, empathetic, and

attentive approach to the needs of others in society (Kwan, 2023). The ethics of care, as a component of moral theory, highlights the ethical importance of the relational bonds and the inherent interdependence that define human existence (Sander-Staudt, 2022). Ethics of care advocates for the well-being of both the caregiver and the care recipient to create a sustainable social-relational system (Sander-Staudt, 2022). Further incorporation of the ethics of care and its alignment with the Ubuntu philosophy helps build a systematic foundation for the Souls-Souls Dialectic theorisation.

Thus, I propose that, as scholars, we apply Ubuntu philosophy more in our practical work and go beyond theorisation. Although I do not blame any of us for succumbing to colonial ways of being and thinking. Cognitive dissonance frequently affects even the most progressive individuals, creating a psychological tension that can hinder genuine ideological growth and self-reflection. Thus, on this journey, we cannot walk alone, as that would be a colonial, individualistic, and capitalistic thing to do.

I appeal to all from diverse sectors of society to consider changing one word, as well as their ways of relating and practising, for this decolonising journey will not happen overnight. Still, rather, one mind shift and one phrase shift at a time. I posit that the term fieldworker ought to be dismantled. Naturally, it is essential to provide a viable alternative when proposing the eradication of an existing framework or practice. Thus, instead of fieldworker, we can say, in the context of research, “data collector”, “community interviewer,” and “research assessor” (Molyneux et al., 2013). In the case of farming staff, we can refer to them as nurturers of the land. We ought to engage more deeply with seemingly everyday concepts and terms and ask ourselves: what is the historical context of this word/phrase, and how has it disenfranchised people of colour? Granted, with any proposed re-theorisations, as they aim to address one problem, a few others arise, and as such, the Souls-Souls Dialectical theorisation, is no exception and is not exempt from being flawed in its way. This theorisation aims to restore the dignity of previously disadvantaged groups, increase connectedness, and encourage research institutes and communities to work in each other's best interests at Soul.

The pluralisation of soul is key and intentional in this paper. It reflects a deep African truth of one emerging into existence not by themselves nor navigating the world of spirituality alone. By embracing plurality, the individual acknowledges that ancestors are not separate entities but are essential components of their own identity and existence. This perspective suggests that the soul is never truly alone, as it carries the weight, wisdom,

and presence of an extensive ancestral line throughout its existence. A so-called individual does not exist in this world as a lone entity. Therefore, the Souls-Souls Dialectic does not just recognise and deeply acknowledge the one higher unity, but also deeply acknowledges the lineage and spiritual guides that the so-called individual walks with, though not often visible to the layman's eye. This is why in African culture, when one is greeted, the greeting extends to those they walk with, i.e., Molweni (plural) /Molo (singular) (I acknowledge you all/I acknowledge you) or Sanibonani (plural)/Sawubona (singular) (I see you all – greeting/ I see you), in isiXhosa and isiZulu, respectively (Motsa, 2024; Resane, 2023). Resane (2023) views the plural greeting form as a means of communal information exchange, where one opens a dialogue to connect with the other and all that they are accompanied by, be it their personal lives, livestock, or community affairs. Motsa (2024) refers to this plurality as a deep African recognition that one belongs to a complex matrix system that encompasses one's family (ancestry), society, and their nation. Therefore, the greeting of another in this manner is a declaration of one's deep recognition of that intertwined matrix. Even in the instances of the singular or individual greetings, there is an implicit recognition of the one stemming from the many. To build communities, societies, and nations, African philosophical practices (Ubuntu) ought to be reinstated. We have not lost our ancient ethics; they remain encoded in our languages, waiting to be decoded and practiced once more.

Ratele and colleagues (2021) have advocated for a similar approach through effective community building as one of the modes for expanding critical African psychology. The idea of the Souls-Souls Dialectic is also present in community-engaged works, which place a compassionate emphasis on how research is done with the communities. This work also emphasises that community work should be co-creative rather than merely extractive (Lazarus et al., 2015; Taliep, 2015; Ratele et al., 2021). The Souls-Souls Dialectic emphasises co-creativity and goes beyond research, reaching nations to address their conflicts and honour their sovereignty and their people.

Critical Solidarities Unfound

When the Souls-Souls Dialectic is not implemented or a similar approach is not used, the relations between the two entities are negatively affected. This section will explore key historical and current instances of a lack of critical solidarity and how these relations have become dire. This will be

briefly explored through numerous cases, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and xenophobia (more accurately, *Afrophobia*).

