Chapter 14
Communitarian Ethics and Work-Based Education: Some African Perspectives

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Introduction

In this chapter, I address work-based education (WBE) from a *moral* perspective, which differs in major respects from most of the other philosophical literature on it. First, I am not primarily interested in *epistemology*. I do not analyse different basic types of knowledge, say, with an eye to indicating ways in which WBE would be a particularly efficient means of learning about an academic field or acquiring certain know-how. Second, I am also not concerned with *phenomenology*. I set aside the rich body of literature, inspired particularly by the thought of Martin Heidegger, that reflects upon what it is like to be a learner in a WBE context or what a workplace environment can inform us about the basic facets of the experience of one who works with others or works with tools. Third, I do not address WBE in relation to issues of *well-being*, namely, the ways in which WBE would benefit or satisfy the interests of either employees or employers. I do not investigate the odds of a WBE learner acquiring a job, becoming more confident or contributing to her firm's productivity, relative to those of a more traditional student.

Instead, I seek to answer questions that have been much less often posed, ethical ones such as these: Is there reason to believe that WBE would tend to make better people (as opposed to make people better off)? That is, can we reasonably expect characteristic WBE learners to exhibit good character to a greater degree relative to non-WBE ones? On a social level, would systematic use of WBE noticeably promote justice, say, by effecting the right sort of reparation to those who have suffered from colonialism or exploitation?

Engaging in moral enquiry is best undertaken not in an implicit and piecemeal fashion but rather when one's assumptions are out in the open and presented in a

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systematic, coherent manner. To put my ethical cards on the table and to arrange them in an orderly way, in this chapter, I explore WBE in light of a theory that, roughly, at bottom instructs agents to prize communal relationships. As I indicate below, this moral theory is to be identified in the first instance with precolonial thought and practice below the Sahara desert. I draw on an Afro-communitarian ethic mainly because I believe that it is a philosophically promising and underappreciated alternative to the Kantian and utilitarian perspectives that dominate Western moral-philosophical research. However, beyond addressing myself to scholars in the 'Global North' interested in the moral dimensions of WBE, I also think of my audience as those living in sub-Saharan and other underdeveloped parts of the 'Global South'. The sort of ethic I articulate should jibe particularly well with world views many of them already hold, and the issues I address, relating to individual character and social justice, should also be of special interest to them, given their theoretical and practical contexts.

I begin by presenting an overview of traditional black African societies, noting that WBE has been the dominant mode of learning in them ('Work-Based Education in Traditional African Culture' section). Then, to begin to show that WBE has relevance for contemporary societies, I articulate a communitarian moral theory grounded in mores that have been salient among sub-Saharan peoples, differentiating it from the Western theories more familiar to international readers and motivating them to take it seriously as relevant to moral enquiry in today's world ('An African Moral Theory' section). Then, I apply this Afro-communitarianism to WBE, enquiring into its prospects for fostering individual character ('Work-Based Education and Character' section) and social justice, particularly in the Global South ('Work-Based Education and Justice' section). I conclude by posing some questions suitable for future research, supposing that my analysis has been basically sound or at least promising ('Conclusion' section).

Work-Based Education in Traditional African Culture

Black peoples below the Sahara, considered apart from the influences of colonialism, are well known for tending to share certain ways of life.[1] They characteristically: are small scale in number so that everyone knows everyone else, with nothing approximating the size and anonymity of a metropolis; have oral cultures, lacking a corpus of written works; maintain that ritual, initiation and tradition have some moral importance of a sort unrecognized in modern societies; hold land in common, parcelling it out to households based on need and clan membership, in contrast to permitting profit-maximizing private ownership; lack sophisticated science and technology, with the economy based largely on agriculture, cattle or hunting/gathering; maintain that there are weighty duties to aid that far transcend the nuclear family, centred on what Westerners would call 'extended family' such as uncles,

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[1] Here I draw on summaries of anthropological and sociological findings presented in Metz (2007, 2012a).

cousins and many other members of a lineage; believe in a duty to wed and to procreate, viewing solitariness as problematic; have faith in the continued existence of and interaction with ancestors, people who were not merely forebears of a given people but ones who both lived to a ripe old age and exhibited moral wisdom (the 'living-dead'); expect respect for, and even deference to, elders, as opposed to prize youth; resolve conflicts affecting society by consensus, at least among some popularly appointed elders, rather than rest content with either majority rule or the non-consultative will of a monarch; and respond to infraction not with retributive punishment, but with an eye toward reconciliation between the offender, his family, the immediate victim and the broader community.

