A THEORY OF THE INDIGENOUS UBUNTU ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Constructing a tenable theory of Ubuntu is urgent and needed for an indigenous ethical perspective on African social and political development. The theoretical analysis and practical application of Ubuntu seems to have become emotive, restrictive, politicized, and not inclusive enough due to grandstanding about ownership, poor conceptual and theoretical articulation, as well as antagonism from other related dominating foreign worldviews that wish to become the development paradigm for human society. This raises relational and dialogical issues about meaning from an African perspective. A native African paradigm for development is urgent due to the dominant neocolonial paradigms of alienation, exploitation, and marginalization. Ubuntu ethics is defined by a set of positive human values for ensuring stable and viable development worldwide, specifically in Africa.

Keywords: Ubuntu; ethics; communalism; community; human person; human dignity; moral values.

Introduction

The power of theory is indisputable. The issue under study is how to construct a theory that can crystalize or precipitate the core features of an acceptable African conception of Ubuntu as a carrier of desired human values. The purpose is to interface the above with democratic values for rapid progress and development in contemporary Africa. This onerous task of building a theory of Ubuntu is affected by some cultural views across the world that seem to have traces of Ubuntu, such as human cooperation, integration, and respect. Let us examine the bounds of theorizing. A theoretical analysis occurs when you pick, define and analyze a concept, using the views of different individuals on that issue. So, you discuss Ubuntu by exposing its strands in the ideas and thoughts of Immanuel Kant, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Bill Clinton, Dalai Lama, Thaddeus Metz, Isaac Mwase, Mogobe Ramose, Mabogo P. More, Augustine Shutte, Philip Ujomu, and E. D. Prinsloo among so many others. A theoretical framework occurs when you choose a concept, define it, and then look for the strongest and most suitable theory that best captures and explains the nature and implication of that idea or notion. So, you need a theory that best presents the possibility of human beings coming together to accomplish what no one can accomplish alone; then, you pick an Ubuntu theory as a grand theory model for understanding the issues at stake as a way of opening up the discursive arena of the ongoing research.

A few previous attempts to offer a putatively suitable African conception or explanation of Ubuntu mostly revealed certain restrictive and unacceptable opinions, such as: A completely naïve and impractical conception of Ubuntu exists wherein Ubuntu is repudiated or rejected as unviable, simply because some people or tribes around the continent that profess Ubuntu actually exhibit extremism, hate speech, prejudice, racism, alienation, xenophobia, and sundry discriminatory practices. One response can be the following one: So, because disrespect for others, hate, irredentism, intolerance, disdain and dehumanization exist on the African continent or worldwide, therefore Ubuntu has failed us in our daily real-life

experiences? We should no longer dialogue on this matter? Things are not so simplistic; rather the opposite is the case. We now need to talk about this issue more seriously and urgently. Surely there is an uncomfortable paradox here (what I preach is not what I do), but we need to be wary of responding to the ultra-extremism of misbehaviour and segregation with the counter-extremism of denying efforts at building a better human society and unifying human kind. We ought to fully understand the prescriptive and developmental nature of ideas in the history of social and political philosophy, as well as the nature of philosophy as a normative endeavour, irrespective of the most dislikable social realities prevailing in that moment. For example, in ancient Greece, when Plato proposed his Ideal State theory and Cyrus proposed the Doctrine of the Peers theory, daily life was predominated by prolonged wars, hypocrisy in social behaviour, and indefensible inequities on the basis of class, patriarchy, nobility, or privilege. At that time, however, Greek scholars, politicians and philosophers continued to prescribe a better way of life for their people. Today, after thousands of years, we recognize these prescriptions as the key Greek contributions to humanity. So, can we also say that the struggle to end racism and all inequalities should cease because modern America exhibits racist tendencies? We ought to be careful here.

There was an Ubuntu theory about unity and cohesion that was mostly romanticized, honorific, or uncritically celebrated without a careful and systematic attempt to define its properties and to clarify its nuances, and thus clearly show the conceptual contrast between Ubuntu and other important related ideas (community, communitarianism, communism, communalism, cosmopolitanism, globalization, humanism, and so on) from within and outside of Africa. Our response is that there is a need for a conceptual clarification of key social concepts that are identical or similar to Ubuntu, for conceptual analysis of the definition of Ubuntu, and for outlining relevant keywords (interconnectedness, common humanity, living together, common purpose, belongingness, shared beliefs and values, kinship ties, etc.) for further analysis, so that the full meaning of the primary concept can stand out. There is also a need for a conceptual framework of Ubuntu, so that concepts related to it (values, individualism, unity, reconciliation, peace, respect, dialogue, compassion, justice, etc.) can be explored in detail.