The case of Israel-Palestine is one that saw many wars—the War of Independence (1948-1949) and the Six-Day War (1967), to name a few, between the two nations after the partition plan of 1947 by the UN General Assembly (Khalidi, 2020; Robson, 2023). The historiography of the Israel-Palestine conflict suggests that the failure to establish critical solidarities between the two parties inevitably perpetuates a cycle of systemic violence. These wars saw many solidarities forming in support of each side. For Israel, on the one hand, the British, French, and the USA were allies; on the other hand, Palestine had support from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa (Arora, 2023; Bhwana, 2024). Over the years, both sides have inflicted significant casualties and suffering upon one another, culminating in the current humanitarian crisis and the genocide in Palestine (Bolton, 2024; Nijim, 2023).

The struggles of establishing critical solidarities have also plagued African countries throughout. Decades of civil war and persistent conflict in the DRC and Rwanda have caused significant loss of life and the mass displacement of millions (Karbo & Mutisi, 2011; McNulty, 2017). The conflict that we know today as the unrest/civil war in the DRC began soon after the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, which saw 1.5 million Hutus make their way to the DRC seeking refuge (Reyntjens, 2020; Umutesi, 2006). Throughout the decades, about 6 million people have lost their lives in the continued conflict between Tutsi, Hutu, and other militia groups in the DRC (Lawal, 2024).

In Southern Africa, *Afrophobia* (xenophobia) has been rife since 1994, seeing 588 deaths and 121,945 displaced foreign nationals between 1994 and 2021 (Addae & Quan-Baffour, 2022; Misago & Mlilo, 2021). This was when many came from other neighbouring countries seeking better opportunities and refuge due to many factors, namely, the economic sanctions of Zimbabwe by the USA and unrest in the DRC (Makina, 2012; Rugaza, 2022). South Africans, particularly Black South Africans, saw this influx as a threat to their livelihoods, including jobs (Hewitt et al., 2020). As such, Black South Africans, especially those from middle- to low-income households, retaliated and rejected their fellow African brothers and sisters through violence and assault, and in other cases, murdering them (Hewitt et al., 2020).

It has become apparent that creating and fostering pathways to form critical solidarities is highly needed between Israelis and Palestinians;

Hutus and Tutsis; Black South Africans and African foreign nationals. The Souls-Souls Dialectic could provide some insight into peeling behind the layers and deepening the solidarities. Critical solidarities require philosophical approaches such as the Souls-Souls Dialectic to foster deeper solidarities, propel Ubuntu forward, and make connections geared toward finding non-destructive, non-violent approaches to resolving societal conflicts. Critical solidarities unfound perpetuate colonial ways of being and political and economic instabilities, and continue the manifestations of the Lord-Bondsman Dialectic in different ways in society, consequently propelling forward ideas of one being more superior and the other more inferior. Progressing towards a postcolonial future requires a return to and the reintegration of African philo-ethical systems to effectively dismantle remaining neocolonial structures.

Conclusion

This paper has argued for revisiting widely accepted terms, practices, and theories in research and society. Furthermore, for the previously colonised nations to begin/continue their decolonial efforts. This paper serves as a conscientisation of the deeply entrenched colonial philosophies, systems, and languages we have unconsciously adopted. Through problematising the Lord-Bondsman Dialectic, this paper sought to propel forward a more African-oriented philosophy of relation, which stems from Ubuntu, to counter the Lord-Bondsman Dialectic – the Souls-Souls Dialectic. It has also problematised the term ‘fieldworker’ and proposed adopting words that are less historically contentious or colonially problematic, such as ‘data collectors’ and ‘community interviewers’. This paper has incorporated other theoretical grounding practices, namely, the ethics of care, Fanonian thinking, and religious positionings and ways of life (Rastafarianism), to further support and ground this paper's proposed theoretical and practical standing for the Souls-Souls Dialectic. Through the exploration of the formation of critical solidarities, this paper uses the Souls-Souls Dialectic as a mode of being and perception of self and others. While establishing critical solidarities, it is essential to scrutinise the complex nuances within these alliances and identify how colonial practices subtly work to disrupt them. The Souls-Souls Dialectic is one exploration of that nuance. Through this, one uses the Souls-Souls Dialectic to foster deeper relations and more critical solidarities.