These are typical, and not necessarily universal, facets of traditional sub-Saharan societies, setting aside the imposition or importation of cultures from Europe, India and the like. An additional trait that could be added to the list above is, in fact, the predominance of work-based education as the mode of instruction. Two influential proponents of African traditional education sum it up as having 'emphasized learning by doing, respect for elders, lifelong education, training on the job, learning to live and living to learn' (Adeyemi and Adeyinka 2003: 436).

More specifically, in many sub-Saharan communities,[2] education was not undertaken in a formally organized or institutional setting. It was rare for learning (a) to take place in a dedicated school building and (b) to be run by professional teachers in light of (c) a preset, vetted curriculum that (d) focused on written texts and (e) sought to impart 'theoretical' or 'cosmopolitan' knowledge, with students (f) oriented toward obtaining a degree or certificate so as to compete on a labour market. In contrast, education was by and large utilitarian and parochial (e*), focusing on teaching students how to master skills that would enable them to take up roles that would reproduce their agrarian communities, both economically and culturally (f*). The young tended to learn such skills either by imitating their parents or elders, or by becoming apprentices to those particularly skilled in a given area who would orally transmit the know-how on the job (a*, b*, d*). What students were taught varied, depending on their gender and talents, and was not subject to review by some group of parents or officials (c*).

One might suggest that, given the low division of labour, lack of scientific enquiry and absence of globalization in the precolonial era, WBE was apt, but that it is of dubious relevance to the urban centres of the twenty-first century. In fact, I believe that, setting aside the evidence that WBE is an efficient way to learn, there are *moral* reasons, especially for underdeveloped societies such as those in the sub-Saharan region, to use it more frequently than they have.

A resolutely *ethical* analysis of WBE is unusual to find in the literature. As John Garrick points out in his essay, 'The Dominant Discourses of Learning at Work', the major approaches taken to WBE 'are all sub-discourses of contemporary market economics' (1999: 217).[3] Garrick notes that WBE is most often viewed as a way to

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[2] For mention of exceptions, in which there were more formal or quasi-formal teaching methods, see Adeyinka and Ndwapi (2002: 19) and Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2003: 434–435).

[3] Cf. 'The Grounds for Work-Based Learning' in Raelin (2008: 9–30)

invest profitably in human capital, to foster personal empowerment, to develop job-related expertise and the like, all of which are respects in which WBE would *benefit* the individual learner or the organization at which she learns. Such analyses are *amoral* (not necessarily immoral) in the sense that they do not expressly and systematically invoke moral language and concepts. Of course, one could argue that workers and firms seeking to maximize their respective self-interest in labour and consumer markets, perhaps via WBE, is a just way to organize economic production and distribution. However, my point is that it is rare to find WBE expressly and rigorously analysed in light of justice and other moral categories such as good character and right action.[4] That is something I aim to help rectify in this chapter.

To evaluate WBE in light of moral considerations, I draw on a particular ethical framework inspired by the communal way of life of traditional African societies. In the following sections, I spell out a communitarian moral theory grounded in several norms salient in sub-Saharan cultures, argue that it should be taken seriously as an ethical guide to contemporary life regardless of one's location on the globe and then show that it entails that considerations of virtue and justice counsel work-based education in modern, industrialized societies.

An African Moral Theory

I evaluate WBE in light of an African moral theory not merely because I address myself to educationists in the sub-Saharan region, those who would be most expected to find this philosophical perspective attractive. My audience is also squarely those in the Global North, who may be unfamiliar with African worldviews. Upon having become acquainted with sub-Saharan moral thought some years ago, I have come to believe that it points toward a principled articulation of right action that adds a perspective that at least should supplement the Western ethical theorization that dominates the international literature and, at most, should supplant it.

