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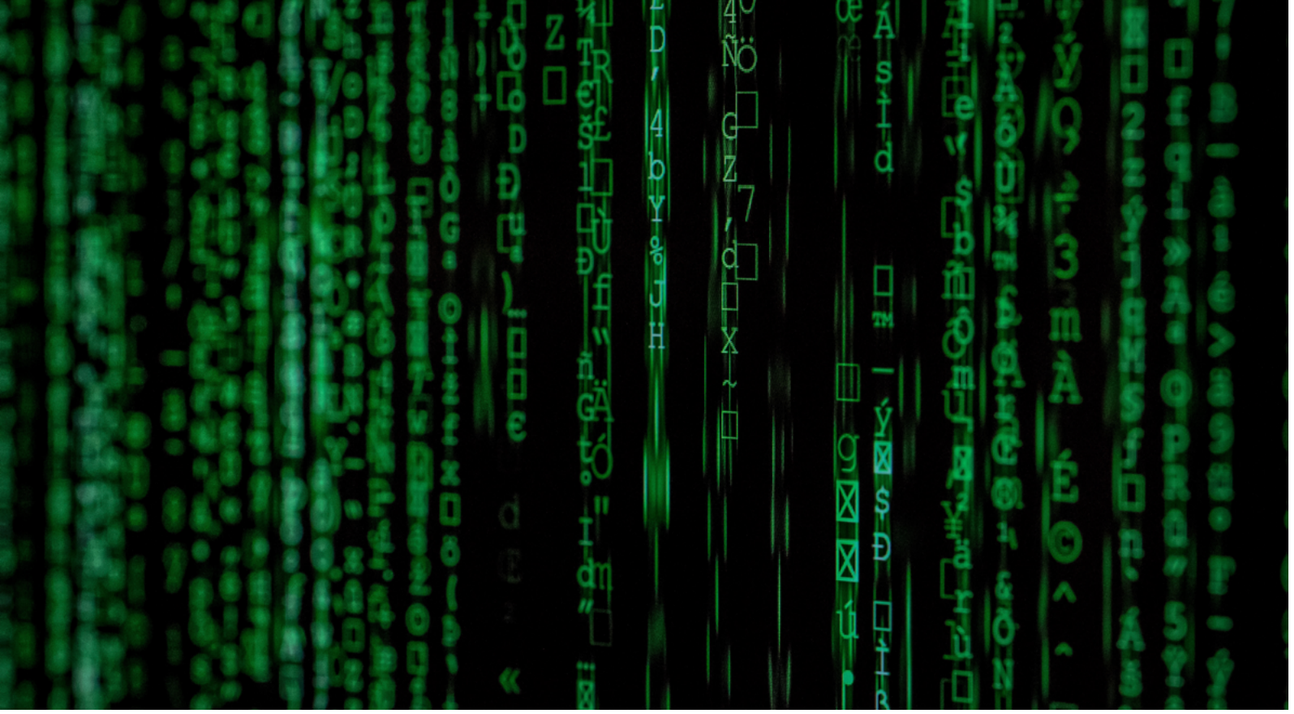
Contents



The Matrix of Resonance

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Abstract

All metaphysical works, in the history of philosophy, that dealt one way or another with energy painted for us a picture in which humanity is seen to stand as discreet, separate, helpless, hope bereft, beleaguered and belligerent instance of the living conscious energy in the face of the inordinate, inanimate, and untold vastness of the cosmic energy. Our relation to the impersonal vastness of cosmic energy by Schopenhauer's light is but suffering fatally from two incurable defects which he linked to Achilles with a vulnerable heel and or to the devil with the horse's hoof (Schopenhauer 1887). In chime with this line of argument, the Stoics stance has it to say that humanity's choice in the face of the cosmic energy is either accepting it with dignity or doing away with oneself, (Palmer 1998). Almost a couple millennia later the Stoic's resolve for suicide was taken up and given a fresh shot by Albert Camus who noted that in a situation wherein humans demand for meaning and significance can never be met, the only way out is suicide, (Camus 1942). Nietzsche kept Schopenhauer company in his understanding that this world is a prodigious empire of meaninglessness, suffering and striving driven along by an irrational force. However, Nietzsche went radical as he argues emphatically that we must live our lives to the fullest. And the key to do this is putting into effect the perpetual elimination of the weak by the strong, the idiot by the clever and the incompetent by the competent, (Magee 2000, Nietzsche 2002). In light of these problems, this study confers upon itself the objective of examining the metaphysical relationship between the cosmic and conscious energy and come up with a new view that would address the gap and overcome the shortcomings the perspectives thus far reviewed suffer from. Accordingly this study unearthed that we are not separate, helpless, hopeless, powerless, disconnected, beings that live and lead their lives in fear of the incalculable threat of extinction from the untold vastness of cosmic energy. Far from this, we are connected with the rest of the cosmic energy in the plenum dubbed matrix of resonance.

Keywords: matrix of resonance, metaphysical energy, metaphysical trove of energy, space-and-time-defying instantaneity, ubiquitous instantiate

It is true that various metaphysical works, in the history of philosophy, grappled directly or opaquely with energy. In their attempts to approach, handle and tackle the very issue they left behind a theoretical picture about energy in such a way that they conceptualised the problem in terms of the relation between the cosmic energy and the human version of energy which I termed for the purpose of this study as conscious energy. Put otherwise, in these works the cosmic energy in its untold vastness stands in total belligerence and diametric contradistinction to the conscious energy. So negative is the relation between the two flips of energy by their light that the only way to describe the very relation comes in the form of a row, a never ceasing belligerence. The very description drew a picture wherein humanity is but seen to stand aloof, discreet, hopeless and helpless, in the face of the stupendous, inanimate, and inordinate vastness of cosmic energy. According to Schopenhauer, our relation, the conscious energy's relation to the stygian magnitude of the cosmic energy is likened to the relation between a herd of frolicking lambs in the field and before the eyes of a relentless butcher who is but keeping a cool head while choosing one lamb after another for his cold and sharp knife. Seen from Schopenhauer's light, humans' relation to the cosmic energy, is likened to that of lambs pleasing themselves before a butcher who sees in them nothing save a fat material for his butchery.

> **"We are like lambs in a field, disporting ourselves under the eye of the butcher, who picks out the first one and then another for his prey. So it is that in our good days we are all unconscious of the evil fate that may presently have in store for us — sickness, poverty, mutilation, loss of sight or reason"**
> [Schopenhauer 2014:3]

Put succinctly, the relation between the conscious and cosmic flips of energy is seen in ways and manners that are best captured by an Ethiopian adage which has it to say: *berae karaju yiwulal*, which, roughly translated, would mean in Amharic, an ox befriends its nemesis. It follows that, for Schopenhauer, the conscious energy is posited to live with its nemesis, viz., the cosmic energy. What could therefore be expected of a relation which is an instance of a conjoining between a whirlpool and a handful of flour? The answer is quite obvious. For Schopenhauer, in a relation where we the conscious energy are posited vis a vis the incomprehensibly massive magnitude of the cosmic energy, what we should do at best is go indifferent about it. Schopenhauer used the term 'resignation' to describe the solution we should come up with, in the relation between the conscious and cosmic flips of energy.

Nietzsche went hand in hand with Schopenhauer in the understanding that this is a world of total suffering, misery and atrocity of inestimable magnitude visited upon the conscious flips of energy by the stygian vastness of the inordinate ordnance of destruction the cosmic energy poses and sprees upon us. Nietzsche went his own different way, parting company with Schopenhauer, in the solution he suggested as a way out of the very situation under discussion. His is a solution which is a total anathema to resignation. Far from it, Nietzsche made a bold suggestion with strong commitment to make the best of this world. Making the best of this world, as a goal, sounds positive and appeals rather irresistible, at first glance though.Taking a closer examination , one would realise that Nietzsche's creed of 'living this life to the fullest' could only come at the detriment of one group of conscious energy by another group of conscious energy. Stated otherwise, the solution he offered is more problematic than the problem itself. In the name of a creed which holds that living life to the fullest, Nietzsche puts his racist incensed, and violence besmirched claim to consistently and perpetually eliminate the poor by the rich, the less fortunate by the more fortunate, the haves by the have - nots etc. To this end he intended to clear the ground by doing away with the existing values and belief systems, so that he can do whatever he feels like doing without being impeded in the least by the do-this and do-that-not precepts of the said value and belief systems. Once the ground is paved in this way, once the battleground is delineated unequivocally, once the battle lines are drawn clearly,

the stage is more than ready for the war to be waged not against the cosmic energy but against the helpless, the botched and wretched he referred to as the 'animal herd' by an *Ubermenchen*, a superhero from the ranks of the Hyperboreans. "*The weak and the botched shall perish: first principle of our charity. And one should help them with it. What is more harmful than any vice?--Practical sympathy for the botched and the weak...*" [Nietzsche 2002:13]

In fine, the relation between the cosmic and the conscious energies received a new but a self contradictory treatment in such a way that what is supposed to be a solution scouring philosophical effort turned out to be a self defeating thrust. So in effect, in view of coming up with a way out of the problem under discussion and as we glide from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche, we moved from resignation to self-contradiction. The self contradiction incurred where this issue is concerned struck a new notch as we go a couple millennia back and deal with the position of the Stoics. The stoics were noted, among other things, for their commitment to prepare and build the human mind which would be imperturbable in the face of adversity, a calamity the stygian cosmic energy might visit upon it.

The highly cherished commitment of the Stoics in offering all they could to make the mind teeming with fortitude gets its saturated expression in the life and turf of the once a slave and later freed Philosopher, the Stoic Epictetus. Of the exemplary exploits and epic deeds of Epictetus, William Ebenstein writes as follows:

"Epictetus was of poor life and became lame early in life. His master, a freedman at Nero's court, once twisted Epictetus' leg. Epictetus serenely smiled: 'You will break it.' His master continued and when the leg was broken, Epictetus merely said: 'I told you so.' This anecdote vividly reflects one of the qualities that popular imagination has come to regard as particularly characteristic of Stoicism: fortitude of the mind under all circumstances, the triumph of mind and will over matter and pain" [Ebenstein 1965: 1380]

However, the Stoics who equipped themselves with the fortitude of the mind very much after the legacy lived by Epictetus, found themselves at the end of the day giving up on life and upon everything it represents. Put otherwise, as imperturbable as the Stoics were in the face of whatever the incalculable vastness of the cosmic energy might come against them, they lost all hope and succumbed to suicide. Judging by the resolve they have taken to live in quiet harmony and dignity with the cosmic energy, no one would expect the Stoics to throw in the towel in the middle of the way. Sellars puts succinctly this self-defeating façade of the Stoics' position as he writes:

"In some circumstances, suicide may be the only rational action. Roman Stoics in particular became famed for their adherence to this doctrine, the most famous of all being Cato. Seneca's acceptance of his imposed suicide, forced upon him by Nero, has been cited as another example, echoing the choice made by Socrates. But a number of the early Stoics are also reported to have taken their own lives, including Zeno, and Cleanthes" [Sellars 2010:108]

So, with the Stoics the relation between the cosmic and the conscious flips of energy such that humans had no choice but to give in, in incurable despair and despondency, to an early death. A school that conferred upon itself the onus of being an ultimate champion in the bout between the cosmic and the conscious flips of energy, as if to take us all by surprise, gave it up and threw the towel in the middle of the game. It is a position which is far more disconcerting and hope draining than the ones taken by the likes of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. In fact the stoics were not alone in this. A couple millennia later, their position was highly elaborated and enshrined by some existentialists of the twentieth century. In the face of a force so vast and a misery so widespread and ubiquitous as the cosmic energy, by Albert Camus's light, the French writer and existentialist, all the conscious energy has got to resort to is capitulation. He is of the stance that man's search for meaning and significance in this world would never ever be answered. Accordingly the only way out from a world that has no reply to human endeavor and quest for meaning and significance, a world he termed as absurd, is suicide, [Camus 1942].

A number of questions suggest themselves at this juncture: Why is it that the various metaphysical positions taken as regards the relationship between the cosmic and conscious flips of energy just tip between despair and pessimism, hopelessness and suicide? Why should humans in their relation with the cosmic energy be treated either as having nothing whatsoever to do with it except a lost battle of hope such that all they have to resort to is to turn away from it in total withdrawal which borders on hopelessness and helplessness? Why is the conscious energy's relation to the cosmic energy, considered to be something that drains human's hope to the point of seeing nothing as a solution to go for but suicide?

Philosophical answers to these and other related questions are what this research is meant to come up with. Pursuant to which, the first response one can come up in light of these questions is the one that has it to say: the hope draining, helpless and exceedingly despairing philosophical positions taken towards the relations between the cosmic and conscious flips of energy stem from the way the very problem was framed. To phrase it differently, the negative sounding conclusions reached akin to the issue of the relation between the cosmic and the conscious facades of energy emanate from the faulty way the very issue was conceptualised. That is to say, trying to philosophise on the ways and manners in which the two flips of energy stand vis a vis one another as if they were mutually exclusive is wrong. If one starts by positing the conscious energy in total contradistinction to the cosmic energy, the conclusion one can possibly arrive at will definitely fall in the province of hopelessness, despair, helplessness and suicide. When the right way is to see the conscious energy as the very part and parcel of the cosmic energy, to posit one in a diametric opposition to the other will lead one to conclusions that are bleak and misery laden at best, and pessimistic and nihilistic otherwise. Taking the conscious energy aloof from the cosmic energy and pitting it against the latter will point from the very beginning to a showdown in which the former will be crushed, or will be hurtled into a state of misery, agony, fear, insecurity, in the least. In all the schools so far reviewed, the relation between the conscious façade of energy as represented by the activities of humans and the cosmic energy is presented as the war between two un-equals. The picture one can get from these wrong philosophical positions is one of a mismatch between the cosmic giant and the human dwarf. In as long as such way of pitting the conscious energy vis a vis the cosmic energy continues, there is no other conclusion to be arrived at than the one which exudes pessimism and its multiples, nihilism and its aftermaths. It is just like putting a cell underneath the foot of an elephant, to say the least. The result will obviously be total annihilation of the cell. Nonetheless, if one thinks of the cell being positioned somewhere inside the system of the elephant, upon its millions and millions of connections with other cells it defines the very existence and function of the elephant. The same holds good for the relation between the conscious and the cosmic facades of energy.