There was a radical traditionalist Afrocentric view that saw Ubuntu as a continued romanticization of an elusive, tenuous, and anachronistic African past. By implication, it became a philosophy of weakness; an offer from mentally colonized Africans revelling in the role of global underdogs and suffering from western domination and colonial mentality, and hence a call for a more radical, aggressive, decolonizing, ethnocentric view of Ubuntu that is "out of touch with reality." Our response is that we need a dialectical study of Ubuntu as a construct for social change and cultural identity, capable of evolving and encompassing the whole gamut of liberation, self-concept, transformation, and decolonization of the African world in a modern scientific and technological era.

There was also a descriptive historical narrative or a historically significant defensive claim of Ubuntu, which could not exhibit objectivity and criticality, but which was capable of building a dialectical and progressive social or value system; accordingly, it was contested by different claimants (foreign and local) for 'clout,' thereby triggering another round of emotively driven rewriting of history. Our response is to push for a philosophical analysis of Ubuntu, so that it is more systematically filtered and crystallized into a desirable value for Africans and the world both normatively and idealistically. The focus is to reconstruct the concept of Ubuntu in a more theoretically sound and practically applicable manner in order for the key ethical, democratic, humanistic and social correlates to be easily identified and imbibed in human beings.

Primacy seemed to be given to a cultural, linguistic, or religious Ubuntu ethos that was intuitively and innately insular and occluded due to its limited tribal scope; so, it was instinctively alienating towards other linguistic and religious-cultural accretions because of indifference, intolerance, and ultra-ethnicity; hence, it could not persuade or influence other members of humanity as stakeholders to buy into this theory as a pathway to the desired common good and integration. Our response is to request a more holistic, inclusive, consultative, and integrative view of this theory that apprehends the diversity of humanity and the repercussions of such.

An African cosmology or view of the universe or idea of human society should exist that can immediately see the advantage or benefit of reconstructing or rethinking Ubuntu as an attempt to main-

stream a philosophical argument, as a construct or theory that could be beneficial and acceptable to other worldviews, races or belief systems as a viable complementary or alternate indigenous ethical perspective, capable of being applied on a global scale. Our response is to re-establish the notion of Ubuntu as one of the major pillars of African cultural identity in the modern world, and to offer a unique and constructive African solution to an African problem and a formulation of it as a possible endogenous ethical and/or socio-political contribution to a divided and distressed world that fairly challenges Africans to show their true and enduring worth as an ancestral race of human beings.

Lastly, there is the legitimate concern about the extent to which an Ubuntu belief or approach can contain or pacify outcasts, belligerents, terrorists, dissidents, dictators, bullies, rebels, and the opposition. To put it simply, how does Ubuntu accommodate the reality of life itself as a harsh, contentious, conflicted and intriguing global arena? This is a very difficult question, because such elements are part of the existential predicament of the human being. They have nowhere to go. We must live with one another. How to live together is the question. Is it by contention, evasion, or engagement? One way to deal with this issue is to suggest that the consequences of ostracism and alienation of bellicose members of humanity pose a problem in its own right. Fighting them or fleeing from them seem to be two opposite reactions with one end which is pushing them away, causing more commotion. However, does fleeing mean one is afraid? Does fighting mean one has descended to the level of the troublesome elements? There needs to be an incremental middle ground or philosophy of engagement or dialogue under treaties or agreements (legal or conventions), boundaries (legal or political), aid and assistance (humanitarian efforts), among others. These are by no means perfect solutions, but the aim is rather to see these elements as part of life and to develop progressive strategies of managing the unending struggle of seeking ways to contain them.

