The Terminological Problem in Africana Studies

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The terminological problem in Africana studies

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Great struggles of Africana analysis that have moved forward

- To assert the existence of Africana phenomena worthy of scientific examination
- To assert the relevance of African people themselves as repositories of knowledge and as analysts concerning these objects and phenomena
- The critique of Eurocentric narratives and methodologies of analysis
Asserting Existence

- Geographical Location
- Sociocultural Agency
- Relevance and the Reconstruction of the "Grand Narrative"
Ancient Greeks “invented thought.”
The ancient Greeks were “Europeans.” (nationalism)
Europeans are “white” (white supremacy ideology)
“I think therefore I am” Enlightenment (humanity as a problematic)
Africans were not connected to the ancient Greeks either biologically or culturally.
Africans could not acquire full citizenship in the European and later US context
Africans were sociologically classified as “black.”
Thus Africans cannot consciously create existence and certainly are not capable of analyzing it or being repositories of knowledge about it.
The Woodsonian Vise

1. Ancient Greek construction of standards governing presence of mind and thought
2. Construction of educative processes in segregation, apartheid, and colonialism that reify the mythology.
3. Designation of this mythological person as the only legitimate source of and analyzer of knowledge.
4. Mythological appropriation of European as having an essentialist foundation.
5. Mythological appropriation of the ancient Greek identity as European.

This cycle illustrates how the ancient Greek standards and identity are reified through mythological processes and appropriated as the foundation of European identity, reifying the mythology through educational and segregative processes.
Critiquing Eurocentrism

- Classicism
- Rationality
- Normality
- Objectivity
- Individualism (Ideology)
- Commodification
- Evolutionism (Ideology)
Naming and classificatory scientific activity seen as a merely semantic issue.  
Reference to Africana phenomena is made by analogy or metaphor to the Eurocentric forms of similar phenomena, leading to the reification of those forms as “standards.”  
In this standardizing reference schema, the evolutionism ideology is imposed and the analysis proceeds with reference to the standardized forms, leading to mis-analyses.  
The terminological problem may be most acute among reclamation scholars, due to their “noble mission.”  
Translational accuracy is insufficient to address the analytical and practical consequences of Nommo and Husia and may contribute to the recolonization of African phenomena within the discipline, in the name of valuab