Thus we need to have a new metaphysical perspective, the metaphysics of energy, where the conscious energy is seen and treated as part of the cosmic energy; or what is the same thing to say, as a manifestation of the cosmic energy. What David Bohm, a quantum physicist, writes further cements my argument:

"One is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existing parts…We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent 'elementary parts' of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather we say that inseparable quantum interconnectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independently behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within the whole" [Bohm & Hiley 1975: 96]

The schools that subscribe to such conclusion as helplessness, suicide and pessimism in their treatment of the relation between the cosmic and the conscious facades of energy had no choice but to succumb to the very conclusion, because they all share at least one metaphy-

sical chink in their philosophical armors. And that chink is, they all, in their metaphysical stances, assumed the conscious energy, as represented by the multifaceted activities of human beings, to be a bystander of whatever is going on in nature. Bystanders have nothing to do with what goes on but watch it passively, even if it goes against their very existence. And when that which goes on is too huge to surmise, too callous and impersonal to entreat with, all that is left for humans is to part company with their hope in life and confidence in themselves. Thus their inevitable way out, turns out to be suicide, as the Stoics and existentialists are known to allude to. At best the role of the bystanders is to discover the laws by which the world external to them operates. This has been, so it seems, the fate of humanity since the times of Newton and Rene Descartes.

Following the Cartesian split of reality into two mutually exclusive substances, the substance which thinks *res cogitans* and the substance which extends *res extensa* [Descartes 1969] humans are not only separated from and stand aloof to the material world, they as well stand separated from their own body and the rest of the world. A human being stands apart not only in reference to the rest of the world but also to itself. Humankind has thus become alien to himself, standing as an outsider to himself/herself where one's body is no longer considered as an essential part of oneself. So humanity stands in total aloof to itself, to say nothing of the rest of the world. "*I am not more than a thing which thinks, that is to say a mind or a soul or an understanding or a reason… I am, however, a real thing and really exist; but what thing? I have answered: a thing which thinks.*" [Descartes 1969: 173]. With this philosophical basis the chasm separating a human being in terms of two mutually diametric substances has led humans to consider themselves as strangers, standing in total disconnection to their bodies. What Palmer writes in this regard covers it succinctly:

> **"The self is defined as mind or soul and the body is not an essential part of the self. … Descartes' argument… leads to this strange conclusion (strange because most of us have always assumed that our bodies are rather essential aspects of ourselves and not baggage we take along with us when we go out) …"** [Palmer 1996: 62]

Little wonder that, in the reviewed relevant literature on the relation between the conscious and the cosmic flips of energy, the two facades of energy are placed in utter disconcertion and hence in total contradistinction that the nature of their relation borders always on bilateral enmity or destruction, when humans are no longer seen to stand as an undivided organic being, organic whole, but rather as beings that are, even at an individual level, irreversibly disconnected, separate, independent, unrelated and mutually exclusive two halves. Thus, if humans are posited to stand in total stance of a stranger to oneself, it is just a corner away from standing in outright nemesis to the cosmic energy. As is clear from the foregoing, the division that makes a human being relate its body and mind in terms only of mutual exclusivity will as well be forced to find that the chasm won't stand there. It ramifies itself into every sphere of human activity. And that way, humans see and relate themselves, as is the case in most of the reviewed literature, either as beings that can only have a defective relation with the cosmic energy at best and thus realizing that they have no say whatsoever in this world which stands outside them, so the best they can do is to turn away from it in total resignation or to give up on themselves, on life and on everything and commit suicide. Capra puts this situation in a manner that could further ossify my argument.

> **"Descartes' famous sentence 'Cogito ergo sum' – 'I think therefore I exist'- has led Westerners to equate their identity with their mind, instead of with their whole organism. As a consequence of the Cartesian division, most individuals are aware of themselves as isolated egos existing 'inside' their bodies. The mind has been separated from the body and given the futile task of controlling it, thus causing an apparent conflict between the conscious will and the involuntary instincts. Each individual has been split up further into a large number of separate compartments, according to his or her activities, talents, feelings, beliefs, etc., which are engaged in endless conflicts generating continuous metaphysical confusion and frustration"** [Capra 2000: 23]

The impact of this metaphysical cleavage visited upon mankind is so profound that it leaves its indelible marks particularly on classical physics. Thanks to the Cartesian chasm created between mind and body on foundations of mutual exclusivity, Newton grabbed the situation with huge appetite and saw that everything in the physical world is but an assemblage of various compartments. Thus he conferred onto himself the onus of discovering the laws that govern this huge assemblage of unrelated, separate, independent things or compartments. Thus came into play the mechanics of Isaac Newton which saw that Descartes' huge Machine was very much in need of a mechanical explanation. And his mechanics came up with the laws that can explain it with precision. There followed a new era which put humanity at the watching post, outside that which is being watched, at an observer's post separated from that which is being observed. In effect Newtonian physics, its explanatory and predictive successes notwithstanding, placed mankind in a helpless status where the only thing humanity can accomplish is watching itself totally separated from the rest of the world, separated from itself, and separated itself from what it is doing, viz., observing and measuring. Mankind being set aloof from the universe except as an isolated observer standing external to what she or he is supposed to observe, the feeling of being powerless, helpless, hopeless, meaningless, etc, is something that is not uncommon.

> **"The Cartesian division allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and completely separate from themselves and to see the material world as a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine. Such a mechanistic world view was held by Isaac Newton who constructed his mechanics on its basis and made it the foundation of classical physics"** [Capra 2000: 22]

The combined impact of Cartesian philosophy and Newtonian mechanics upon the Western way of thinking was wider in its application and deeper in its grip that it resulted in depriving humanity of its essential and necessary connection first with itself and then with the rest of the world. On a successive basis, humanity has been alienated from the central role it has been given by different modes of thought and world views other than science and philosophy. In the name of science and philosophy humanity has been marginalised on a non-stop basis from the central role it used to play and the centre stage it used to hold, in the eyes and world views of non-western systems of thought. The net effect of which is that humanity is suffering the natural and philosophical version of the economic alienation Marx saw being visited upon the proletariat in the capitalist system. By Marx's light, workers become alienated from the objects they produce, from themselves, from their human nature and from their fellow workers, [Marx 1964].

Likewise, for humanity that posits itself generally against the cosmic energy under the guise of studying, measuring, philosophizing about the latter, its fate is one of alienating first itself from itself as body and mind and then itself from the cosmic energy that stands in outright contradistinction to it, and then alienating itself from its nature, at least part of its nature, namely depriving itself of all the host of choices humankind is capable of making and sticking only to despair and suicide. Last but by no stretch of imagination the least is alienating itself from its fellow humankinds and setting itself out on a shameful, criminal, racist, nihilistic mission whose motto is 'the perpetual elimination of the weak by the strong, the have-nots by the industrious, the poor by the rich, [Nietzsche 2002]. Almost in all notable philosophical and scientific endeavours, the successful way in which humankind has been incessantly pushed away from having any meaningful role other than that of a mere bystander and a passive observer is clearly shown by Palmer as he writes in concert with the issue under discussion:

> **"For a thousand years, the concept of human dignity was closely bound to the idea that God had created the Garden of Eden in the very centre of the universe and that the rest of the cosmos was formed as a series of concentric circles radiating out of Eden, the belly-button of reality. This meant that the human drama was the key drama in the cosmos and that every other being in the universe was simply placed here as a witness to the human drama. This had the effect of imbuing every human act with meaning. Even if one's life was filled with misery…at least that misery had significance; hence there was a certain dignity in even the most miserable human existence"** [Palmer 1996: 51]

In resonance with this line of discussion one can see that the progress of philosophical and scientific theories over the last three hundred or so years has resulted in effectively taking away humans' dignified position within the cosmos and replacing it with an abysmal sense of despair and despondency. "*Freud once said that human dignity has suffered three mortal blows. First Copernicus's discovery that the human is not at the centre of the universe; second, Darwin's discovery that the human is an animal; and third, Freud's discovery that the animal is sick,*" [Palmer 1996: 52].

Modern philosophy and classical science portrayed humanity even-

tually but surely as an impotent observer who has nothing to do in the face of the untold vastness of the cosmic energy. A number of questions suggest themselves at this juncture: How far must we continue listening to modern philosophy and classical science when all they tell us is that we are nothing more than an alienated, sickened and impotent bystanders of the unfeeling, colossal and mechanistic universe? Are we not far better than that? Are we not, at a deeper level connected with cosmic energy? Are philosophy and science not disowning our active role in the universe and flinging to us a role of a disowned, disengaged, helpless bystander and a hopeless observer?

The answer to all these and other related questions has to do with a positive, resonating, well related, actively vibing perspective vis a vis the relation between the conscious and the cosmic flips of energy. Put otherwise, the whole metaphysical position so far taken in the row between the conscious and the cosmic flips of energy has to change in such a way that humanity shall assume its creative, active central and constructive role in the cosmic setting. Hence the need for the new metaphysics of energy wherein the conscious energy resonates with the cosmic energy in a creative, effective and constructive way. Seen from this angle, and viewed from this new perspective, the conscious energy bids goodbye and good riddance to the impotent role that has been grafted onto it by the combined hands of modern philosophy and classical physics. With the new metaphysics of energy I hereinafter dub as the matrix of resonance the role of humanity, or what I interchangeably refer to as the conscious energy, is one of being active and its relation is also one of resonating, of equally being affected and affecting, of changing and being changed, of actively and engagingly responding and being responded to. It follows that the conscious energy is not out there only to respond helplessly to the callous machinations of the cosmic energy. On the contrary it is very much in there, in the very hub of inherently interlaced plenum of energy making and being equally made by the matrix of resonances.

The advent of quantum physics, above all else, comes up with ground shaking discoveries that support the position I take and the arguments I make as regards the matrix of resonance. The task of measuring the velocity of an event in space cannot be accomplished without affecting the position of the very event and vice versa [Hawking 2011]. The same holds good for activities of the conscious energy as regards the particles of the subatomic world. Since particles being part and parcel of the cosmic energy are defined as well as high energies or to use Einstein's parlance they (Particles) are energies themselves, and when the conscious energy is engaged in the task of measuring them, we can safely conclude that the conscious energy is changing an aspect of the cosmic energy and partakes actively in the making and breaking of the cosmic energy, instead of being a helpless bystander, and a hopeless observer of the cosmic drama. This being the case, even at the subatomic level, reality is to be seen as a matrix of interconnections wherein the conscious energy marks its prints indelibly with every endeavour humans make to measure, say the momentum of a particle. In effect in the matrix of resonance, the governing rule is not one of being out there and receive with passivity whatever is hurtled at you, on the contrary the rule of the game is to be in there in the very thick of things and resonate with every act from every other element or component of the cosmic hub. "*The new physics tells us that an observer can't observe without altering what he sees. Observer and observed are interrelated in a real and fundamental sense*" [Zukav 2001:102].

In the matrix of resonance, therefore, the conscious energy is to be regarded as an active participant of whatever is coming off nearby or in relation to it where the cosmic energy is concerned. The gist of my argument is that, humanity as conscious energy is to be seen and understood not only as an active participant in a matrix of resonance with the cosmic energy, but also as a resonating factor that creates with its conscious activities reality itself, the matrix of resonance itself, in a manner of speaking. In perfect resonance with this line of argument Zukav writes:

"Philosophically, however, the implications of quantum mechanics are psychedelic. Not only do we influence our reality, but, to some degree, we actually create it. Because it is the nature of things that we can know either the momentum of a particle or its position, but not both, we must choose which of these two properties we want to determine. Metaphysically, this is very close to saying that we create certain properties because we choose to measure those properties"
[Zukav 2001: 30]

It is a case where a total reversal of the status quo is of essence as far as the relation between the conscious and the cosmic flips of energy is concerned. Put otherwise, we have

come a long way where the conscious energy is correctly viewed both in its position and role vis a vis the cosmic energy. Accordingly, the salient feature that defines the quintessential of the cosmic energy is no longer an impotent bystander, or a helpless and passive observer. In a diametrically opposite plane, the defining qualities of the cosmic energy in its relation with the cosmic energy are those of resonance wherein participation stands most dominant. A quantum physicist of note, Princeton University, John Wheeler, writes to this effect:

"May the universe in some strange sense be brought into being by the participation of those who participate? The vital act is the act of participation. "Participation" is the incontrovertible new concept given by quantum mechanics. It strikes down the term "observer" of classical theory, the man who stands safely behind the thick glass wall and watches what goes on without taking part. It can't be done in a quantum mechanics way"
[Wheeler J.A. et al 2000: 1273]

In a matrix of resonance the one attribute that reverberates through every page of reality is that of nonlocality. To state it in different terms, in a metaphysics of energy the conscious and the cosmic flips of energy are to be seen no longer as archrivals where the latter appears to be a total nemesis of the former, and the former is viewed as a lamb disporting itself before the eyes of a butcher [Schopenhauer 1887] who takes its cynical time to choose one after another for its prey. On the contrary, in a matrix of resonance as a plenum of all resonances where every part and parcel of reality is a participant in it and no longer a mere recipient of whatever the cosmic façade of energy hurls at it, the other principle that holds good is a ubiquitous instantiate. That is to say, reality at its most fundamental is not only inherently related but also instantaneously connected in a manner that defies space and time. It is not something that the law of touch and move, act and react, shove and stumble, in a word something that Newtonian physics can explain. It is of such a nature that nothing of the knowledge, the whole host of experience, the concepts and the entire forest of language we have for so long dwelt in comfortably can explain. In chime with this line of argument, one of the founding fathers of quantum physics writes:

"The mathematically formulated laws of quantum theory show clearly that our ordinary intuitive concepts cannot be unambiguously applied to the smallest particles. All the words or concepts we use to describe ordinary physical objects, such as position, velocity, colour, size, and so on, become indefinite and problematic if we try to use them of elementary particles"
[Heisenberg 1974: 114]

It is rather something that can only be explained essentially by the principle of non-locality, among other salient qualities of it. Accordingly an event can be in many places without being amid them. Stated otherwise, an event can be here and there without being in between. In a trove of energy which is the same thing to say in a hub of energy where reality at its most fundamental resonates with itself, every element of reality is in ubiquitous relation and presence with other elements of reality. The elements or the events in reality are connected not in a unilineal way as defined and explained by classical physics and other related sciences and modern philosophy. Far from it, they are connected beyond space and time in a web of energy. David Bohm puts matters pertaining to non-locality succinctly in what follows:

"Parts are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationships depend, in an irreducible way, on the state of the whole system (and indeed on that of the broader systems in which they are contained, extending ultimately and in principle to the entire universe). Thus one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existent parts"
[Bhom D. and Hailey B. 1975: 123]

To wind it up, the non-analyzability of the world into discrete and unconnected bricks from which it is assumed by classical physics and Democritus' metaphysics to be fashioned would insinuate at a number of groundbreaking metaphysical implications. The fact that an event can be here and there without being in between is the rule of the game in a matrix of resonance. But then this governing rule of the metaphysics of energy is possible providing the resonance is predicated on the undivided wholeness of reality. Unless reality is basically connected and essentially an undivided whole of intricate web of relations, immediate and ubiquitous resonances among its parts is unthinkable. This being the case, it follows that reality is at its most basic irreducibly undivided system. And from undivided whole stems relations of

instantiate resonances that define why reality is a matrix of resonance that defies space and time. In such a world one doesn't have to feel standing alone, desolate, hopeless and helpless facing one's alleged nemesis in the form of a vast untold empire of unfeeling destructive and misery-laden cosmic energy. David Bohm's point would certainly ossify my argument as he states, "*We say that inseparable quantum interconnectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality and that relatively independently behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole*" [Bohm, D. and Hailey, B. 1975: 96]. This indeed holds good for the best part of quantum theory as it does for the Eastern world view in which neither the universe is considered as an assortment of independently existing separate physical objects nor humans are seen at best as an impotent bystanders observing it from outside. Capra a quantum physicist of our time, writes to this effect, "*The most important characteristic of the Eastern world view is the awareness of the unity and mutual interrelation of all things and events; the experience of all phenomena in the world as manifestations of a basic oneness*" [Capra 2000: 130].