The restrictive conceptions of Ubuntu mentioned hitherto seem to be fraught with inadequacies which justify our need to rethink and retheorize this idea, leading us to a renewed and urgent quest for a more conceptually distilled and robust theory of Ubuntu that can fast-track African development using ethical and epistemological correlates. The question of the proper way that human beings should behave in society remains a key issue in philosophy, and has been an ancestral challenge for human society over the ages. So, there is a struggle about the role of the human being as the primary material of the universe. Today, as always, our common humanity is threatened by a wave of divisions, instability, disorder and insecurity, arising from the fact that some negative attributes of an individual or group human nature (greed, ignorance, violence, hate, discrimination, unfair treatment, impunity, intolerance, authoritarianism, etc.) can manifest themselves into society as corruption and bad governance, anachronism and irrational fear of the 'other,' wars, hate speech, racism and ultra-ethnicity, genocide and crimes against humanity, apartheid, xenophobia, sectarianism and dictatorship, disobedience to the rule of law, inequity in resource distribution, lack of social justice, Nazism, jihadist extremism, tyranny, siege mentality, personality cult, abuse of power, and so on). Human behaviour is critical to the survival of the human race. The concern is about humanity and human nature.

Hobbes, Kant and Gandhi on Human Nature and the Human Person

What is human nature after all? What is the link between human nature and Ubuntu? We must share the view of Berry (1986) who insists that "social and political organization has to accommodate itself to the human nature and not vice versa" (xiii). In other words, human nature is a primal symbol in the quest for security in human existence, and it has to do with certain physical and non-physical elements of the human being. According to Dewey (1974), human nature can be defined by the innate needs of humans, and he says:

I do not think it can be shown that the innate needs of men have changed since man became man or that there is any evidence that they will change as long as man is on the earth. Needs for food and drink and for moving about, need for bringing one's power to bear upon surrounding conditions, the need for some sort of aesthetic expression and satisfaction, are so much part of our being. (p. 116)

Furthermore, Dewey points out that "pugnacity and fear are native elements of human nature. But so are pity and sympathy" (p. 118). The analysis above shows that there is a natural dimension of security as embodied in human nature and its operations. So, human beings can act as individuals, but a lot of things are beyond the individual and thus require the formation of large groups of human beings living together for the greater good, such as the family, village, county, town, tribe, nation, State, etc., to accomplish them.

Therefore, human nature mainly has to do with the social nature of the human being. According to Mackenzie (1963),

human association, societies are first formed for the sake of life; though it is for the sake of good life that they are subsequently maintained. The care of the young, the preservation of food and drink, the provision of adequate shelter and protection would suffice to account for the existence of human societies. (p. 35)

These natural feelings and instincts of humanity themselves are again constrained by some other natural factors. According to McShea (1979), "men need what other animals do not, a method for the restoration of the functionality of feelings. Their freedom to imagine all possible things cannot, consistently with survival, entail enslavement to the necessity of action on the basis of an emotional reaction to each imagination" (p. 389).

The analysis of human nature takes a different dimension when an attempt is made to separate the individual aspect from the universal one, as we see when Bacon (1972) places the operations of human nature at two distinct but important levels. He did so through the theory of idols. In his view, human nature is captured by idols:

The idols of the Tribe have their foundation in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men. The idols of the Cave are the idols of the individual man. For everyone (besides the errors common to human nature in general) has a cave or den of his own, which refracts or discolours the light of nature; owing to his own proper and peculiar nature (p. 92).

The individual and universal aspects of human nature make sense when we situate human nature theoretically, starting with Thomas Hobbes's view.

Hobbes's basic argument is that, after all said and done, human beings who are essentially egoists seem to get along better with one another when they aim at justice, construed as the pursuit of individual advantage with a cooperative setting. In other words, given that limited resources and conflicting interests characterize human life, people can expect to further or promote their interests if they live harmoniously with others in the society (Nielsen, 1996, 86–87). Hobbes says that nature has made humans equal in the faculties of body and mind. Despite that there are differences in the way they are endowed with such faculties, these differences are not so considerable as to allow an individual to have certain qualities that others do not. For the philosopher, this equality of ability among humans gives rise to the equality of hope or to the belief that all have the same chances of attaining their ends. This equality in turn leads to disputes over the resources of nature, in which people exercise their powers in order to conquer, dispossess or deprive weaker ones of their lives, liberties, and properties. Therefore, Hobbes (1963) contends that the equality of human beings gives rise to a condition of mutual destruction in which no one can be sure of emerging victorious or subsisting for a reasonable length of time (p. 142).