Limitations

I consciously note that merely changing words will not directly eradicate the Lord-Bondsman roles we play, whether consciously or unconsciously, in society, let alone fully adopt the Souls-Souls Dialectic practices to foster critical solidarities. I'm also aware that acting consciously can be taxing to the mind; as such, the colonised unconscious comes forth more than we would prefer, thus hindering the need to establish critical solidarities. A notable limitation of the current study is the absence of primary data, which restricts the scope and depth of the resulting inferences. The paper notes that not every Souls-Souls Dialectical encounter is one of mutual deep regard and respect, thereby hindering decolonial and postcolonial progress toward a better future for all. Nonetheless, the insights from this paper are critical to African psychology, the expansion of Ubuntu philosophy, and care practices.

Recommendations

We must cast aside derogatory words rooted in colonial linguistics, as well as practices that hinder Ubuntu and the development of crucial solidarities in research spaces, collaborations, and communities. This paper promotes the continuation of decolonial and postcolonial ways of being and relating, specifically, but not limited to, the adoption of alternatives to words such as field/fieldworker to data collectors. This paper also calls for the adoption of a Souls-Souls state of being and relating with self and others to drastically reduce the violence around the world, i.e., in Gaza. This paper also calls for the interrogation of neocolonial practices permeating Africa's political, economic, and educational systems. This paper encourages further investigation into how decolonial indigenous knowledge can be applied more practically. Further theoretical frameworks, whether offering support or proposing alternatives, are encouraged to facilitate a deeper exploration of both individual and structural states of coloniality. This paper recommends future research in other aspects of research and other disciplines on how the Souls-Souls Dialectic can be framed or implemented.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Table 1
Problematizing process (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013)

Problematizing steps	Outcomes
1. Identifying a domain of literature	• Philosophy • Hegel’s <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>
2. Identifying and articulating the assumptions underlying this domain	• Cole (2014) quotes Hegel, who writes, “The master is in possession of a surplus of what is physically necessary; the servant lacks it” (p. 586).
3. Evaluating these (from no.2)	• This dialectic explores the idea of consciousness and speaks to the idea that each is not who they think they are. In other words, the ‘lord’ is a ‘bondsman’, and the bondsman is the lord—a dramatic reversal of self-consciousness and realisation that the lord is the one who is dependent on the production of the <i>bondsman</i>. • Alexandre Kojève argues that once this Hegelian dialectic between <i>lord</i> and <i>bondsman</i> ends, it marks the ‘end of history’ (Fukuyama, 1989).
4. Developing an alternative assumption ground	• Fukuyama (1989) noted Leo Strauss’s critique of this, stating that it could end philosophy and the possibility and search for wisdom. In interpreting Kojève’s and Strauss’s readings of the <i>Master-Slave Dialectic</i>, this paper argues that history did not end, but rather took a different direction, or, if it did end, a new one, born of ancient wisdom, was resurrected. • This paper thus provides a critical alternative to a <i>Souls-Souls Dialectic</i>. This dialectic usher in a way of being that doesn’t crumble due to mutual recognition but is healthy, sustainable, and progressive. It places its roots in ubuntu, Fanon’s “restoring to the other”, ethics of care, and Rastafarianism. This rooting allows for a spiritual balancing that encourages the souls of the oppressed and the oppressor to align with the universal consciousness. More definitively, the <i>Souls-Souls Dialectic</i> refers to a divine recognition in the other(s), going

	beyond the commodification of the others' race, sex or gender, towards the promotion of mutual wellbeing.
5. Considering it in relation to its audience	• The audience, due to systematic and centuries of designed structural realities have internalised the <i>master-slave dialectic</i>. In other words, within their own groups (or themselves), they see themselves as the powerful or the powerless. • This theorisation aims to restore the dignity of previously disadvantaged groups, increase connectedness, and encourage research institutes and communities to work in each other's best interests at Soul. • We ought to engage deeper with seemingly everyday concepts and terms and ask ourselves, what is the historical context of this word/phrase, and how has it disenfranchised people of colour?
6. Evaluating the alternative assumption ground	• The alternative proposed by this paper takes multiple levels of engagement, these being psycho-history, psycho-linguistics, and psycho-future conceptions. In other words, it explores the psycho-historical context of how words can structure and determine human beings' existence on this earth; how the powerful shape the lives of those they took power from; how over generations words take on different meanings and can be reshaped; and how futures can be changed to not be the latest version of what occurred in the past (i.e., neocolonialism), but rather dreaming of futures beyond the process of decolonisation. • Working against what has been systematically engrained for generations will prove to not be easy for the psychology of the reforming being. As such, the process of <i>Souls-Souls Dialectic</i> requires consistent conscious effort.

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