On their firm stance that reality cannot be understood in the ways, manners, methods and dints prescribed by classical physics and modern philosophy, the Eastern mystics share the same metaphysical position with that of quantum physicists. Reality, which is described in quantum theory as an interconnected cosmic web, appears to be grasped directly and intuitively, goes by such different names as Brahman in Hinduism, *Dharmakaya* in Buddhism, *Tao* in Taoism, [Capra 2000, Chuang 1971, Zukav 2001]. And in the metaphysics of energy which stands centre stage in this research this same undivided whole of interconnectedness goes by the name ***matrix of resonance***. Pursuant to this metaphysical position, every metaphysical endeavour shouldn't begin with bits and pieces which have been enshrined in Newtonian and Democritus' traditions and views as building blocks of reality. On the contrary, metaphysical probing should begin from the undivided web of ubiquitous instantiate and work outwards in such a way that it can explain the apparently different parts and parcels, objects, processes and phenomena as the multifaceted versions and contingent manifestations of the matrix of resonance.

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Ethics and Morals in Indigenous African Context: Implications for Contemporary African Societies

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of ethics in promoting a desirable traditional African society, and its implications for contemporary African states. It considers why the current era, including individuals, the public and private sectors are largely unethical, and why there is widespread lack of consideration for the interest of all members of society. A major reason given by a number of philosophers for this turn of events is that African humanism has become obsolete in the contemporary era. The paper argues that only a recourse to a virtuous life can repair the extent of degeneration in the world.

Keywords: Ethics; morals; humanism; African identity; cultures; traditions; sympathetic impartiality; revivalism; ethic of becoming.

Introduction

The concepts of ethics and morality are not exactly the same. However, they are interlinked. Therefore, they will be used interchangeably in this paper and will approximately be taken to refer to the same thing. Traditional African societies consider ethics as a measure of right and wrong and as relating to goodness of character. Goodness of character proceeds from the individual's development of virtues such as mutual respect, honesty, kindness, compassion and justice.

A number of early westerners to the African continent denied the existence of ethics and morality in traditional African societies, probably as a result of their ignorance of African cultures and traditions. However, some of them eventually realised the existence of well constituted standards of morality, a contravention of which attracted severe punishment [Udokang, 2014: 266; Ekeopara & Ogbonnaya, 2014: 34]. According to African philosophers, there are well defined systems of morality which play a significant role in regulating the lives of community members. However, the source of traditional African ethics has been contested by various theorists. While some philosophers consider religion as the source of African morality, others such as Wiredu and Gyekye claim that society and rational thinking, and not religion, shape the morality of individuals. They argue that African morality results from occasions when people take into consideration the impact of their thoughts, words and actions on others, and not as a result of metaphysical intervention [Udokang, 2014: 268; Anderson, 2013: 165-166; Kazeem, 2011: 265-271].

The system of ethics and morals in indigenous African context largely differs from what obtains in the contemporary era, where almost every facet of life seems to be characterised by moral laxity, including rivalry, contestations, selfishness, individualism and secularism. As a result, a number of theorists, such as Matolino and Kwindingwi assume a defeatist attitude towards the myriad of ethical challenges that plague the current era. They call for the end of Ubuntu (African humanism), claiming that as an ethical framework, it does not possess the context and the capacity to represent an ethical inspiration or moral code in the contemporary era. Although the extent of immorality in Africa is disconcerting, this paper will argue that a recourse to a life of morals and values is the best means of rectifying everything that has gone wrong in the world at large, and in Africa in particular.

Interrogating Ethics and Morality in Traditional African Societies

Ethics in the traditional African context relates to the norms, values, principles and moral standards that regulate the behaviour of community members [Udokang, 2014: 267]. It provides the measures of right and wrong conduct for individuals and the society at large. The traditional African society considers ethics and morality as relating to goodness of character. An individual is considered good if he refrains from bad actions and thoughts such as stealing, adultery and cruelty to others. Goodness of character also entails the cultivation of virtues such as respect, kindness, compassion, justice and obedience to constituted authority [Ekeopara & Ogbonnaya, 2014: 37]. Gyekye [in Anderson, 2013: 164] considers morality as constituted by social rules and standards aimed at regulating the behaviours of community members. These social rules and norms, according to him, result from what the people consider as constituting good and bad character, right and wrong. He considers morality as social in nature, and emanating from individuals' sense of duty to promote and realise cooperative and harmonious coexistence. Bujo [in Dolamo, 2014: 3-4] considers the humanity with which individuals relate to each other as the bedrock of morality. He opines that African ethics neither conceives the individual as ontological act nor as self-realisation. Rather, it conceives the person as a process of coming into being in the reciprocal relatedness of society and the person. Therefore, human beings cannot be ethical or moral if they fail to relate well with other community members.

A number of philosophers posit that African ethics does not proceed from religion. However, another school of thought claims that ethics in traditional African society cannot be separated from traditional African religion, because most moral precepts have a religious or metaphysical undertone, while African ethics hinges on reference to God. For the latter group, African morality relates to the kinds of behaviour that enables humans to avert the wrath of the deities, to be upright and blameless, and to attract blessings and favours from God [Ekeopara & Ogbonnaya, 2014: 37-38]. An enquiry into the moral language of most traditional and even contemporary African people and cultures, including the Akan people of Ghana, the Yoruba and Ibo people of Nigeria, and the Sotho and Shona people of Southern Africa reveals that ethics and morality are expressed and understood in terms of the character of community members, their connection to the common good, and the ethics of duty. The ethics of traditional and contemporary African societies is

> **"embedded in the ideas and beliefs about what is right or wrong, what is a good or bad character; it is also entrenched in the conceptions of satisfactory social relations and attitudes held by the members of the society; it is implanted furthermore, in the forms or patterns of behaviour that are considered by the members of the society to bring about social harmony and cooperative living, justice, and fairness"**
> [Obasola, 2014: 120]

A number of African philosophers posit that a clearly outlined and well-ordered system of ethics and morality can be found in traditional and contemporary African societies. Prior to the advent of colonialism and missionaries in Africa, the lives of community members were regulated by a properly outlined system of African moral codes and ethical principles. Precolonial African societies possess a deep sense of wrong and right, and this has given rise to traditions, taboos, rules, laws and customs which are observable in each society [Udokang, 2014: 267].

The prevalence of ethics and morals in traditional African societies is disputed by early westerners to the African continent. They contend that ethics and morality was non-existent in precolonial Africa. They further assert that the idea of morality in Africa is the creation of Christian missionaries and Europeans [Udokang, 2014: 266]. These skeptics did not consider any of the indigenous African practices and belief systems adequate [Dolamo, 2014: 6]; and they "*ignored and even denigrated indigenous African cultures for hundreds of years*" [Bell and Metz, 2012: 81]. Many of them disputed the existence of religion in traditional African society. Emil Ludwig [in Ekeopara & Ogbonnaya, 2014: 34] and his counterparts argued that traditional Africans lacked any knowledge of God because they were considered inferior, unable to display any cognitive capacity and as a result, could not conceptualise the ideas of God. Many like-minded westerners concluded, therefore, that there was no foundation for morality in precolonial African

societies. These wrong observations of ethics, morality and religion by the early westerners were used to justify their negative perceptions of the moral and psychological characters of traditional Africans, whom they considered as crude and ignorant of the differences between right and wrong [Udokang, 2014: 266]. They termed Africa a dark continent; and traditional Africans as lost souls, primitive, uncivilised, irrational, pagans and backward. As a result, they set out to correct all their observations by any means they considered necessary. Their approach resulted in the destruction of substantial aspects of African tradition, social life, and family values, which were structured on moral, religious and communal basis [Dolamo, 2014: 6].

Contrary to initial pronouncements that the word morality had no significance in the vocabulary of pre-colonial Africans such as the Ibos in Nigeria, some of the early westerners, such as Basden eventually realised that there are theoretically well defined standards of morality among the Ibo communities [Udokang, 2014: 266], a contravention of which attracted severe punishment. He gave instances where unfaithful wives and their accomplices were punished by torture or killed [Ekeopara & Ogbonnaya, 2014: 34]. By noting that transgressors were punished signifies the practical nature of the traditional Africans', and specifically, the Igbo moral code. Perhaps the early westerners held their early negative views as a result of their prejudice and ignorance of the cultures and traditions of the traditional African societies [Ekeopara & Ogbonnaya, 2014: 34].

The cultures of traditional African societies were subsumed in different customs and beliefs. Every member of society was expected to adhere to them in order to prevent curses that could befall them for contravening laid down precepts. The moral precepts of these societies discouraged all forms of unethical conduct, including theft and adultery. They also forbade community members from causing harm or injuries to others, including foreigners, unless the person is guilty of immoral conduct [Idang, 2015: 104]. Mbiti [in Udokang, 2014: 104] posits that a breach of the moral precepts of each society was considered bad, wrong or evil for distorting communally accepted peace and social order. Perpetrators were punished accordingly or even ostracised. In cases where suspects deny the charges levelled against them, custom demands that they prove their innocence by either taking an oath or taken to a soothsayer for spiritual divination. Such deterrents played a significant role in maintaining a crime free community as no one would want to be subjected to public ridicule [Idang, 2015: 104].

The system of ethics and morals of each community was preserved in their customs and traditions, and therefore in tandem with the overall metaphysics and worldview of the people. Each pre-colonial African society maintained its solidarity and social order through the laws, taboos, customs and prescribed forms of behaviour which became their moral code. Temples [in Udokang, 2014: 267] notes that the social dimensions of morality were well-known to Africans in such a manner that any serious contravention of the moral code had severe social implications. All evil acts were considered anti-social in nature and as a result, had ramifications for the society at large. African theorists, such as Kalu and Nwosu concur with Tempels' observations, in their claim that the willingness of community members to be guided by the dominant norms and values played significant roles in ensuring peace and stability, in promoting the welfare of community members and in enhancing the correct functioning of society. A violation of ethical norms and standards was also considered a violation of the cosmic order, and this would require individual or communal atonement through appropriate rituals and good deeds. In the Igbo ethics, for instance, the Igbo people enforced conformity to their traditions through their customs.

Many traditional African societies, including the Igbos believe in a metaphysical or religious conception of morality. For these societies, morality relates to having a close relationship with the ontological order of the world. A violation of this order is equated with a violation of the order of the universe and results in a physical disorder through which the fault is revealed. There was no clear distinction between moral and religious laws in traditional African societies. Moral and religious values were the same. The society rejected what religion forbade, and sanctioned what religion approved. The Yoruba tribes of Nigeria do not distinguish between moral and religious values, since doing so would lead to negative consequences. In essence, traditional African societies conceive the universe as held together by a worldview that binds ethics and religion together in a manner that conceives morality as based on the commandment of the deity. Anyone that contravened the moral codes is, as a result punished by the Supreme Being, the deities and ancestral spirits [Udokang, 2014: 268].

A number of philosophers reject the notion of religion as the source of morality. According to Anderson [2013: 165-166], Gyekye and Wiredu are some of the prominent scholars who deny the role of religion in moral development. Rather, they argue that the morality of a group or community is determined by society and the traditions of the people. While Gyekye agrees that religion plays a crucial role in the development of the moral life of the Akan people of Ghana, he posits that society and not religion shapes morality. He contends that in the system of morality of traditional Africans generally, and the Akans in particular, the consequences of human actions on the society and people determine their morality. By this Gyekye means that African morality does not proceed from divine pronouncements, but from taking into account the interests and welfare of human beings. He further posits that actions are good when they promote the interest and welfare of the people, while the actions that do not consider the interest and welfare of others are bad.

Wiredu neither considers religion or God as the source of morality, nor morality as dependent on divine instruction and revelation. He posits that religion was not the source of morality for the Akan people of Ghana [Udokang, 2014: 268]. He argues that although human beings may act ethically in order to avert punishment from the deities, this does not confer on them a sense of moral obligation. For instance, he claims that a robber may refuse to commit an offence for fear of arrest; but he would not have thought of committing the crime in the first place if he had any sense of morality [Anderson, 2013: 166[. Wiredu [in Udokang, 2014: 268] considers rational thinking on what is best for human welfare as the basis of morality. For Wiredu, the Akan people did not consider doing good as dependent on God's directive since they did not have a belief in a revealed religion. They never had a set of moral precepts that they considered as proceeding from God to the human race. Consequently, the Akan people did not have any inclination of a religious or revealed morality. Wiredu's treatise in this regard amounts to saying that

> **"African ethics is humanised. It is essentially interpersonal and social, with a basis in human welfare and well-being. This is why the African man is essentially his brother's keeper and is ultimately concerned about his welfare. Community of life or communalism ranked over and above individualism; hence the stress on communal solidarity. The African man's concern for the well-being of his brother and neighbour is at the heart of traditional ethics and morality"** [Udokang, 2014: 268]

For Wiredu [in Kazeem, 2011: 265], morality is the motivated quest for sympathetic impartiality. In other words, human behaviour and conduct should always show consideration for the interests of other people. A person is said to have shown due concern for the interest of others when in the process of thinking about the consequences of his actions on other peoples' interests, he hypothetically puts himself in their shoes. For Wiredu, the principle of sympathetic impartiality is a human universal that is applicable to the moral conduct of all non-brutish human races. In other words, he claims that sympathetic impartiality has a universal appeal since all societies that prefer nonviolence would subscribe to it. Oruka [in Kazeem, 2011: 271] disagrees with Wiredu's moral notion of sympathetic impartiality, claiming that sympathetic impartiality may not be necessary because Rawls' principle of rational egoism, which entails calculating impartiality, is a sufficient conceptualisation of morality. Rather, he claims that human beings lack sympathetic impartiality in Rawls' state of nature, while they also fail to acquire it in a civil state, because if they did, there would be less need for prisons, class wars and the police force. Although human beings remain self-centred, they are still rational; and that is why society has not completely degenerated into chaos.

Kazeem [2011: 272] believes that contrary to Wiredu's position, morality is not necessarily universal in all communities and is not solely based on the principle of sympathetic impartiality. Rather morality may also result from Rawls' principle of calculating impartiality. In Rawls's theory of justice [Jacobs, 2014: 547], which examines how to ensure impartiality in a state in the distribution of social goods in view of various moral doctrines competing for prominence, Rawls posits that citizens must abstract themselves from their obligations, worldviews, knowledge, moral commitments, community affiliations, and any other personal characteristics that allow them to be guided by their prejudices. This process would result in an impartial or egalitarian distribution of rights, obligations and benefits, and as a result, receive the approval of all the citizens.