According to Thomas Hobbes, the period of existence when humans live without a common power to control them all or arbitrate among them is called "the state of war" (p. 143). In this state, everyone is against everyone. He takes care to point out that this state of war encompasses not just conditions of actual conflict, but also the state of existence in which people are disposed to behave as if they are in a state of war. Furthermore, in the state of nature or war, where everyone is an enemy to the other and where the security and protection of life and property are not assured, there is no industry or fruitful labour. And other human activities like culture, art and society do not exist. For Hobbes, the state of nature is the state of war. It is the state of the violence and anarchy of everyone against the other. This condition of life is typified by the inability to guarantee survival and peace for any reasonable length of time. One of the most

distinctive features of the state of nature is the fact that it does not ensure the individual or aggregate of interests, except when there is a normative exit by means of a contract. Hobbes (1968) informs us that it is absolutely important to note that:

to this warre of every man against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no injustice (p. 188).

The outright repercussion of this is that "in such a condition, every man has a right to every thing; and therefore, as long as this naturall right of every man to every thing endureth, there can be no security to any man, (how strong or wise soever he be)" (Hobbes 1991, 110). This is not all about the state of nature. Hobbes informs us that "worst of all, there is a continual fear and danger of violent death. Put simply, the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes 1963, 143). Against the background of the absence of a common power, law, notions of justice and injustice, right and wrong in the state of nature, the philosopher says that the passions and the reason of humans leads them to search for peace. Their quest for peace arises from their fear of death and desire for the resources necessary for adequate living. By desiring peace and cooperation, they use reason to fashion some convenient articles of peace out of the right and law of nature. According to Hobbes, the right of nature is the liberty for all human beings to use their powers to preserve their lives, while the law of nature is a general rule derived from reason, which forbids them to destroy their lives or the means of preserving them. He also claims that the first and basic law of nature is to seek peace, while the second laws of nature enjoin us to readily give up our right to self-defence if others show a willingness to do likewise.

Thomas Hobbes notes that humans give up their right to self-preservation by either renouncing or transferring it. A right is renounced when one does not care to whom the benefit goes, while a right is transferred when one intends that the benefit goes to some specified persons. The philosopher maintains that the acts of renouncing or transferring rights are conducted through declarations and transactions binding the participants to a term of agreement. The goal of the transfer of rights is to guarantee life security and the means of preserving life. In effect, the realization of the shortfalls of the state of nature would pave the way for the emergence of the commonwealth. According to Hobbes, social order as the great Leviathan, commonwealth, state is an artificial human created to protect and defend the natural human. He says that "the sovereignty of the leviathan is its artificial soul which gives life and animation to the whole body" (Hobbes 1963, 139). In his view, the Leviathan's strength lies in the wealth and riches of all its members. And every part or member of the Leviathan is induced to perform their duties by the sovereign who has the power to punish or reward.

For Hobbes, contract is the name given to the mutual transfer of rights among human beings. It is the basis of the commonwealth, which exists in order to ensure that their lives are safe and happy. The protection of life and property is guaranteed in the commonwealth only when people establish a common power on which they confer all their powers and strengths. Hobbes (1963) notes that "this common power can be one man or an assembly of men" (p. 148). The commonwealth is attained through the processes of transferring and renouncing human rights and the laws of nature. The commonwealth emerges from the debris of the state of nature that was defeated by the superior logic and opportunistic inclination of human beings. The appealing, systematic and well-articulated justice and security theory of Hobbes suffered from certain internal contradictions that paved the way for the emergence of other views. This theory did not fully account for the dangers arising from the illimitable powers that were bestowed on the sovereign as ruler. Hobbes did not reckon with the fact that these powers would clear the way for dictatorship, primitive accumulation, misappropriation, authoritarianism and the eventual denial of the same justice and security of lives and property as we find in Africa. It was this unresolved paradox of justice and security that other theoreticians tried to address.

Why is human nature devoid of fair treatment and rule-guided behaviour? Immanuel Kant offers a conception of the human being that thrives in an atmosphere guided by rules, neutrality, and fairness. As explained by Nielsen (1996), his impartiality theory calls for some basis for respectful, fair, and equal treatment of all. This theory of justice holds that "the function of justice is to provide a reasonable basis

of agreement among people who seek to take due account of the interests of all" (pp. 86–87). The reason for behaving justly is that whatever happens to a person matters in itself. As such, people should not look at things from their own points of view alone, but they should seek a basis for considering the views of others (pp. 86–87). In other words, the concept of a person, which is operational in the impartiality theory of justice, is that a person is a self-originating source of valid claims. And we accept the claims of that person because we feel that his/her interest is equally important as ours.

