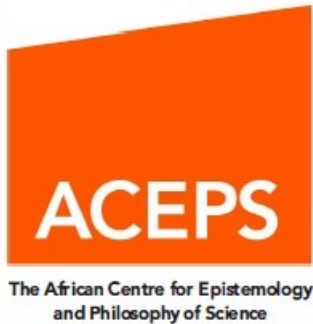


UJ opens African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science

The African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science (ACEPS) was officially launched at the University of Johannesburg on Friday, 19 May 2017.



ACEPS, which is housed in the Department of Philosophy within the Faculty of Humanities, aims to foster intra-African and global conversation in the areas of Epistemology and Philosophy of Science by bringing African insights, questions and values into meaningful conversation with other philosophical traditions.

Speaking at the opening, Prof Alex Broadbent, the executive dean of the Faculty of Humanities, said that critical thinking about the nature of knowledge, and the way Africa participates in science, is an essential part of the project of decolonisation.

Much of the African continent has a difficult relationship with knowledge, and the power it yields and its sharing or deliberate withholding. Prof Broadbent pointed out that "to improve this relationship is to afford greater recognition to knowledge generated locally and to set about generating more of it. This was one of the themes of the recent calls for the decolonisation of knowledge."

He stressed that if the decolonisation of knowledge is to be successful, it needs to be driven by critical thinking about the nature of knowledge and related concepts like justification, evidence, method and explanation. "A related difficulty accompanies the recognition of local knowledge. You can't simply decide to treat what somebody says as knowledge on the basis of where they live or what their name is," said Prof Broadbent. "Phrases like 'knowledge production' can conceal

the fact that knowledge answers to something beyond itself and beyond us. To produce knowledge is to find out about something, and this means to risk being wrong about it.”

He went on to describe the uniqueness of the centre: “ACEPS is not a centre of cultural studies. It is an African centre of Epistemology and Philosophy of Science. We do not speak of studying African philosophy, as one might study cave paintings in the Drakensberg. We speak of doing African philosophy, engaging in a practice that is as alive and as changing as any other academic discipline — probably more dynamic, at present, than the traditions of the Global North. ACEPS pursues its research projects with an African conscience, through encouraging work that is distinctly African in nature and salient to African challenges and concerns.”

ACEPS work will be centred on three umbrella projects: Indigenous Knowledge Systems; Health and Medicine in Africa; and Rationality and Power.

Prof Broadbent concluded: “The role of an African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science, in this time and place, is to champion critical decolonisation, both against reactionary opposition to decolonisation, and against the temptations of dropping our critical guard.”

The Centre was founded in 2016 by co-directors Professor Alex Broadbent and Professor Veli Mitova, and includes research projects led by Dr Mongane Wally Serote, Chad Harris, Likhwa Ncube, Zinhle Mncube, and Dr Ben Smart.

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