What Kazeem is saying in essence here is that, since morality connotes both the good and the bad, a universal moral doctrine should be constituted by both sympathetic impartiality and calculating impartiality, which together account for the constitutive elements of morality. He considers Wiredu's position as problematic for undermining and underestimating the true nature of human beings in the community as rational, egotistic, irrational, selfish, altruistic and loving. Morality actually unites these diverse human characteristics in order to promote societal good. Therefore, morality for Kazeem, attempts to unite the characteristics of human beings for the betterment of society at large [Kazeem, 2011: 272].

In contrast with Wiredu's notion of sympathetic impartiality, Molefe [2016: 4-12] argues that morality in the African context should be considered as partial in nature, because impartiality is not consistent with the level of commitment that various aspects of African tradition are subjected to. In defence of his claim, he alludes to three aspects that are subsumed in partiality, namely the high value placed on family structure, ancestral worship and the idea of personhood; and the high regard that a number of theorists place on various aspects of African tradition. These include Wiredu's and Appiah's consideration of the family as the best institution for moral education; Oruka's consideration of the family as the best model for the African community; and Ramose's argument for the prioritisation of Ubuntu (humanism) towards a family member before according the same privilege to others. He notes that the African tradition of ancestral worship occurs mainly within a family blood-line or extended relations; while in cases where the whole community participates in the celebration, some aspects of the ritual are performed in private. He further observes that in the concept of personhood, the individual "*must prioritise one's project of self-perfection, achieving moral virtue, and one must work hard to take care, firstly of one's family and then, if possible, the wider community*" [Molefe, 2016: 16]. The point Molefe makes here is that this evidence negates the notion of sympathetic impartiality that Wiredu advances, because the manner in which Africans attend to these issues are subjective and partial, and therefore, a reflection of the moral framework of Africans.

Molefe makes a critical and valid point regarding the partial outlook of African moral thought in the sense that Africans in particular and other races in general are largely partial in the manner in which they relate to others. However, the fact remains that such a moral framework cannot be promoted as the sole basis of African morality, especially in view of the extent of atrocities and unethical behaviour that result from a partial moral worldview. While human beings are selfish by nature, the only means of ensuring a just and ethical society is by promoting an objective and impartial approach to all aspects of existence.

Anderson [2013: 165-166] disagrees with Wiredu and Gyekye's claim that religion is not the source of morality. He reasons that by arguing in the manner they did, Gyekye and Wiredu are in essence claiming the existence of a religious free society in Ghana. However, Anderson does not believe that there is any community in Ghana that lacks religious influence. Rather, he claims that almost all the traditional societies in Ghana, including the Akan societies have religious imports and thrive on religion. In fact, Anderson believes that the influence of religion in the Ghanaian societies is so prevalent that it permeates every aspect of their life, including the government, the dress mode of the people, their speeches and even their food.

Wiredu makes a valid point in rejecting religion as the source of morality. However, this is also contestable depending on the perspective from which it is viewed. It is true that a person may be ethical or moral not because he is religious, but because he believes in doing the right thing and because he would prefer not to be harmed by others. This makes the sense of morality universal since all rational beings would always want the best for themselves and rationality should prevail on them to treat people in the same manner that they would want to be treated. The problem in this case is that human beings are naturally selfish. Many people only want the best for themselves without caring about the interests of others or about the consequences of their words, thoughts and actions on other people. It makes sense to believe that a person can be ethical without being religious, while another person can be moral as a result of the influence of religion in his or her life. It is logical to submit here that human beings can become ethical as a result of religious, rational and societal influence, because they believe in treating people in the same manner that they would expect to be treated, and or as a result of their personal convictions.

The Humanistic Nature of Traditional African Ethics

African traditional ethics, according to Ekeopara and Ogbonnaya [2014: 39-40] is not ideologically individualistic, but communal in nature because it takes into account the existence and interest of the individual and other people. It recognises that an individual cannot exist alone, but in communion with other human beings. As a result, an individual recognises that his or her existence is not for the purpose of satisfying only personal interest. Rather, they must also ensure that they do not infringe on the interests of other people. In view of this recognition, African traditional society is also communal in nature. This communalism becomes the foundation of the concern that Africans show for the welfare of their neighbours. The traditional African society therefore condemns self-centredness and individualism, and promotes solidarity as a major virtue.

African traditional ethics promotes humanism since it considers all human beings as existing together while rendering complimentary assistance to each other [Ekeopara & Ogbonnaya, 2014: 40]. African worldviews, according to Murove [2010: 383] believe in the interrelatedness, interdependence and interconnectedness of all beings in a manner that the flourishing of one entity affects the flourishing of the others. They also consider it the duty of human beings to protect nature and the environment for the benefit of all. Adedutan [2014: 44] further claims that entities

> **"whether human, divine, animal or vegetal, operate within a principle termed general laws of vital causality. In this system, a being, by virtue of the strength of its force, can either harvest more strength from another being, or, in contrast, lose some strength to a stronger being. Man, as a being, for example, can either strengthen or weaken the being of another man; the being of man can also affect the subordinate being of animal or plant."**

In contemporary Southern African languages, the term Ubuntu or Hunhu denotes humanism towards fellow beings. It emphasises the interdependence and common humanity of human beings, and the responsibility that proceeds from human interconnection [Letseka, 2012: 54]. The moral theory of Hunhu or Ubuntu "*is not only a dialogical African moral theory; it is also a way of life. This means that hunhu/ubuntu does not only evaluate and justify moral acts in African settings but it is also a world view for Africans*" [Mangena, 2012: 11]. As a constitutive element of African ethics, Ubuntu is founded on culture and religion. It relates to the dignity and integrity required of individuals; it represents what makes an individual human and the elements that promote the attainment of individual and communal fulfilment [Dolamo, 2013: 1-3]. This moral worldview of traditional Southern African communities considers human nature as having worth. Pre-eminence is placed on mutual moral responsibilities such as cooperation, solidarity, compassion, respect, loyalty, harmony, reciprocity, dignity, care, collective responsibility, and humanity towards each other [Letseka, 2014: 547].

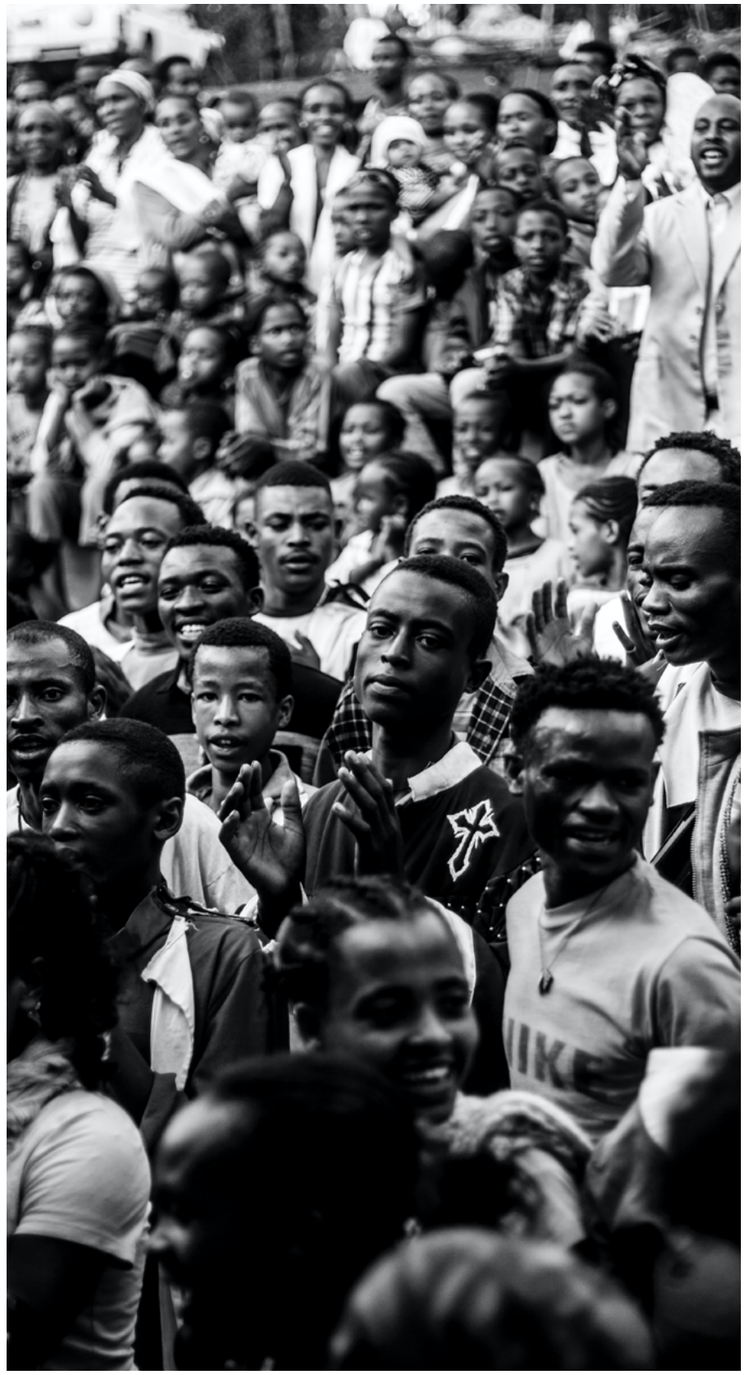
The moral theory of Ubuntu, according to Bell and Metz [2012: 81] shares a number of common features with the Chinese moral tradition known as Confucianism. Both moral philosophical thoughts recognise the interrelatedness of all beings as well as the "*the role that ancestors should play in our ethical lives […] the value of harmony in thinking about our proper relationships to one another, to animals, and to the natural environment*" [Bell and Metz, 2012: 81]. All proponents of the communitarian ethics of humanness or Ubuntu believe that the humanity of individuals is premised on their acceptance of fellow human beings in their differences and uniqueness. This core principle affirms that the identity of a person depends on the community both metaphysically as well as causally, while an individual is duty-bound to contribute to the well-being and progress of the community. This communitarian ethics which exposes human beings as normative and relational is gender neutral because it applies to community members irrespective of their gender and accords everyone consensual democracy in line with the values of Ubuntu [Oyowe & Yurkivska, 2014: 86].

Ubuntu further signifies that human beings should attach sacred and premium value to human life. In other words, the ultimate goal of a person should be to aspire towards a genuine or authentic lifestyle. By claiming that a person can derive Ubuntu through others implies that a person has the moral obligation to be the best human being possible, living together in harmony as members of one community, and deriving personal fulfilment without being selfish. In the traditional Southern African society, an individual who failed to relate communally with others or who showed negative or antisocial attitude towards others was considered to be inhuman or an animal. Society considers individual actions to be right or as conferring humanness on others when members of a community share the same way of life, show care and concern for each other's quality of life, identify with each other and show solidarity with each other. The dignity of a person results from his or her capacity to be friendly, to live harmoniously together and to respect human rights [Metz, 2011: 537 - 559].

Although Ubuntu is mostly associated with communalism and interdependency, it is not anti-individualistic because the respect that Ubuntu has for the personhood of other people also means respect for oneself or for individuality. Since a person assumes personhood as a result of his or her relationship with others, a human being is therefore human through others [Letseka, 2014: 548]. While the Igbos, for instance, are known to have strong communal dispositions or attachment, they are also known to possess a high level of individualism. Scholars have termed this seeming sense of contradiction the antinomy of providing a balance between the high level of individualism among the Igbo tribes with their strong loyalty to their community. The high level of loyalty that the Igbos have towards their community does not take away their unique individuality. Neither does it totally submerge them in their communities nor does it discourage self-reliance, personal initiatives, or the development of their individualities [Agulana, 2010: 293].

Implications of Traditional African Ethics and Morals for Contemporary African Society

The high level of moral consciousness that traditional Africans displayed is obvious from the preceding thoughts. However, many contemporary Africans cannot be said to genuinely adhere to moral principles. This reflects in all the things that have gone wrong in society; such as the high level of crime, lack of care and concern for others, greed, corruption, individualism, selfishness, loss of family values, and the general level of inhumanity that human beings display towards others. As a result of these observations, it is not surprising to note that some theorists such as Matolino and Kwindingwi have lost faith in the ability of human beings, especially Africans to seek the ideal.



Matolino and Kwindingwi [2013: 198] contend that the promotion of humanism or the moral theory of Ubuntu in South Africa in particular, and in Africa in general ought to come to an end. They argue that the ideology of Ubuntu "*is not well rooted in the ethical experiences of modern people qua moral beings; and […] that Ubuntu as a conceived ethical solution lacks both the capacity and the context to be an ethical inspiration or code of ethics in the present context*" [Matolino and Kwindingwi, 2013: 198]. They consider Ubuntu stagnated as an ethical theory and a way of life, and as a result of its complex principles and failure "*to transform itself from a descriptive worldview to a prescriptive construct adequate for modern extraction of subjectivity*" [Chimakonam, 2016: 225]. Matolino and Kwindingwi, according to Chimakonam [2016: 227] find the rapid decline in the influence of Ubuntu on the moral conduct of contemporary Africans to be expected because the socio-cultural context within which Ubuntu was accepted as a way of life in the past is no longer the same for contemporary (South) African communities.