Kant (1990) contents that justice is the relation of people to one another, which contains the conditions under which it is alone possible for everyone to obtain the right that is his/her due (p. 433). This implies that the essence of justice is "the aggregate of those conditions under which the will of one person can be co-joined with the will of another in accordance with a universal law" (Kant 1965, 34). This means that one's act is only just if it exhibits the character of being amenable to the acts and freedoms of others under a universal ordinance. The highlight of Kant's justice is the most striking point that "a man realizes his true self when he acts from the moral law (Rawls 1972, 254). The moral imperative concerns or affects every individual that is capable of being subject to obligation. And only those actions that are done from the motivation of duty can be said to retain moral worth. Duty is nothing other than ensuring that our actions necessarily derive from acting out of reverence for the law (Copleston 1960, 104, 109, 110). As Korsgaard (1989) insists, "the essential character of law is universality. Therefore, the person who acts from duty attends to the universality of his or her principle" (p. 211). Thus, according to Kant (1991), the vital law of justice is the categorical imperative. Evidently, "the categorical imperative only expresses generally what constitutes obligation. It may be rendered by the following formula: Act according to a maxim which can be adopted at the same time as a universal law" (p. 241).

As Ebbinghaus (1968) rightly notes, "the categorical imperative determines the concept of duty solely as regards its form. It states only what duty as such is and consequently what all duties have in common" (p. 214). However, Africa's foremost philosopher Kwasi Wiredu (1995) has argued that rules, especially rules of morality, make sense to us not merely on the basis of universalizability, but more importantly on the basis of the connection between morality and human interests (p. 36). Rules do not make sense as rules; they rather retain their significance as rules intended to achieve specific purposes. Apart from these purposes, there is the question of the context and effectiveness of such rules. What happens when a rule works in some place or time and not in another? The belief that human beings can be decent, reasonable, responsible and good if properly formed is not exclusive to any culture or race. One major exponent of this view is Mahatma Gandhi – the revered leader of India who brought a new idea to the quest for human nature. He preached about love for all human beings and mutual respect for each other. He believed that humans were central as children of God, and that there should be no discrimination or unfair treatment of others on the basis of beliefs, colour, creed, caste, or religion. There needs to be respect for others' feelings. Essentially, Gandhi despised prejudice, hate, selfishness and colonialism of any sort. In a sense, he preached about the universality of human nature and to make a better world where all human beings can live together in peace and develop their respective humanity without fear or favour. His target was to make human life better by upholding human dignity through the promotion of human and social values (Kesavulu 2022, 1). From the above, we clearly see that the search for humane and orderly social living and mutual respect among human beings in society has been an age-long issue throughout the history of social philosophy. Let us examine some pitfalls of the African human nature.

African Human Nature in the Era of Tradition and Modernity

A tradition is an ancestral belief or practice learnt or met in nature and transmitted down through the generations. So, in a sense, reasoning or behaviour can be traditional/classical, ancestral, reactionary, conservative, not modern, or contemporary. Modernity is about a transition from the old ways to the present-day features; technology, rule of law, enlightenment through education and exploration, urbanity, cosmopolitan and multicultural life forms, as well as globalization. Despite modernity and civilization in contemporary Africa, some knowledge and practices considered anachronistic are still being practiced.

Presenting this idea more theoretically, Oladipo (1998) succinctly summarizes the controversy: "the traditionalists see in traditional culture the foundation and pathway to social reconstruction and

cultural renewal in postcolonial Africa. African knowledge existed in forms different from the ones observed in the contemporary era. There has been philosophy in African traditional cultures all through the ages" (p. 62). In addition, several attempts have been made to present and discuss these traditional philosophies of African cultures. So, traditionalists are engaged in a backward-looking effort, whereby "some contemporary philosophers in Africa extract from traditional thought ingredients believed to be of philosophical relevance" (Sogolo 1993, xiv). On the other hand, modernists think otherwise: any serious attempt to guarantee "Africa's emergence in the modern world" should involve, to a large extent, alienation from traditional culture and assimilation of both the culture and intentions of Western civilization" (Oladipo 1998, 62). They mainly argue that African philosophy should have a contemporary focus that takes into consideration current issues affecting the lives of Africans.