A moral theory is a comprehensive, basic principle that purports to indicate what all wrong actions have in common in contrast to right ones and that can be used to resolve potentially any interpersonal, social problem. The most influential Western moral theories are the principle of respect, that an act is wrong insofar as it degrades a person's autonomy, and the principle of utility, that an act is wrong insofar as it fails to improve people's quality of life.

Now, a moral theory counts as 'African' insofar as it is informed by beliefs and practices salient among traditional black peoples below the Sahara desert. Hence, to label a moral theory, or anything, 'African' implies neither that it is exclusive to that region, not to be found anywhere else, nor that it is exhaustive of that region, to be found among every member of it. Instead, to call something 'African' or 'sub-Saharan',

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[4] One will, of course, find *some* moral discussion of WBE in the literature, but it is invariably brief and piecemeal, as opposed to thorough and theoretical. Representative are Boud and Garrick (1999: 5–6), Matthews and Candy (1999: 60–61), Cunningham et al. (2004: 272).

at least in the present context, connotes merely the idea that there are certain features in that locale that are recurrent and noticeable in a way they tend not to be elsewhere on the globe.

The African moral theory that I have articulated and defended is this: An act is wrong insofar as it fails to respect communal relationships, those in which we identify with and exhibit solidarity toward others. Note that this principle is not intended to be a description, that is, an accurate reflection, of any precolonial people's way of life but is rather a normative-philosophical construction, grounded in traditional sub-Saharan cultures, that is meant to provide guidance for how people ought to live regardless of their society. This principle, I have argued elsewhere, does a good job of making sense of the characteristic nature of sub-Saharan societies, which I adumbrated in the previous section; it can be viewed as a rational reconstruction of the values that would make sense of several facets of the culture commonly encountered below the Sahara (Metz 2007). However, this principle *also* excels at unifying and grounding most readers' scattered, unreflective judgments about morality, regardless of their cultural background, something that I have been working systematically to prove elsewhere (Metz 2009, 2010a, b, 2012b), but that I here defend merely as *prima facie* plausible.

My favoured African moral theory instructs agents to prize community, where this is not just any actual social grouping but rather is an ideal form of it composed of two logically distinct relationships: 'identity' and 'solidarity'.[5] To identify with each other is, in part, for people to treat themselves as members of the same group, that is, to share a sense of togetherness principally by conceiving of themselves as a 'we' and taking pride and shame in the group's behaviour. Identifying with others also includes engaging in joint projects, coordinating behaviour to realize common ends. Identity is a matter of people sharing a way of life, with the opposite of it being instantiated by people defining themselves in opposition to one another and seeking to undermine one another's ends.

To exhibit solidarity with one another is for people to care about each other's quality of life in two senses. First, it means that they engage in mutual aid, acting in ways that are expected to benefit one another. Second, caring is a matter of people's attitudes such as emotions and motives being positively oriented toward others, say, by sympathizing with them and helping them for their sake. For people to fail to exhibit solidarity could be for them to be indifferent to each other's flourishing or to exhibit ill will in the form of hostility and cruelty.

Identity and solidarity are different sorts of relationship. One could identify with others but not exhibit solidarity with them—probably workers in relation to management in a capitalist firm. One could also exhibit solidarity with others but not identify with them, for example, by making anonymous donations to a charity. My proposal, following the intimations of several African thinkers, is that a promising normative conception of community includes both kinds of relationship. Consider the following senses of 'community' one finds suggested by sub-Saharan theorists:

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[5] The next few paragraphs borrow from Metz (2012a).

'Every member is expected to consider him/herself an integral part of the whole and to play an appropriate role towards achieving the good of all' (Gbadegesin 1991: 65); 'Harmony is achieved through close and sympathetic social relations within the group' (Mokgoro 1998: 3); 'The fundamental meaning of community is the sharing of an overall way of life, inspired by the notion of the common good' (Gyekye 2004: 16); and '(T)he purpose of our life is community-service and community-belongingness' (Iroegbu 2005: 442).