Matolino and Kwindingwi [2013: 197] argue that the aggressive manner in which Ubuntu is promoted in post-apartheid South Africa by the new black elite is aimed at the creation of a black identity and the restoration of the dignity of the black people. They question the need for "*Ubuntu as a mark / guide of the spirit of the nation [...] the disjunct that exists between the metaphysical conditions necessary for the attainment of Ubuntu and the stark ontological and ethical crisis facing the new elite and our people*" [Matolino & Kwindingwi, 2013: 197]. According to Metz [2014: 65], Matolino and Kwindingwi argue that the conditions in present day South Africa as well as in many other parts of the African continent negate any appeal to the moral theory of Ubuntu. They contend that the political elite and others

> **"who have most influentially invoked Ubuntu have done so in ways that serve nefarious social functions, such as unreasonably narrowing discourse about how best to live, while, philosophically, these authors contend that the moral ideals of Ubuntu are appropriate only for a bygone pre-modern age. Since there is nothing ethically promising about Ubuntu for a modern society, and since appealing to it serves unwelcome purposes there, Matolino and Kwindingwi conclude that Ubuntu in academic and political circles has reached its end"** [Metz, 2014: 65]

The most problematic aspect of Ubuntu theory, according to Matolino and Kwindingwi [2013: 204], which further negates its relevance and existence as understood in the academic and political arenas is

> **"its failure to strike a coherent balance between its central claims of authenticity as a lived-out mode of being and what the circumstances of Africans are as moral beings living in the here and now. Its yearning for the restoration of a pristine mode of being is disjoined from the reality of ordinary people. Although the elite may have political interests in defending the project, its efficacy on the broad and general level will never be realised."**

In their critic of Ubuntu, Matolino and Kwindingwi [2013: 198 & 201] claim that while Ubuntu could have been the dominant ethic, one of the issues that must be examined before it can be considered to be an authentic mode of being African relates to the disadvantages of what they term revivalism. By this they refer to the 'narrative of return' which they consider as the quest by academics, political leaders and others to identify past values which they believe are capable of revitalising an obsolete way of life and inspiring a better society. They question the revivalists' articulation of everything African as having proceeded from the perfect pre-slavery and pre-colonial Africa; and they posit that all Africans do not have the same conception of what it means to be an African. They contend that these people probably hold competing values that cannot be interpreted on the basis of Ubuntu, and that the philosophy of Ubuntu can only be effective in small and undeveloped homogenous communities. They further claim that through mutual interdependence and recognition

> **"members of these communities foster the necessary feelings of solidarity that enable the spirit of Ubuntu to flourish [...]. Without the existence of such communities the notion of Ubuntu becomes only but an appendage to the political desires, wills and manipulations of the elite in the attempt to coerce society towards the same ideology reminiscent of the aforesaid earlier attempts by some political leaders on the continent"** [Matolino and Kwindingwi 2013: 202]

For Matolino and Kwindingwi [2013: 202-203], the belief that the 'narrative of return' reflects the best desirable interpretation of reality is not always the case. They disagree with the belief that everyone can easily understand this narrative and naturally desire to act in line with its provisions. They further reject the notion that anyone who tends to act in contrast with its dictates is inhuman or un-African. Rather, they posit that the narrative cannot be naturally apparent to everyone since such a claim can be interpreted to mean that the narrative proceeds naturally from Africans through a supernatural force. No one on earth, they claim, is metaphysically inclined to possess any moral quality, to be communal, social, antisocial, or selfless. Rather, they believe that such qualities are motivated by specific objectives and result from specific conditions.

Metz]2014: 65] challenges Matolino and Kwindingwi's contentions that the current state of affairs in contemporary South Africa and in most parts of the African continent does not justify any appeal to the moral theory of Ubuntu. Rather, he claims that scholarly research into Ubuntu and its political application thereof has only commenced. He considers their arguments as insufficient basis for their conclusions, and asserts that the ethical theory of Ubuntu has a significant role to play in the development of the morality of people and organisations. Metz, according to Matolino [2015: 214], argues that Ubuntu can be defended as both a way of life and as an ethical theory, and can play a significant role in how contemporary (South) Africans conduct themselves. For Metz [2014: 71]

> **"Ubuntu, when interpreted as an ethical theory, is well understood to prescribe honouring relationships of sharing a way of life and caring for others' quality of life. Sharing a way of life is roughly a matter of enjoying a sense of togetherness and engaging in joint projects, while caring for others' quality of life consists of doing what is likely to make others better off for their sake and typically consequent to sympathy with them."**

Matolino [2015: 214-219] responds to Metz's objections, claiming that Metz's defence of Ubuntu is unphilosophical, weak, indefensible and dogmatic. He condemns what he terms Metz's utopian propagation of Ubuntu, as neither new, nor holding any promises for Africans. He defends his response by alluding to the failures of the earlier revivalists of pre-colonial African values, such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor and Kenneth Kaunda, whose philosophical flirtations resulted in disastrous consequences for post-colonial African states. These include the failures of one-party dictatorial governments which were founded on the need to revive the true African identity.

For Chimakonam [2016: 225-227], the significance of Matolino and Kwidingwi's conclusion regarding the end of Ubuntu lies in its methodical and philosophical import as opposed to its validity. It is neither advisable to dismiss their claims as Metz does, nor to accept their conclusions as dogmatic truth. Rather, Chimakonam proffers that their claims be considered a philosophical problem or a conundrum that needs to be critically examined.

Koenane and Olatunji [2017: 275] agree with Metz's position that Matolino and Kwindingwi have not been able to advance valid arguments for the abolition of the moral theory of Ubuntu. They consider their claim pessimistic, an attitude that Africans ought to dissuade from their consciousness. Koenane and Olatunji [2017: 274] concede that unethical conduct, violence and crime cannot be justified, and that moral persons who possess Ubuntu will abhor wrong actions and behaviour. However, they believe that there is no justification to call for the end of Ubuntu. Rather, they believe that the moral crisis that confronts contemporary African states makes a stronger case for human beings to uphold the moral theory of Ubuntu.

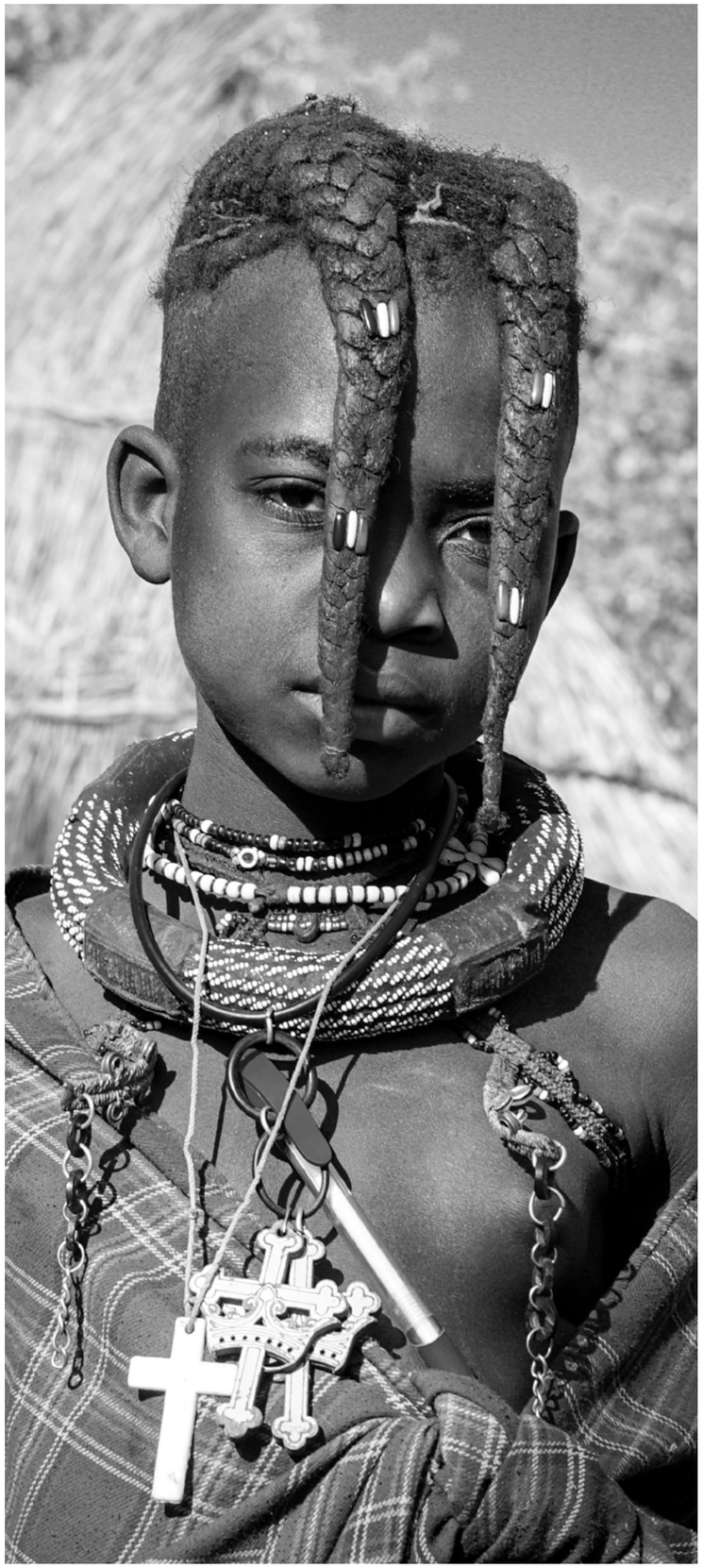
In opposition to Matolino and Kwindingwi's criticism of Ubuntu, Koenane and Olatunji [2017: 263] posit that Ubuntu "is still alive, relevant and can play a vital role in civil society". Koenane and Olatunji [2017: 263] consider Ubuntu to be an all-inclusive worldview, which represents the universalised values of humanness such as respect, compassion, honesty, empathy and tolerance and which various cultures have in common. They subscribe to Metz's claim that Ubuntu is just beginning. Contrary to Matolino and Kwindingwi's misrepresentation of the complete notion of Ubuntu, Koenane and Olatunji posit that

> **"Ubuntu is an ethic of becoming: it promotes a certain attitude towards a relationship an individual should have in order to live harmoniously with others. As an ethic of becoming, the Ubuntu ethic or Ubuntu conduct is a continuous process of developing morality and should be promoted"** [Koenane and Olatunji, 2017: 275]

It is indisputable that the world at large and Africa in particular is confronted by a deep moral crisis. The challenge here is to seek adequate means of confronting them. The solutions advanced by Metz, which Matolino terms dogmatic, do not render them less effective in resolving ethical challenges. Perhaps, the world needs to embrace elements of dogmatism and de-emphasise some aspects of rights and freedom in its quest for an ethical society because it appears as though many people employ the principles of rights, equality and freedom to indulge in unethical conduct.

Conclusion

This paper explored the conception of ethics and morality in traditional African societies and their implications for the contemporary world. It reveals that indigenous Africans were largely ethical and religious, while most of their interactions and conducts were guided by values. This cannot be said to be the case in the contemporary era where many people act without recourse to ethics and morals. Rather, almost every facet of life seems to be characterised by moral laxity. The implications of such conduct can be seen in the myriad of challenges and complications that the current African societies experience, including the lack of care for each other, selfishness, corruption, inadequate service delivery, inhumanity towards others, rivalry, contestations, individualism and secularisation. Perhaps Matolino and Kwindingwi's rejection of the moral notions of Ubuntu in the current era proceeds from their observations of the unethical practices that contemporary African societies face. They have called for the end of Ubuntu, claiming that as an ethical solution, it does not possess the context and the capacity to represent an ethical inspiration or moral code in the contemporary era.



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May 18:
A woman carries her belongings through the rubble of shacks in the Ramaphosa squatter camp.
Photograph: Kim Ludbrook/EPA
theguardian.com

Applying Aquinas' Natural Law Theory to the Xenophobia Conundrum in South Africa

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Abstract

In the last two decades, South Africa has experienced a series of xenophobic attacks directed at black Africans foreigners from different parts of Africa. Lack of a deeper sense of diversity and plurality has led to low levels of social trust, social cohesion and even social peace. Factors such as poverty, population increase, violent conflict, civil wars and environmental stress have led to tremendous migrations in Africa. Immigration has contributed to xenophobic violence in South Africa. This paper examines the contribution that Thomas Aquinas's theory of natural law can make to the phenomena of xenophobia. Aquinas's natural law through its underlying principles of human value and freedom can be used to challenge issues surrounding social injustice, in particular xenophobic violence in South Africa. For Aquinas, leading a morally justified and self-fulfilling life requires not only following the precepts of the natural law which dictates doing right actions, but also in having a good or virtuous disposition.

Introduction

The history of xenophobia in South Africa can be traced from the apartheid era when black African immigrants experienced discrimination and violence, a trend which continued in the post-apartheid era. In May of 2008, the first wave of xenophobic attacks against foreigners caught media's attention due to its violent nature and the number of deaths [Vromans et al 2022:2]. Although South Africa has been regarded as a beacon of democracy due to its respect for human dignity, this was questioned due to the number of innocent foreigners who were killed in the 2008 xenophobic attacks. The quest to understand human nature in relation to xenophobia from the perspective of Thomas Aquinas' natural law as a remedy is at the heart of this paper. The case of xenophobic attacks shows how human beings easily turn against each other in an inhuman way, undermining the very existence of the other yet claim to possess the ability to know what is good and strive for it and above all, virtuous. Xenophobia, or 'the fear of the other' which partly relies on myths, prejudice, and stereotypes can take a variety of forms, including derogatory language and violence. The 'xenophobic' violence that wrecked South Africa in May 2008, leaving 60 people dead and many thousands displaced and destitute [Sharp 2008:1], will be used as the case study of this paper. For Aquinas, morality requires that moral agents pursue what is good and avoid what is evil. Hence, preserving the life of the other, avoiding harm and striving for the good, should be the status quo.

Understanding Xenophobia and the May 2008 Attacks

Etymologically, the word xenophobia comes from two Greek words *xeno* which means "stranger", "foreigner", "guest" and *phobia* which means "fear" [Borden 2010]. The term partly denotes a strong feeling of dislike or fear of people from other countries. The Merriam Webster Online Dictionary [2023] defines the term xenophobia as '*fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or anything that is strange or foreign*'. Xenophobia is characterised by a negative attitude toward strangers or outsiders or foreigners, prejudice, dislike, fear, or hatred. This means that xenophobic people would dislike foreigners, as it is their 'foreignness' that makes them objectionable. Thus, xenophobia can be understood to encompass attitudes, prejudices and behaviours that reject, exclude, and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society, or national identity [Sigsworth et al 2008:8].