In contemporary Africa, most of the countries or nation states are artificially multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious, thus posing a very serious problem for establishing and sustaining humane, fair, equitable, law-abiding, tolerant, peaceful, ethical and negotiated sociopolitical order. Wiredu (1992, 191–199) observes that "any society without a modicum of morality must collapse." Is this the case? Well, social morality, of which justice is a key aspect, is a means of clarifying the relationships between human beings, and a medium of regulating interpersonal behaviour. Morality is an emanation of one's overriding desire to preserve social harmony by ensuring that moral codes discourage injustice, deceit, and anarchy in any system. The essence of morality is one's endeavour to harmonize conflicting interests, to play the role of an arbiter, and to secure the greatest possible general good (Perry 1974, 373; Bayles & Henley 1989, 10; Foot 1985, 208). According to Kupperman (1983, 4–10) the essence of morality must consist in injunctions against harming others.

It is on this basis that the question of the need for morality exhumes the age-long issue of egoism. The latter holds that one should not only seek his/her own interest in everything he/she does, but that he/she should act morally only if he/she has something to benefit from such an arrangement (Hospers 1973, 600). In a sense, when practiced by a group, egoism will reflect in many ways, including isolation, intolerance, domination and discrimination, which remain the hallmarks of ethnicity or group-based egoism. A popular conception of ethnicity is the one that highlights its prominent negative aspects in a contemporary situation. Odugbemi (2001) makes it clear that "ethnicity undermines the fundamental values without which we cannot build a sane, serious, democratic society" (p. 70). Lemarchand (1974) says that the overwhelming aim of ethnicity is its focus on exclusion of others from power. The ensuing contexts and struggles for control have decisive negative impacts on patron–client relationships and on interethnic identities (p. 143). Such convolutions in social organization and psychological predispositions simply replace the question of human survival on the centre stage.

The African philosopher Wiredu makes a connection between knowledge, action, and survival. For him, "the most obvious problem is that much of the knowledge we need in Africa now is in the hands, and sometimes in the heads of non-Africans. But as things stand now, pressing for science and technology in Africa is apt to give the appearance that Africans simply want to imitate their erstwhile colonizers" (Wiredu 1998, 17–18; 2000, 181). If Wiredu's words are true that there are theoretical and practical weak points, then it is correct to observe that this is a precarious situation for the Africans to be in. There is a crisis of African rationality and social order, which has several key dimensions: Epistemologically, there is a difficulty in generating requisite social and scientific knowledge, as well as core human values for peace and survival. Metaphysically, it is difficult to define and establish independent thought systems on the basis of endogenous core values of self-worth, national pride, and human well-being. Phenomenologically, there is a difficulty in willfully pursuing cultural identity for liberation and transformation, so that decolonization, self-reliance and change in the sociopolitical order are more easily attainable. Such deficits are life-threatening and inimical to African cultural identity in the modern era. So, Oladipo (1998) identifies a problem of knowledge, which is the convolution in discovering "how to acquire and apply scientific knowledge and how to utilize man's accumulated wisdom for promoting human wellbeing" (p. 71). Referring to the past, Oladipo urges us to "see colonialism as a central fact in African social history, one that has generated a crisis of self-knowledge on the continent" (p. 68). Serequeberhan (1994) argues that, with reference to Africa, the philosophical and cultural spaces are defined as ex-colonial enclaves, and actions are mediated

and imposed upon by the persistence of neocolonialism arising from the continued intrusion of Western worldviews in present-day Africa. The aim of this intrusion is to reproduce and perpetuate Africa's subordinate status in the contemporary world (pp. 20–21). This problem is yet to be fully overcome. In fact, can Africans overcome this problem?