The combination of identity, or sharing a way of life, and solidarity, or caring for others' quality of life, is equivalent to what English speakers mean by a broad sense of 'friendship' or 'love'. A friendly or loving relationship more or less is one in which the parties think of themselves as a 'we', engage in common activities, act to benefit one another and do so for the other's sake and consequent to sympathy. Hence, one way of putting the Afro-communitarian moral theory I am articulating is to say that we are obligated to prize friendship or love, or that an act is wrong insofar as it fails to do so, and especially insofar as it prizes unfriendly relationships, those based on hatred. As Desmond Tutu, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and renowned chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission sums up morality from a typical African perspective: 'Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the *summum bonum*-the greatest good. Anything that subverts or undermines this sought-after good is to be avoided like the plague' (1999: 35).

To illustrate and motivate the principle, I now apply it to several instances of intuitively wrong behaviour. It is normally immoral to deceive, coerce, assault, steal, exploit and break promises. What do these and other relatively uncontroversially wrong actions have in common? The present theory entails this (rough) answer: They are *unfriendly*. They are antisocial or express hatred in the following senses: The agent is distancing himself from the person acted upon, instead of enjoying a sense of togetherness; the agent is subordinating the other, as opposed to coordinating behaviour with her; the agent is doing what is likely to harm the other for the sake of himself or someone else rather than acting for the sake of her good; and the agent is being malevolent, in contrast to exhibiting positive attitudes toward the other's good.

Deeming acts to be wrong basically insofar as they esteem unfriendliness differs in interesting ways from a Kantian account, according to which wrong acts are those degrading of an individual's autonomy, and from a utilitarian view, according to which wrong acts are those not improving people's quality of life relative to other available actions. Proponents of these Western theories would say that friends ought to treat each other morally, namely, according to one of these theories, whereas I, defending an Afro-communitarian perspective, suggest the reverse: In order to treat each other morally, we must prize friendly relationships.

Friendly relationships, of the relevant sort, include Kantian and utilitarian elements; being a genuine friend means coordinating one's behaviour with others rather than subordinating them, and striving to improve their quality of life rather than harming them. However, the Afro-communitarian moral theory expresses much more than a combination of these ideas familiar in Western normative

thought. First, being a genuine friend means not merely making other people better off, as per utilitarianism, but also making them better people, namely, helping them to improve their character by themselves becoming better friends. Second, being a genuine friend means helping people for their own sake and because one sympathizes with them, whereas a utilitarian would object to such other-regarding attitudes if having a more selfish disposition had the indirect effect of making others marginally better off (à la Adam Smith's invisible hand). Third, being a genuine friend means more than not oppressing others, which could in principle be done by remaining isolated from them; it also means participating with them, engaging in common activities, which the Kantian does not require as a way to respect autonomy. Fourth, being a genuine friend means sharing a sense of self with others, that is, thinking of oneself as a 'we' and taking pride and shame in the group's behaviour, neither of which a Kantian (or a utilitarian) deems morally important at bottom.

Focus, now, on an educational context in order to see how the African moral theory works. Consider, first, why it is wrong for students to plagiarize. Presumably, it is good for students to acquire an education, and a school would be much more likely to impart an education to them with a policy of disallowing students to take credit for writing produced by others. Hence, considerations of mutual aid counsel a school to adopt a rule forbidding plagiarism. A student who broke this rule would hardly be fostering a sense of togetherness with other students and his instructors but rather would be thinking of himself as an 'I' in opposition to others. He would also be deceiving others and taking advantage of their conformity to the rule, which, by the above, would be unfriendly. In addition, he would be harming, rather than helping, other students by taking up instructors' time that could have been spent more productively, and he would not be evincing positive attitudes toward other students' good but rather ones of indifference, at best.