In South Africa, xenophobia comes with not just a fear but above all, a negative attitude, and perceptions together with accompanying acts of hostility, violence and discrimination against foreigners, black African foreigners for that matter [Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria 2009:80]. Xenophobia is embodied in discriminatory attitudes and behaviour and often culminates in violence, abuses of all types, and exhibitions of hatred, and xenophobes presumably do not have adequate information about the people they hate and, since they do not know how to deal with such people, they see them as a threat [Mogekwu 2005]. In South Africa, xenophobia has unpredictably manifested itself through many instances often unrelated through forms such as discriminatory attitudes often within the context of crime, poverty, inequality, and unemployment:

> **"Today, one in every 50 human beings is a migrant worker, a refugee or asylum seeker, or an immigrant living in a 'foreign' country. Current estimates by the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration indicate that some 150 million people live temporarily or permanently outside their countries of origin (2.5% of the world's population1). Many of these, 80-97 million, are estimated to be migrant workers and members of their families. Another 12 million are refugees outside their country of origin. These figures do not include the estimated 20 million Internally Displaced Persons forcibly displaced within their own country, nor tens of millions more of internal migrants, mainly rural to urban, in countries around the world"**
> [McKinley et al., 2001:1]

Apparently, xenophobia involves causal factors such as economic reasons and social instability which often result in a breakdown when coming to societal values and norms. Viewed from the economic perspective, xenophobia is fuelled by high levels of unemployment, where citizens perceive

immigrants or refugees as threats to their access to employment opportunities and basic service delivery (Amisi et al 2011:59-83). Besides social evils and racism, xenophobia has become manifest in societies which have received substantial numbers of immigrants, as workers or asylum-seekers. Xenophobia sometimes includes labelling that one group in dominance gives to another group, in a bid to create separate, and most times, superiorist cum inferiorist dichotomy (Chakale et al 2019). In such cases, immigrants suffer internal disputes about national identity and ethnic exclusion; and this ethnic conflict easily builds up and becomes the basis features in most modern societies, mainly because those societies have an increasingly diverse population. This systematic targeting and denoting of the 'other' as different and unequal has resulted in subsequent overt xenophobic tendencies, expressed namely through negative stereotypes of black Africans and the derogatory naming of them as 'Makwerekwere', a term based on the linguistic sounds they make as they speak their foreign languages. This becomes a basis for hostility, conflict, and violence between South African citizens and predominantly black foreigners. Hence xenophobia in South Africa cannot be restricted to the fear or dislike of foreigners but also to the extreme tension and violence by South Africans towards immigrants which often results in emotional and psychological distress, frustration, brutality, and deaths as we saw from the 2008 xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

The May 2008 South Africa's violent xenophobic attacks which initially broke out in Alexandra, Johannesburg rapidly spread throughout the country resulting in a number of deaths, injuries and displacements:

> **"In May 2008, a series of xenophobic attacks accompanied by widespread looting and vandalism left at least 62 people dead, 1,700 injured and 100,000 displaced in South Africa. The violence began in Alexandra in Johannesburg after a local community meeting at which migrants were blamed for crime and for "stealing" jobs. Within days the attacks had spread around the country, with Ramaphosa settlement on the East Rand becoming one of the areas that witnessed inhumanity on an unthinkable level. On 18 May, 35-year-old Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave was beaten, stabbed, covered with his own blankets and set alight. The following day, a 16-year-old migrant was hacked, burned and left for dead in a refuse dump. Miraculously, he survived. Across the land, tens of thousands fled their homes, crowding into community centres and police stations for protection until they could be moved to makeshift camps "** [Oatway and Skuy 2021]

Some of the causes of the 2008 May xenophobic attacks can be attributed to fear, aggression, and hatred of perceived 'others' within a society, combined with the feeling of insecurity that outsiders grab the opportunities of the locals. Some rationalised the attacks by blaming undocumented migrants for crime, unemployment, and other social problems in the country. Current trends indicate that the dislike for foreigners by South Africans, is likely to remain part of the society for as long as it is not tackled with vigour and facts about what value foreigners have and bring to South Africa. The experiences of those who were displaced by the May 2008 xenophobic attacks showcase how difficult it is for foreign migrants to survive in South Africa. The dynamics of the May 2008 attacks were such that it was able to spread rapidly throughout the country.

One of the challenges that victims of xenophobic violence of 2008 were facing in the aftermath was insecurity. Being a foreign national meant that one was helpless against xenophobic violence even if one is a legal resident with official documents. Due to the occurrence of the xenophobic attacks and the way they happened, the victims were traumatized resulting "the functioning of an individual, causing dissociative episodes, uncontainable emotions, self-destructive behaviour and an altered view of the world' and so others live helplessly" (Sigsworth et al 2008:17). Foreigners suffered discrimination because of being different. The ascription of blame was also highlighted since the perpetrators of xenophobic violence would attribute blame to foreigners for the lack of service delivery and other socio-economic issues. Moreover, foreigners experienced severe disrespect from South Africans physically, verbally, and emotionally. Foreigners remain vulnerable to xenophobia through the attitudes and behaviours of some South Africans who are fearful of the 'other'. Those who cannot speak local languages are also vulnerable to xenophobic attacks (Sigsworth et al 2008:18).

While the roots of xenophobia can be partly traced back to South Africa's history of exclusion through the promotion of ethnic and racial consciousness, the immediate causes of the 2008 attacks ignited from surfacing community perceptions and xenophobic sentiments. When South Africa finally got its freedom and was transitioning from apartheid to democracy, there were expectations of improved access to resources such as education, infrastructure, healthcare, and employment (de Jager & Hopstock, 2011). However, that did not materialise, since poverty continued to plague communities, and inequality between citizens also increased. There was also an increase in terms of the migration rate which led foreigners to be blamed for the perceived inability of the government to provide aid and bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. According to Sharp (2008), this then led South Africans to consider foreigners as competitors and potential threats for the already limited resources and a perceived shortage of jobs. However, the belief that every job occupied by a migrant means one less job for a South African remained unjustifiable (McConnell, 2009). Foreigners in South Africa were also associated with increased crime rates, the spread of certain diseases, and other social issues; beliefs likely formulated after government statements regarding the control for immigration as a solution for 'migrant' crime (Centre for Human Rights, 2009).

Xenophobia Justified: Harris' Three Hypotheses

While some South Africans have responded to xenophobic attacks in a way that justifies the actions, xenophobic attacks can be perceived as isolated individual incidents, because they are "message crime" intended to speak to the entire "hated group" (Misago et al 2009:13). The implication here is that xenophobic attacks are not really based on hate but on the 'unwelcomeness' of the foreigners. This means that xenophobic attacks are partly meant to communicate to foreigners that they are not welcome in a particular community or country. Furthermore, there is a perceived threat of diseases which also has implications for xenophobia which includes a general tendency to link subjectively foreign peoples with disease. This link is evident in xenophobic propaganda, in which "ethnic outgroups are explicitly likened to pathogenic species or to nonhuman vectors of disease, such as rats, flies, and lice" (Goldhagen, 1991:93-99). The associative link between foreign peoples and disease is also a recurring theme in the social science literature on immigration (Markel & Stern 1999:1314). In South Africa, foreigners are sometimes linked to crime, drugs outburst, prostitution, crimes, and diseases such as malaria. The three hypotheses of xenophobia proposed by Harris namely, the scapegoating hypothesis, the isolation hypothesis, and the bicultural hypothesis are important in understanding xenophobia in South Africa.

The scapegoat hypothesis asserts that xenophobia is located within the framework of social transition and change. It occurs when indigenous populations turn their anger resulting from whatever hardships they are experiencing against 'foreigners', primarily because foreigners are constructed as being the cause of all their difficulties. The basis of such xenophobia in South Africa is limited resources such as clean water, service delivery, health care, and employment, while driven by high expectations on transition. In the post-apartheid South Africa, while people's expectations have been heightened, a realisation that delivery is not immediate has resulted in discontent and indignation. Such dissatisfaction creates a breeding ground for a phenomenon like xenophobia to emerge. South Africa's political transition to democracy has exposed the unequal distribution of resources

May 19: A protester throws stones at a burning container in Reiger Park
Photograph: Siphiwe Sibeko /Reuters
theguardian.com

and wealth in the country which has forced some people to create a "frustration-scapegoat"' (: 4), that is, they blame foreigners for deprivation and poverty. This reveals that foreigners often become such scapegoats by being victims of abuse and violence. This hypothesis partly explains how foreigners have become scapegoats by being blamed for economic challenges and personal frustrations.

By contrast, based on the isolation hypothesis, the xenophobia manifested in May 2008 was a consequence of apartheid South Africa's isolation from the international community, and particularly the rest of Africa. The isolation hypothesis understands xenophobia as a consequence of apartheid South Africa's seclusion from the international community. The antipathy expressed by South Africans towards other Africans in recent years, the isolation hypothesis holds, is a residual effect of the internalised antipathy or hostility engendered by the apartheid state towards the external world. The democracy brought political transition allowing South Africa to open itself to the international community, thereby opening its borders. This has brought them in direct contact with the unknown, the 'other'. Morris (1998: 125) suggests that "There is little doubt that the brutal environment created by apartheid with its enormous emphasis on boundary maintenance has also impacted on people's ability to be tolerant of difference". Based on this understanding, xenophobia exists because of the very foreignness of foreigners. It exists because foreigners are different and unknown. The question that this understanding raises is why such intolerance towards difference is largely expressed in relation to other black Africans and not in relation to 'whites' who continue South Africa to run businesses and own vast amounts of land and property in the country. Nevertheless, based on the isolation hypothesis, it is apparent that xenophobic violence of May 2008 relates to issues of poverty and the fact the country was partly isolated during the apartheid era.

Finally, the bio-cultural hypothesis can also help to explain why African foreigners are mostly targeted in South Africa. African foreigners seem to be particularly vulnerable to violence and hostility (Human Rights Watch, 1998). The hypothesis looks at xenophobia at the level of visible difference, or 'otherness', such as the physical, biological factors and cultural differences. Morris (1998:1125) suggests that Nigerians and Congolese, "are easily identifiable as the 'Other'. Their physical features, bearing, clothing style and inability to speak one of the indigenous languages, are in general clear distinctions. Local residents are easily able to pick them out and scapegoat them."

Natural Law and the Light of Reason

Thomas Aquinas' natural law theory can be employed to maintain peace, harmony, tolerance and coexistence. Aquinas perceives the concept of law as a ruler's plan dictating practical reason through which a lawgiver governs and orders the universe, directing it providently towards an end (Aquinas 1948, I-II, q.94, art. 2). This partly presupposes an eternally predestined plan through which human actions are due to conform. The imprint of the "eternal law upon the human mind is what Aquinas calls the natural law, which is grasped through the light of natural reason, by which we discern what is good and what is bad" (Pasnau & Shields 2004:220). One participates in the Supreme Being's predestined plan through the natural law, which guides oneself to achieve ultimate happiness. Thus, natural law is a standard feature of universal morality through which human awareness regarding what is good and bad conforms to the divine will of the universe, with respect to one's rationality and free will. Through reason, one has an intellectual ability to judge the moral standard and worthiness of certain moral principles. For Aquinas, the primary moral principle of the natural law through natural reason is that "good is to be done and pursued and evil avoided" (Eardley & Still 2010:80). One should seek to achieve the good, since by nature human beings desire what is morally good and right.

All other moral principles rely on the first principle of the natural law, as long as they contribute to one's ultimate good or happiness. Regarding how the good can be known, Aquinas expects one to have a natural inclination towards both the good and right action. This is so because general principles or guidelines of the "natural law can be known by everyone, since people recognise that things for which one has a natural inclination are good and, therefore, what is detrimental to them is bad" (Selman 2007:140). Through natural inclination and reason, certain things are apprehended as good. This is because goodness entails acting in a way that satisfies such inclinations, in order to achieve that end. Human goodness comes with rationality through which morally right actions help one to achieve one's desires. On this basis, Aquinas notes that human beings have a natural inclination towards the preservation of life, for sexual desires for bearing and raising of children, and for knowing the truth about the ultimate good and God. For example, once people are reminded or made aware of this good they possess, preservation of life will be the goal and not its demise as we see with xenophobia.

Such inclinations are vital dictates of the natural law, because they demonstrate clear cases through reason regarding what is good. Based on this understanding, xenophobia is unjustified because one's inclination towards a morally good life is not only a reasonable option, but also one which makes practical sense. Since through rationality one discerns what is good, it might be strange to imagine a situation when one's natural judgement is corrupted by either passions or vice like in the case of xenophobia. Thus, it is natural to feel that theft is wrong while justice is right. In that way, Aquinas's natural law "offers an interesting account of the foundation of morality…and it offers an account of how the basic moral principles are grasped by anyone"' (Pasnau & Shields 2004:228). As such, natural law theory partly aims at promoting the common good in the society as well as preservation of the good. Aquinas also "acknowledges the necessity of being virtuous because "leading a good, self-fulfilling life consists not merely in doing the right thing, but in having a good character'; a character absent in those who participate in the xenophobic activities (Eardley & Still 2010:86). As such natural law seeks to identify fundamental, constitutive aspects of human flourishing that one could call basic human goods while articulating the principles of reason that govern how upright choices should be made in response to those basic human goods.

Natural Law and the Virtues

Aquinas' natural law involves an account of virtues understood as the habits of mind and character that reliably dispose one to choose and act in accordance with moral norms which in themselves constitute an important aspect of human flourishing. As such there are various precepts that order human beings toward a variety of goods that reason apprehends as intrinsically valuable, as choice-worthy in themselves and not merely as means toward further ends (Aquinas 1948, I-II, q.94, art. 2). As bodily beings, life and health are inherent aspects of our well-being. As social beings, friendship, the formation of communities, marriage and family life all have intrinsic value for us; and this does not exclude foreigners. To choose and act reasonably, then, is to choose and act in ways that respect the intrinsic value of all of the basic goods for all human beings, citizens and foreigners, to choose and act in ways that are compatible with the ideal of integral human fulfilment (Finnis 2013:451). Practical reason directs us toward each of the basic goods and away from their contraries, like xenophobic attacks that damage human well-being and are contrary to human flourishing. This Aquinas would call unreasonable, and therefore immoral, meaning against the natural law (Aquinas1948, I-II, q. 95, art. 2). Thus, one ought to act according to reason, and from this principle it follows as a proper conclusion that harming or even killing another on the basis that they are foreigners and supposedly responsible for all the bad things happening in the society, is unreasonable.

For Aquinas, the importance of having a good disposition in one's life complements the necessity to act in accord with the precepts of the natural law. Virtue gives one an assurance of acting in accordance with the moral law, because "morally virtuous agents will not necessarily need to reason deeply before acting and one cannot have the moral virtues properly without prudence" (Selman 2007:129). Thus, Aquinas introduces the cardinal virtue of prudence to his understanding of natural law, a virtue responsible for fine-turning or causing all the other virtues, whether moral or intellectual. Natural law needs the virtues to guide the particular and practical nature of moral life, and this requires the virtue of prudence. The virtue of prudence requires a right disposition both in emotions and affections, just as it requires moral virtues due to passions that might veil one's judgement through natural reason (Eardley & Still 2010:88). It can then be said that prudence is directed towards knowledge for the sake of action, and its goal is the absolute good. This entails that one ought to act while being aware that a particular action will result in the good that will be fulfilling in some way. Hence, moral justification essentially depends on practical wisdom. One's disposition requires prudence which helps one discern what ought to be done in a particular circumstance through practical reasoning. Like in the case of xenophobia, natural law through the virtue of prudence, can affect one's disposition to engage in discussion that seeks harmony between citizens and foreigners and not their destruction. Prudence as a kind of intellectual amplitude guides or illumines one through counsel, judgement and command towards the ultimate human good, without necessarily establishing or desiring that particular end. In that way, the "principal function of prudence as

an intellectual virtue is to dispose and perfect the practical reason for the election of proper means for the leading of a good life" (Brennan 1941:67). Living a good life that is directed towards good actions requires right choices not only as an end, but also as a suitably ordained means to that end.

One may question how a prudent person acquires the ability to employ moral virtues, "for we normally assume that prudence consists simply in a certain sort of knowledge, knowledge having practical implications" (Pasnau & Shields 2004:236). For Aquinas, prudence is the ability to practically apply practical knowledge in particular situations. Like in the case of xenophobia, an act of prudence would involve one seeking the truth and not a scapegoat. It would involve one finding the root cause of the problems and not seeking the easy way out like that of blame game. For Aquinas, prudence links knowledge with action, or rather, knowing and doing Through natural law, one grasps what should be done, whereas through prudence one actually assesses or evaluates what ought to be done in complex situations.