According to Cabral (1998), a leading figure in Africa, culture is the instrument that will pave the way for a new Africa. He says that we are facing the problem of choice, "which may be called the dilemma of cultural resistance" (p. 260). This resistance, however, is targeted at something. To this end, he pushed for national liberation that would pitch itself against "the principal characteristic, common to every kind of imperialistic domination, the negation of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violently usurping the free operation of the process of development of the productive forces" (p. 261). In short, freedom for the African peoples is imperative for their security at the material and ideological levels. Cabral discusses the influence of a strong cultural identity as a factor of resistance against domination. He also viewed resistance as a process in the service of reclaiming cultural identity, which must be consolidated and pitched as a negation of a foreign dominating culture (Wereta 2007, 5) in the effort to decolonize. Cabral argues that Africans must fight against the two main types of domination: repudiation of the physical liquidation of the dominated peoples via human and cultural genocide, as well as infusion of the instruments of political and economic domination into the oppressed population's cultural identity. This besieging effect and the occluding repercussions arising from it necessarily imply a clarion call to deny all inimical metropolitan constructs and values (Cabral 1998, 260), even in an era of science and technology.

Oladipo (1998) points out that while we are committed to the development of science and technology in Africa, the concern over its desirability is secondary to that of "how it may be used to promote human values. This makes the problem of knowledge in Africa to be how to exploit all the resources of the modern world for the benefit of our society without jeopardizing the strong points of our culture" (p. 5). Human values and their merits need to be upheld and sustained. One major threat to human values across most African social and political orders remains anachronism. Wiredu (1980) identified anachronism as a threat to the African world. In his view, anachronism is when something has outlasted its suitability (pp. 1–6). Better still, anachronism is construed as the inability of a people, race, tribe or group to change with the emerging trends or modern times (Ujomu 2019, 270; 2020), leading to a rogue or sectarian existence as a culture that exists on the fringe of society or even audaciously hides in plain sight in the heart of society, refusing to live within the civil laws of society, thereby causing instability and disorder and creating alternate divisive worldviews. Anachronism is a key reason for the inability to build workable endogenous developmental epistemologies and social orders in most parts of Africa. Some tribes or societies across the continent, insofar as they refuse to transit beyond anachronism, are evidentially refusing to desist or reform certain retrogressive and inimical ancient cultural practices. Anachronism is a threat to peace and development because it truncates the spirit of revolution (Ujomu 2018, 66; 2020, 105–106) or the social change towards benefitting from foresight, imagination, education, civility, constructive criticism and enlightenment as core values of modernity.

Theorizing Ubuntu

Ubuntu as a cosmology or view of the universe, or specifically as a conception of human society, needs to be examined seriously as an indigenous ethical or social alternative to the *status quo* due to certain gaps noticed in the modern world as a whole. Such gaps are prevalent in both developed and developing societies. At one level, Ubuntu can be said to be an idea or a belief about the way good life should be, so it is normative or prescriptive. The concern about how one ought to live his/her life in society remains one of the fundamental topics of philosophical investigation throughout human history. A number of scholars have offered different responses to this question with varying degrees of success. Elements of the Ubuntu ideal could be located in the works of scholars of different eras all around the world (Mwase 2013), thus endorsing its global inclinations and acceptability in our view. The primitive elements that turn Ubuntu into a cultural and historical experience can be universalized, and so can be found within and across nations and tribes (Ujomudike 2016). In a more general sense, Ubuntu is a value

system, a scheme of social relations, or a way of life that determines human personal and social actions in the cultural, political and economic domains of life in a society. It can be seen as a principle that guides and underwrites human behaviour at the individual, group, national, and possibly even the international levels (Ujomudike 2016). The absence of the human values of Ubuntu poses a threat to social life at the national and international levels, and thus becomes a problem needing urgent attention.

The great paradox here is that without human nature and the struggle to contain its excesses, the ultimate pursuit of the four H or 4Hs (humanization, humanitarianism, humanity, and humanism) will be impossible to attain. Thus, the focus on humanity is embedded in the diverse meanings of the concepts of *human* (to be a human being socially, biologically, culturally, psychologically, etc., focusing on self-preservation, freedom, life-promoting actions, and living together for a common purpose), *humanization* (to make something such as technology or culture that is more oriented to human interests or appearance), and *humanitarian* (to show care and concern about the human being in distress or to make the human being better by proactive actions). The essence of Ubuntu is the focus on or reference to the interdependency of human beings; the idea that a human being is a complete person to the extent that the society gives him/her recognition as a person and allows him/her to realize the full potentials and benefits of being a human person (Mwase 2013, 1–2). Also, Ubuntu emphasizes the importance of other people or the society in the life of a human being. It highlights the fact that a person cannot do without others. Our individual lives are intricately and inextricably tied to the lives of others and we all need to cherish these interrelations and interconnections. The essential of Ubuntu remains the emphasis on the fact that such interconnection should be guided by kindness, respect, cooperation, openness, accommodation, and willingness to work for others' interest. The difficulties that human beings encounter when pursuing the above goals and behaviour clearly illustrate why Ubuntu is required. So, the philosophical basis of Ubuntu rests on the belief in and realization of our common humanity, our sense or perception of being part of the whole human family.