Relatedly, think about why the African moral theory would entail that it is permissible for a school to punish a plagiarizer, at least an unrepentant one, an issue distinct from the claim that it is impermissible to plagiarize. It might appear that because any punishment is unfriendly, all punishment is unjustified by the present principle. However, the principle instructs us to *prize* or respect friendly relationships, and doing so can sometimes permit behaviour that is in itself unfriendly, when done to counteract unfriendliness. If someone has not been unfriendly but is the victim of an unfriendly action, then valuing friendliness permits treating the unfriendly agent in an unfriendly manner, if essential to stop that behaviour or prevent its harmful effects. In short, punishment is justified as a means to repairing broken relationships, when those responsible for breaking them are not mending them and the penalties are placed on them. With regard to a student who has plagiarized, then, a penalty would be permissible insofar as it would be necessary to stop the student from deceiving and taking advantage of others, to prompt her to make things right with those she has wronged and to direct her toward interacting with others on a friendlier basis.

My aim has not been to convince readers of the truth of the Afro-communitarian moral theory I have spelled out but rather to demonstrate that it is a promising way

to make sense of the rights and duties we intuitively have. Thinking of immoral actions roughly in terms of what esteems unfriendly relationships is not often discussed in the international literature, but it grows out of values shared widely among nearly a billion people below the Sahara desert and is, I submit, a perspective that is worth applying to contemporary controversies in education.

Work-Based Education and Character

Whereas much of the literature on WBE discusses respects in which it efficiently imparts *skills* to workers, in this section, I focus on *virtues* that WBE can be expected to foster in them, relative to a normal classroom setting. In light of the African moral theory from the previous section, a virtuous person is one who esteems communal relationships. One phrase that is characteristically used to summarize sub-Saharan ethics is, 'A person is a person through other persons', a (literal) translation of a maxim instructing one to become a *real* person, or to live a *genuinely* human way of life, by prizing community with other persons (e.g. Wiredu 2004: 20). I argue that one's odds of exhibiting good character, so construed in communal terms, would be better if one participated in WBE than if one merely attended school.

I begin to spell out the way that WBE is likely to make us better people, namely, ones who prize communal or friendly relationships, by recalling that WBE characteristically takes place in a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991; Raelin 1997: 569–571; Wenger 1998; Matthews and Candy 1999: 53–56; Keller 2006: 207–208; Nielsen and Kvale 2006: 123–126). This phrase, which is ubiquitous in the WBE literature,[6] connotes the idea that a worker learns much of what she does (roughly) by informally collaborating with others to realize shared goals. More specifically, it is often pointed out that, in contrast to school, in the workplace an individual must fit into an organized scheme, doing what she can to become part of a system oriented toward producing some object or service. She tends to succeed insofar as she helps the group to do so, unlike the more solitary endeavour that is characteristic of the classroom. In addition, whereas in school, from the perspective of a student, communication tends to be unidirectional and dyadic, that is, coming 'downward' from a single source, namely, the teacher, in a community of practice at work communication tends to be more self-inaugurated, back and forth and among a variety of co-workers.[7]

Up to now, friends of WBE have invoked the idea of a community of practice in order to explain salient respects in which people's education can improve and thereby benefit either themselves or those who employ them. For example, Etienne

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[6] For an earlier, related notion of 'shared cognition', see Marsick and Watkins (1990: 208).

[7] Nielsen and Kvale (2006: 123–125) highlight the respects in which the WBE learning context is often that of teamwork and network. For much more detailed and careful analyses of the concept of a community of practice, see Wenger (1998, 2006).

Wenger, one of the scholars who coined the phrase 'communities of practice', argues that they are likely to enhance a firm's profitability by helping it to solve problems quickly, to transfer best practices, to develop professional skills and the like (Wenger and Snyder 2000). Other theorists highlight respects in which employees are likely to benefit from communities of practice, say, by developing their autonomy (Beckett and Hager 2002: esp. 27–28, 86–87) or learning in a way they prefer (Nielsen and Kvale 2006). Now, I appeal to the notion of community of practice for a different reason, namely, to suggest that it should be seen as something not merely desirable as a means to the *well-being* of an employee or employer but also as contributing to people *becoming virtuous.*

Given two ways to acquire useful knowledge, either in a community of practice or outside one, *ceteris paribus* one ought to do so in such a community since by doing so one would be more likely also to develop moral excellence. Consider four different reasons for thinking so, in light of the Afro-communitarian ethic sketched above. First, recall that community, from a sub-Saharan perspective, includes the idea of people psychologically identifying with one another, by thinking of themselves as a 'we' and taking pride or shame in what the 'we' does. Such an inclusive notion of oneself as being part of a group is more likely to be realized in a workplace community of practice than in a classroom. To be sure, students do have some tendency to think of themselves as a 'we', in light of their common status and interests. However, such an orientation is likely to be much stronger in a WBE context, in which people are dependent on one another to achieve shared aims and routinely communicate with each other about how to achieve them.