Aquinas notes that although prudence does not deal strictly with the cognitive tasks of knowing right actions, "the prudent agent not only has that practical knowledge but is also able to focus on that knowledge at the right time, for as long as necessary" (Pasnau & Shields 2004:238). One already knows through self-reflection as motivated by natural law, the right actions that can lead to the ultimate good. Prudence is itself higher than intellectual knowledge or reason, because although the latter can help one discern the difference between bad and good actions, often there is a temptation of not desiring this kind of knowledge and opting for the easy way out as in the case of xenophobia. Prudence leads one's intellect towards the right action with the help of the precepts of the natural law, through a virtuous disposition. Thus, based on this understanding, xenophobia is unjustified. Natural law does not only serves as a possible remedy for xenophobia but becomes meaningful because there is variation, diversity and transformation in social life: there is something 'natural' in the idea of natural law as it emerges out of the real challenge of having to understand the multiplicity of ways in which human beings experience their lives in common. Such an understanding suggests that xenophobia is injustice not only to foreigners but to the whole of the human race.

Conclusion

The phenomena of xenophobia challenge the core of our humanness and how one perceives the 'other.' Although xenophobic violence is a complex issue, natural law can help to understand and eradicate the problem. One notes that all human beings are connected and related as members of the same species through shared human nature, and through the light of reason and virtues channel their actions towards the safeguarding of this fundamental relation with each other. The solution to xenophobia in South Africa partly lies in the ethical choices people make and how the nations and individuals live their human values in curbing their domestic policies, migration laws and helping foreigners and migrants to adapt and experience these human values in the new environment. Moreover, tolerance and harmony are important in a pluralistic society because they include an inherent paradox of accepting the things one might ordinarily dismiss. To overcome or avoid conflict, one needs to tolerate at least some of the very things one abhors, disagrees with, disapproves of or dislikes. Although not self-evident, tolerance is not uncommon: all over the world people have proved to be willing and able to tolerate and accept the seemingly irreconcilable differences between their own values, lifestyles, religious beliefs, political views, personal preferences, and those of others. The urgency to practice and promote tolerance is only too obvious: without tolerance, communities that value diversity, equality and peace could not survive. Tolerance toward immigrants is characterized by positive feelings towards them as well as an understanding and endorsement of equality between immigrants and citizens. This is because xenophobia revolves around feelings of fear and irrational thoughts regarding immigrants in society. Tolerance is an asset that allows people with different views to live side by side in the same community.

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Hegel's Historical Denialism and Epistemic Eclipse in African Philosophy

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Abstract

African philosophy remains bedevilled by relics of Hegel's racist chants against the rationality of Africans, and this situation deserves revisitation and reevaluation for reconstructive purposes. In this paper, I implicate Hegel's concatenations as necessitating the reactive fervour within which a significant portion of the themes, thesis, and content of African philosophy is locked. This influence, which partially eclipses African philosophy, I term historical denialism. In an attempt to repudiate Hegel's constructs, some philosophers in Africa seem ideologically contrived into developing or discovering an authentic philosophy for Africans, and in the process, advocate cultural essentialism as determinants of philosophy—at least logically. Averring that philosophy is not the sole representation of thought, I proceed by exploring other trajectories which could have informed a non-reactive African philosophy, while logically linking Hegel's denialism to subtle silencing of his idealism within philosophical discourses in Africa. This subtle silencing, which shortchanges pedagogy of philosophy on the continent, forms the other half of the eclipse in philosophy in Africa. I conclude the discussion by asserting that while it may be imperative to exorcise Hegelian ghost in African philosophy, to use Olufemi Taiwo's coinage, essentializing African philosophy would either further enmesh the field in a reactive predisposition, or limit its reflective and multifarious possibilities.

Keywords: African Philosophy, Cultural Essentialism, Decolonisation, Epistemic Eclipse, Historical Denialism, Reactionism.

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Historical Denialism and the Reactive Fervour in African Philosophy

A significant portion of the content of the history of African philosophy[1] is informed by a reaction to what I call "Hegel's historical denialism." I assume a little conceptualisation of what historical denialism means is necessary here; I will address this shortly. Hegel balkanises the African continent into three parts before proceeding in his ascription of what he conceives as the irrationality of Africans: the stretch of the south of the Sahara he calls Africa proper; the north of the Sahara he terms European Africa; and Egypt, he describes as the territory connected to Asia. Africans[2] are, in Hegel's evaluation, influenced by nature. They are so conditioned on account of being untamed and completely wild and by this 'composition', Hegel argues. Implicatively, therefore, Africans had not reached a level of self-consciousness [Hegel 1956: 93]. Hegel consequently denies the portion he terms Africa proper participation in the absolute spirit, which is intermittently linked to consciousness. How could a people in their untamed and wild nature be capable of the level of consciousness necessary for such thought processes that philosophy entails? This is a logical inference from Hegel's pontification.

Innumerable responses trailed Hegel's foregoing comments, consequently necessitating a conscious effort to repudiate such pronouncement, and fashion out a systematic body of thoughts that can be called African philosophy. It is not my intention here to assert that all philosophical postulations that birthed African philosophy emanated from Hegel position, as this would connote radical reductionism, and this is avoidable for consistency and validity. However, acknowledgement of a non-reductionist approach does not diminish Hegel's influence on the subsequent development of African philosophy, as this influence is undeniable. Coincidentally, or by a well-thought-out presupposition, the debate on the possibility or existence of African philosophy partially falls within the mix of response to residues of Hegel's propositions, while arguments against the existence of African philosophy fundamentally rests on a tripod. Numerous interpretations and explications of the structure of repudiation of African philosophy abound, but I will limit the identification of these to three compartments I believe capture all insinuations, and they are as follows. First, there are no known individual thinkers to whom we can trace the body of knowledge put forward as philosophy at the inception of the discourse. Secondly, Africans are not rational enough to participate in such systematic thought processes that make philosophy possible. Lastly, there were no written records of philosophy in Africa, and philosophy cannot rely on oral tradition as it is an enterprise adumbrated with writing [Ikuenobe, 1997: 190]. Outright rejection trailed the second charge, while the first and third charges, I contend, set the stage for debates among thinkers and philosophers in Africa, on the possibility of African philosophy.

Boundaries of the central motivative drive for African philosophy are marked by at least three interrelated theses: these are the rational derivative thesis, the militancy thesis, and the counterhegemonic thesis. For the current discourse, I will pick Polycarp Ikuenobe, Alena Rettova, and Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze as representative voices of these positions. In the rational derivative thesis, Ikuenobe argues that to deny a people philosophy is to deny them any kind of intellectual activity, a system of thought, culture, and civilization [Ikuenobe, 1997: 196]. What Ikuenobe seems to suggest is that philosophy is the sole pool from which intellectual activity, culture, and civilization emanate. Alena Rettova's commitment to the militancy thesis is expressed in the position that African philosophy emanates from a standpoint of repudiating dehumanising tendencies afflicted on African worldviews through components of slavery, colonialism, and racism [Rettova, 2016: 127]. Rettova would subsequently conceptualise African philosophy as a radical critique, given that at the heart of its development is a political charge embedded in "*acute social awareness and a readiness for political militancy*" [Rettova 2016: 127]. Eze, however, extends this description of the origin of African philosophy to include rupturing of colonial relics and '*a historic critique of modern western anthropological and philosophical tradition*' [Eze, 2001: 207]. The foregoing expressions are intermittently linked to reactive fervour of African philosophy, as

1 I rather consider the body of thoughts of what is referred to as African Philosophy as Philosophy in Africa. I must admit that this position is not uniquely mine. There are many philosophers who equally consider this as an apt conceptualisation.
2 This erratically means occupants of Hegel's Africa proper.

they explicate calls for reengineering African philosophy for a political project Eze, through the consolidation of a counter hegemonic thesis, christens '*a representative voice of counter hegemonic histories of modern philosophy*' [Eze, 2001: 207]. Emmanuel Ifeanyi Ani equally recognises this reactive ardour of the development of African philosophy through an explorative approach contending that African philosophy is replete with claims of ideological motivation [Ani, 2020: 52].

It should be noted that at the formative stage of the *formalisation* of African philosophy[3], and upon activation of the reactive fervour, African philosophers were fractionalised into particularist/culturalist[4] and universalist schools of thought [Wiredu, 1980: 27]. While the former denotes the camp arguing that philosophy can emerge from cultural beliefs, or that precepts of cultural worldviews indeed qualify as philosophy (here, one could aptly place Alexis Kagame [1956], Sophie Oluwole [1999], Olubi Sodipo [1973], Kwame Gyekye [1987], and to some extent, Polycarp Ikuenobe [1997] and Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze [1997, 2001], universalists on the other side, consider philosophy as an enterprise not necessarily reducible to cultural elements; but rather a critical engagement of concepts [[Kwasi Wiredu, 1980; 1996], Peter Bodunrin [1981], Paulin Hountondji [1995], and Kwame Appiah [1992] fit this description]. Sufficiency of this conceptualisation remains contested like any other universal categorisation or fixation. A case in context would be that if one reads Emmanuel Chukwudi *Eze's African Philosophy and the Analytic Tradition* literally, the claim that philosophy is a critical enterprise entailing activities of conceptual clarification, is indicting of analytic philosophy—more prominently, the linguistic turn of the analytic tradition. Eze subsequently terms some defenders of this brand of universalism 'the ultra-faithful', referring to those committed to the analytic tradition in which they had been trained as professional philosophers [Eze, 2001: 207], while Ikuenobe [1997] conceives the universalist school's presuppositions reductive and exclusive. Without prejudice to the universalist tradition, this is at least one strand of universalism. However, quite all universalists seem to agree that individual thoughts of a critical nature qualify as philosophy, thereby satisfying the condition of identified authorship[5].

Moses Akin-Makinde attempts an interventionist thesis on the existential dismissive subject of African philosophy, by contending that if African philosophy exists, then it is the duty of philosophers to demonstrate that by doing it. This is further extended to include assumptions that the controversy on the existence of the subject had been laid to rest [Makinde, 2010]. Within context and contests, therefore, D.A. Masolo's, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, V.Y Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa*, E.A Ruch's *Is There an African Philosophy*, Peter Bodunrin's *The Question of African Philosophy*, and a compendium of essays in *Second Order*, a journal that bears a near-perennial witness to the debate on the existence of African philosophy, give careful illustration and historical references to the description of culturalism and universalism in African philosophy.

Recent anthologies such as P.H Coetzee and A.P.J Roux's *The African Philosophy Reader*, Kwasi Wiredu's *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Eze's *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola's *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy*, Edwin Etieyibo's *Method, Substance, and the Future of African Philosophy*, and others, strengthen various debates and contestations on the themes, methods, and issues in African philosophy, as well as present demonstrative and contentious scopes of African philosophy from both camps, through issue-based, author-based, and sceptical explorations. Whether or not the debate on African philosophy has ended is not a decisive focus of the current discourse, hence, hibernating the question may be warranted here.

Now, a return to the initial identification of Hegelian historical denialism is germane, as African philosophy could either be logically, in a non-exclusive sense, conceived as originating first, as a reaction to Hegel's racist view, or secondly as the *philosophical induction* of African worldviews. In either case, Hegelian denialism is extended. The extension is direct in relation to the reaction to Hegel, and indirect in the second case signified by the presentation of African worldviews as philosophy. What makes the latter indirect is that Hegelian import is one of numerous sparks necessitating the attempt to christen African worldviews as philosophy, while in the first case is a direct reaction to Hegel's racist postulations. Some Western philosophers, ethnographers, and anthropologists, especially those of the enlightenment era, had equally dismissed Africans' capacity for critical reasoning by stating that certain conditions, especially ontological, are responsible for Africans' lack of capacity for reasoning. That such racist thoughts are represented in the works of David Hume [1974], Immanuel Kant [2007], and Lucien Levy-Bruhl [1975] is egregious.

What the racist thoughts in the works of other identified thinkers demonstrate is that Hegel was not alone on this path of denialism, as Levy-Bruhl's pre-logical argument exhibits some basis of sentiments against Africans' capacity for critical reflections. In *How Natives Think*, Levy-Bruhl dismisses the possibility of Africans' philosophical endeavour on the basis of assigning mysticism and pre-logicality to their thought process and understanding of the world [Kebede, 2004]. However, despite other thinkers' ascriptions, Hegel is a ubiquitous figure within African philosophy discourses and conversations on philosophy in Africa. From dialectical conversations on the existence and practice of African philosophy, either through contextual interpretation, nationalist representation, cultural validation, rationality defence, methodological proposals, universalist critique, or particularists' affirmation, I aver that a significant context and content of what is thus known as African philosophy seems to be continuously and surreptitiously shaped by Hegel's repulsive thesis. And just as Olufemi Taiwo opines, Hegel's ghost is yet to be fully exorcised in philosophical discourses in Africa [Taiwo, 1998].

One may ask why African philosophers' attention is further drawn to Hegelian disruption. First, by tying his denialist postulation maximally and more ferociously than others to history, Hegel elicits enormous and perennial responses because an affirmation of a people's history can be perceived as a major edifice on which cultural meaning-making notions are built[6]. Acting on the contrary to repudiate a people's space in the universal history, and in that process denying their rationality as Hegel did, is tantamount to a tragedy of delineating a people from humanity [Cabral, 1973]. Another perspective is in the contention that since reason is a major component of human existence, and philosophy is one of the most expressive modes of reason, then Hegel's attempt at decapitating Africans' rationality might be construed as irredeemably necessitating such rapt attention[7]. These expressions are not solely reflective in Hegel; they exist *disjointedly* in Hume, Kant, and Levy-Bruhl. However, Hegel's position seems more comprehensive in this dismissal, and for that, the attendant centrality of Hegel in discourses aimed at *affirmation* of reason and history could hardly be prevented, I suspect.

3 This refers to the period when African philosophy started developing as a professional endeavour.

4 In this essay, I will use culturalist more often as particularism aligns more with relativism. I take the culturalist position to be a major element of essentialism. This view makes it possible to aptly describe concepts thoroughly by avoiding category mistakes.

5 If any respondent views this perspective as a reactive agenda of satisfying earlier queries of critics or denialists of African philosophy on grounds of unidentified authorship, I presume it is the responsibility of universalists of the identified authorship conviction to respond appropriately.

6 Hountondji, Paulin. 1983. African Philosophy: Myth and Reality. London: Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 11.

7 Sola Olorunyomi shares a similar thought on this.

A critical implication that can be drawn from Hegel's historical denialism is what I term epistemic eclipse. By eclipse, I mean a structurally restrictive and reductive conjuring of African philosophy. It is structurally restrictive and reductive, in the sense that it foregrounds African philosophy as a sole tool for asserting the rationality of Africans, while also contriving African philosophy into a reactionist model. Owing to the first reflection of the eclipse, in order to respond appropriately to Hegel's claims, African philosophy implicitly takes the route of affirming the self, strictly, in a rational capacity. Hence, in a sense, African philosophy emanates as a reaction to Hegel's claims against Africans' capacity for reason. The restrictive character of the eclipse incidentally foreclosed other possibilities of conceiving African philosophy aside the reactive fervour of Hegel's *demand*. Epistemic eclipse accruing from Hegelian denialism also refers to incomprehensive conception of philosophy in Africa. And closely tied to this are a plethora of proposals for radical racial boundaries and cultural essentialism, in discussing or formulating African philosophy.