Thus, the idea of Ubuntu retains a cocktail of features or values. Notable among them are the respect for human dignity, the value of the human person, an ethic of care and compassion, as well as a push for key moral and democratic values, such as consensus, dialogue, and tolerance among others. What is at the heart of Ubuntu is a moral norm; a guiding principle for governing human action; a pattern or principle of human relations; a system of interaction by which human beings can positively develop themselves individually and collectively. For human beings to live in a productive, peaceful and purposeful manner, the principle or values of Ubuntu may be proposed as a way out of the human predicament. The value of life is seen in human beings showing humaneness and compassion to one another. Compassion is love and respect for others and fosters interaction and reconciliation, which in turn allow recognition, consultation and agreement, so as to make society inclusive and socially responsible and responsive in decision-making. The urge to seek consensus or mutual accord disposes us to pursue dialogue construed as conversation and negotiation for positive communication and accommodation of others. These values are the bedrock of what is referred to as tolerance; an opportunity for others who do not share our beliefs, ancestry, language and ways of life to thrive and survive.

As some African tribes posit, "he who is alive can do a thousand things." Life is paramount for existence and so much is built around the value of human life. Interestingly, Ubuntu, which seeks the interaction and interdependence of human beings, upholds the principle of the value of human life as something that needs to be made a priority within the society. The aim is to increase the chances of comfort, well-being and progress among the majority of people in the society through cooperation and consideration for others. The concrete impact of this principle is easily seen at the level of human dignity, quality of life, and standard of life of the citizens across the classes. The value of human life could be the core value that can counter marginality and marginalization in the polity and depoliticize the different domains of social life to the extent that some elements can drive all our activities. The value of life is also related to our axiological premises for considering the human person to be deserving of certain goods (benefits or burdens), necessary for the rational pursuit of human well-being and happiness (Ujomu 2008; Olatunji 2013).

Conclusion

In summary, Ubuntu is philosophically framed as a platform for liberating Africans from all forms of peonage, domination, oppression and exploitation, both from within or outside the continent. Defending Ubuntu suggests the establishment and maintenance of a conception of the African personality or what Africans stand for. This search for an African personality is an intellectual and social project that implies the pursuit of the human values of freedom, human dignity, justice and responsibility that will ensure the escape from regressive manipulation and exploitation. The aim is to lead Africans towards exhibiting an identity or personality that can enjoy respect worldwide and promote the key elements of our African cultural systems or ways of life. Features of our African ways of life, especially our tradition and practices, raise questions about our rationality, our ethical or moral behaviour and its foundations. It is in this sense that Ubuntu can be relevant to African Renaissance. Considered analytically, the Ubuntu theory allows us to review the rationality issue. In African philosophy, it refers to many things, but it is primarily a concern about meaning, intelligibility and transmission of viable and sustainable human conduct or behaviour that Africans have evolved over the ages. Do they have such? The discourse on Ubuntu therefore raises afresh philosophical issues and concerns about the way Africans can attain self-definition and live according to the dictates of modern scientific experiences, without compromising their human dignity and freedom as rational and responsible beings.

In other words, in what ways can Africans decolonize their minds and practices, so as to achieve more humane and stable social order all over the continent? The study of rationality presupposes a study of the dynamics of a logical mindset of the Africans, their modes of causality and pursuit of ultimate reality. The rationality question points to the interrogation of the African beliefs (opinions, viewpoints, and assumptions), ideas (concepts, constructs, abstractions), and values (desires, interests, goals and norms). The intention of looking at these elements of rationality is to situate the African traditions, cultures and belief systems within a critical and analytical lens that defines the ways we develop meanings, learn and transmit lived experiences as markers of pushing our understanding and knowledge towards improved ways of living by learning the more scientific aspects of philosophy like logic, ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of science, and epistemology.

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