Mask in wood. Warega. Belgian Congo. Owned privately. U.S.A. Temples Home

Yet, without Hegel, the context of the development of African philosophy might or would have been different. There are many ways to demonstrate this, but for this discourse, I will expand the topic by interpreting epistemic eclipse through the notion of extant externalism. By permitting the reactive fervour, construction or evolution of African philosophy is willed to an external force, and this is what extant externalism implies. This proposal harbours two perspectives: the first part is the extent to which, in an attempt to contradict or reject Hegel's description of African rationality, the structure, themes, and content of African philosophy is often influenced by Hegel. That this external influence of Hegel remains a key directive factor of African philosophy, I suppose, is obvious. The second part of extant externalism is more paradoxical and lies within the culturalist construction of the subject matter. By limiting the confines of African philosophy to cultural views, culturalists unconsciously sap the subject of its potential for universal exemplification, and without mincing words, this approach is external to the discourse of what philosophy *is*.

One would find in literary texts predating the question of African philosophy in the strict sense certain reflections of a similar fervour. For instance, prior to the debate on the existence of African philosophy as a composite professional discipline, works of literary thinkers, mostly Africans, had attempted to repudiate the unsavoury tainting of the rationality of Africans or African rationality[8]. This is where the essentialist character of the works of literary scholars such as Leopold Sedar Senghor's *Negritude* falls [1995]. Building on this, Alexis Kagame and other philosophers joined the conversation in an attempt to extrapolate an authentic Africanness, while sociological and anthropological works like Placide Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy* and John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophies* had also set some pace for subsequent elaboration on the conversation. The reactive school, I suspect, attracts insinuations that some works are worthier and are apt representations of decisive response to racist charges than others. Bernard Matolino for instance, rather than consider Placide Tempel's *Bantu Philosophy* as a seminal work in the establishment of African philosophy regards it as a continuation of the racist description of Africans. Tempel's book advances philosophical racialism, Matolino alleges [2011].

8 These terms are used cautiously with proper understanding that 'African rationality' is not synonymous with 'rationality of Africans'. While the former suggests a totalitarian assertion, the latter does not.

We could link the reactive dimension of African philosophy and the culturalist scope of African philosophy without logical inconsistency. In fact, taken from a normative point of view, the culturalist perspective of the essentialist bend aligns easily with a repudiation of Hegelian postulation, thereby suggesting we could create a necessary connection between culture and philosophy. One aspect of the normative dimension informs some opinion that the essence or duty of African philosophers is to promote African views and philosophies, or as philosophy. And the enclave that asserts this is by no means negligible [P'Bitek, 1970]. Such a proposal is both pre-emptive and reductive. But for Hegelian denialism, geographical isolation of thoughts championed by essentialists might not have been the case as it is now, as African philosophy may have arisen differently. To invert Leibniz's dictum, the culturalist motif is not the best of all possible worlds. However, essentialists' reverberating agenda tends to suggest it is.

A people have a right of response to any charges they presume worthy of reaction, and I think placed within historical antiquity, responses to Hegelian claims may appear pertinent. However, construing African philosophy as an *endless* item of such reaction, in anticipation of justifying Africans' capacity for reason may be unnecessary. Yes, while philosophy entails application of reason, not all endeavours that accommodate reason necessarily qualify as philosophy. There are many ways to apply reason, and philosophy is just one of many of such categories. A reactive African philosophy must take this into cognisance in order not to undermine or foreclose other possibilities of constructing the subject.

Existing culturalists' construction of African philosophy has not been able to convincingly dispel the claim that philosophy is not necessarily group thinking. If anything—and I mean by its basic constituent—philosophy often amounts to a critique of culture; an accidental tool for assessing cultural beliefs, but critically. However, when unchecked cultural enthusiasm is made a sacrosanct precondition for philosophising, as some culturalists are wont to do, thoughts become fossilised, and in that process, the critical tool of philosophising might become moribund as pandering towards cultural thoughts becomes attractive. By ascribing philosophy to cultural worldviews or collective thoughts as some claim, the individuated thought pattern that swells the boundaries of philosophy is sandwiched. And through this, the sceptical and critical spirit of philosophy is not done good service, and neither is the aim of some culturalists satisfied beyond mere reactionism, symbolic as they may conceive it. Garbing cultural views as philosophy is unnecessary, and neither does doing so legitimately affirm capacity for reason since, as earlier affirmed, philosophy is not the all and only means of affirming rationality. When philosophy is thus garbed, anachronism becomes not just only what Michel Foucault would call the regime of truth, but also a living burden to the philosopher.

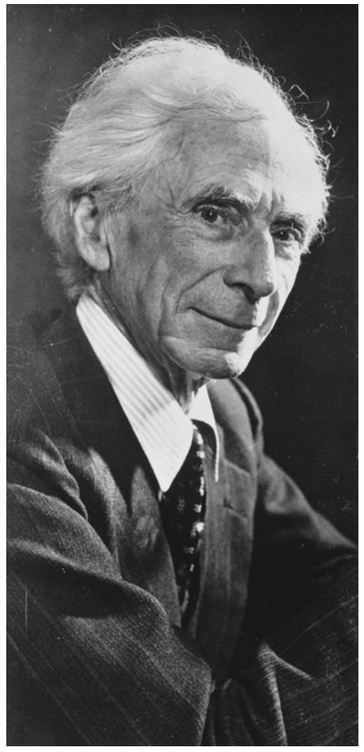
We may further our query of the logic behind culturalists' position on essentializing culture in determining philosophy. Philosophical postulations often begin in scepticism, meanwhile, acceptance of cultural worldviews as philosophy seems to eliminate the questioning capacity philosophy requires, as quite many culturalists, out of inclination towards the essential difference between Africans and Westerners are readily happy to signal communitarian ideals as the spirit behind African philosophical thoughts. It is suspicious to see where a sceptic fits in such a structure, let alone an individual critical thinker whose views run contrary to the seemingly-fossilised group thoughts and *legislative* assumptions. In the meantime, it is aggregable that our critical individual would otherwise qualify as a philosopher; this is if we consider critical and logical thoughts as ingrains of philosophy, and there are convincing preconditions to accept such perspective. However, since our sceptic's views run contrary to group thoughts, by the communitarian ideal of the culturalists' model, they would hardly be a *true* African, let alone being an African philosopher. After all, being African is ontologically premised, if we go by some culturalists' construction.

Given that insufficiency of the reactive fervour is a major concern here, we may ask how an alternative view of the development of African philosophy could be expressed. We may also seek clarification on the reference of its conceptual or existential framework. In response to this, African philosophy, I contend, could have emerged as a compendium or grouping of the works of African thinkers on a particular philosophical subject, or as a critical interrogation of any matter without essentialism. Such an attempt could be similar or coincidental with the ascription of the term 'German philosophy', 'British philosophy', 'French philosophy', and so on, to works produced by philosophers in those territories, regardless of the diversity of thoughts involved in them.

A major implication of the idea should be obvious by now. It is an insistence on the delineation of philosophy from cultural validation, as though philosophical thoughts may be developed within a cultural context, it does not translate to the validation of cultural edicts. We may cite revolutionary works in the field as examples. John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* could be read, and rightly so, as thoughts developed within a cultural context of contestations between liberty and equality. What makes it a philosophical piece is not a conglomeration of cultural views presented from the opposing sides of libertarianism and egalitarianism. On the contrary, it is the explication and argumentation of critical reflections.

I am aware that this line of thought could be pushed into the purview of the analytic tradition in philosophy. It could be said that such a view is Western as a number of critics of *universal* thoughts could describe it thus with varying degrees of scepticism. Here, Eze comes in handy in dispelling the analytic bend of such narrative. A charge of using Western categories in describing what philosophy is or ought to be–we would be reminded by Safro Kwame—is inappropriate as there ought to be a unique African approach to the study and development of African philosophy. African philosophy is authentic, Kwame [1992: 29] would emphasise.

Hegelian denialism, I presume, could be neglected while reflecting on philosophical issues in Africa, and this would not be restricted so as to assert that there is no African philosophy. We may admit that one of the current dimensions of conceptualising African philosophy is instructive in this regard, and this is the perspective that conceives African philosophy as philosophical products of Africans regardless of the themes addressed[9]. Some reference can be made to Paulin Hountondji's alignment of African philosophy with existing African literature, where literature is described here as written thoughts on philosophy by Africans. The individuality thesis would therefore be integrated into what counts as African philosophy, not as a legislative or normative model, but of the import of individual reflection and postulations of philosophical categories. This perspective shares semblance with the works of Kwasi Wiredu, Moses Akin-Makinde, Paulin Hountondji, D.A. Masolo, Abiola Irele, Peter Bodunrin, and Kwame Appiah, among others. As an illustration, however, such dimension would mean that African philosophy of the alternative non-reactive bend need not possess colouration of cultural essentialism which some reactive works in the discipline reflect.



Bertrand Russell in november 1957.
Wikipedia

9 This is not suggestive of a unilateral way of doing philosophy as the notion of what qualifies as individual philosophy would invariably lurch to the fore, Nonetheless, the individualised approach to a subject-matter in philosophy might be one of the ways to philosophise on the continent. And this is already so.

Hegel's historical denialism extends beyond the reactionism it ferments, as it inwardly attracts *strategic* or unconscious elimination of some aspects of Hegel's philosophy. Hegel's denialism, like an unsheathed sword swayed by the blindfolded, cuts both ways, and in that process, sometimes lands a deadly strike on its own foundational work and how it is engaged on the continent. In teaching philosophy in Africa, quantitative positioning and concentration on Hegel's remarks in his *Philosophy of History* as epistemic determinant of Africans' capacity for reason, eclipses the content and structure of other important aspects of his contribution to philosophy. For instance, Hegelian idealism, being a precursor to the subsequent contrarian views of Karl Marx's materialism, could easily be passed over in teaching philosophy in Africa[10]. That Marx's philosophy is based on the inversion of Hegel's idealism ought to create a fuller conversation on the subject matter of Hegel's thoughts system than is often engaged. It is by no accident, therefore, that I link this to Hegel's historical denialism. For instance, while both the principle of dialectics and alienation are central to Hegel's idealism, how these can be interpreted materially was, without doubt, the focus of Marx's philosophical thought. Within German idealism, and idealism in the tradition of philosophy in general, these two notions are central to the extent that neglecting them could be tantamount to espousing only half-truths of that philosophical tradition in particular, and of history of philosophy in general. Teaching philosophy in Africa without observation of the foregoing short-changes the discipline of philosophy, as there are observable cases of this approach.

The history of philosophy should not entail haphazard representation nor be imbued by selective ideology of the sort Bernard Matolino [2020] and Mesembe Edet [2002] advocate. Matolino is right in saying the teaching of the history of philosophy ought to entail critical reflection on the context within which a philosophical postulation is made. Yes, this is true. Nevertheless, I think Matolino's assertion is an extension of what a critical teaching of history ought to be, as no historian of philosophy worth their onion should be predisposed to teach the history of philosophy without proper elucidation of circumstances (historical and speculative) that influenced and could have influenced such postulations. If we search within the development of important texts in the history of philosophy, we would find some convergence on this approach. For example, taken in isolation, Bertrand Russell's treatment of John Locke as one of the luckiest political philosophers in history based on the happenstance of Locke's *Treatises on Government* and the concurrent battle for American independence, thereby earning his theory of rights a place in the American declaration of independence and its subsequent constitution. Russell's identification of the theocratic concretisation of Aquinas' legal theory as a probable consolidation of the latter's Catholicism are quite a point of reference in this regard. Viewed more comprehensively, perhaps, not only could Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* be taken as a mere documentation of the history of philosophy in Western thought systems, but it could also be interpreted, for its contextual elucidation, as a philosophical commentary on the history of Western ideologies and its extended foundations. This is one way, and a convincing one at that, to understand and teach the history of philosophy with its numerous contextual possibilities, but not with a preconceived cultural fossilisation.

Even if existing historical pedagogical writings on African philosophy does not express such contextual reflection as Matolino [2020] claims, only a comprehensive and non-disintegrative approach could rectify such omission, not cultural fragmentation or political expediency of essentialism. Regardless of the grand followership an essentialist thesis may currently enjoy on the continent, a non-culturally affiliative mechanism, I believe, is apt for any concrete historical corrective model. To be historians, we must first and foremost be philosophers, claims Bertrand Russell [1945]. And we could add that to be historians of philosophy is to be critical explorers of the history of development of ideas, and not necessarily cultural associates of the essentialist twist.

10 Here, I will like to mention at first hand, a former teacher, Dipo Fashina of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, whose interest in Marxism influenced his insistence on a comprehensive study of Hegelian thoughts, and by extension, a relation of the latter's influence of Karl Marx's philosophy.

Conclusion

The foregoing brings the thought in this paper to some concluding remarks. Should Hegelian denialism not be excoriated while furthering the conversation of Hegel's other philosophical thoughts? Would a comprehensive approach to conceptualising African philosophy, in hindsight, not serve the purpose of reengaging the history of the discipline? Would Hegel's ghost not be expunged altogether within the matrix of alternative thoughts towards how things might have been? This, perhaps, should interest philosophers currently researching decolonisation in African philosophy, or decolonising philosophy in Africa.

Reactionist basis of African philosophy is questionable enough, and to add the claim of essentialism to the construction of the discipline, African philosophy gets locked into a closet of difference—within which exists a reasoning that attempts to separate Africa from the rest of the world. The paradox of this trajectory is that rather than the nationalists' attempt to repudiate the logic of racial difference which underlines the logic of racist charges against the rationality of Africans, African philosophers are on the contrary systematically reinforcing claims exhibiting similar disintegrative tropes through assertions of uniqueness and peculiarity, but with a different political shade. We find a sharp expression of such in Lucky Uchenna Ogbonnaya's exploration and advocacy for a method of African philosophy and a subsequent proclamation that African ontology is different from Western ontology [Ogbonnaya, 2018: 121]. We could once again allude to Leopold Sedar Senghor's impulsive disintegrative claim that reason is Western, while emotion is African, as an existing example that glosses such thought also. Meanwhile, one should be warned of the invalidity of such an essentialist split.

In this paper, my expressed view of non-dependence on philosophy as the only source of reason is largely premised on a conviction that African philosophy need not be construed on the basis of reacting to wanton criticism of Africans' rationality. Responsive constructions repudiating such racist claims abound, and it is critical to also dissuade philosophical postulations that attempt to essentialise philosophy in the name of authenticity or Africanness. Instructive, this is, for discursive conception of African philosophy on the one hand, and pedagogical continuity of philosophy in general on the other.

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