A second facet of the African notion of community, recall, is identifying with others practically, by participating in joint activities. Here, again, the community of practice facet of WBE instantiates such behaviour much more than the typical classroom. Of course, teachers can and do assign group activities at school, but they are not the norm. In contrast, a community of practice *just is* a relationship in which people undertake a common project, coordinating their behaviour through communication to realize common ends. By definition, then, insofar as WBE includes a community of practice, it includes part of what an Afro-communitarian ethic prizes.

A third facet of community, of the sort that one ought to esteem to become a real person in African ethics, is mutual aid, a relationship in which one helps others, ideally repeatedly over time. Again, such a relationship is more likely to be encountered on a day-to-day basis in a workplace than in a formal teaching space. Yes, students sometimes help one another outside of class, and an excellent teacher will solicit input from a given student in a way that is likely to benefit many others in the classroom. However, I submit that co-workers, colleagues and team members probably *reciprocate* much more than do students, at least when comparing time spent at work and at school.

Fourth, and finally, note that communal relationships of the sort that in an African framework confer virtue on a person include certain positive attitudes toward others' good. A real person is one who is motivated altruistically and who helps others upon sympathizing with them, not primarily because, say, she expects to be rewarded in the long run for having helped others in the short term. Even if an instructor in a

traditional classroom drew out a student in a way that would help other students, it would not follow that the student's contribution would express the right sort of attitudes. She might well answer a teacher's question merely so as to receive a higher mark for herself or to avoid being shamed or penalized in some way. In contrast, those who are part of a community of practice on the job would be more likely to exhibit the relevant emotions and motivations toward their co-workers. To be sure, individuals want to advance at a firm, in terms of pay, status and working conditions. However, when set in a community of practice, self-regarding attitudes are very likely to be tempered by other-regarding ones that would naturally arise when working with others. In particular, upon the other three aspects of community being realized, namely, a sense of togetherness, joint projects and mutual aid, it would be unusual for individuals not to help one another for the each other's sake and on the basis of fellow feelings.

In sum, by the Afro-communitarian moral theory I have articulated in the previous section, a person is virtuous, or becomes a 'real' person in the vernacular, insofar as she prizes communal relationships of identity and solidarity. I have argued that both the psychological and behavioural facets of identity and solidarity would be much more likely to be realized in a community of practice at the workplace than in a traditional school environment and have invoked the widespread observation in the literature that WBE characteristically includes a community of practice. This argumentation implies neither that workplace learning would invariably be sufficient to maximize virtue nor that learning at school would invariably be sufficient not to realize it as much as possible. After all, some workplaces radically isolate workers from one another, and one can imagine a substantially revised type of school environment, indeed one in which communities of practice were made central. Instead, my argument in this section has been that, given *characteristic forms* of school-based and work-based learning, the latter is much more likely to promote virtue, conceived in Afro-communal terms, than the former. Put roughly, one is likely to be friendlier while on the job than in the classroom.

Work-Based Education and Justice

By 'justice' I do not mean merely those policies that may be rightly enforced by the state, which many contemporary political philosophers would take the term essentially to connote. I have in mind such policies but also additional social relationships that might not admit, for moral or practical reasons, of being backed up with state coercion. Intuitively, non-political organizations, such as businesses and NGOs, can contribute to social justice, and if this is true, then it is also true that groups that are not formally organized and, indeed, even individuals acting alone can in principle advance just relationships, namely, ones in which people are treated fairly and given their due.

When social justice is construed in this broad way, then one can reasonably expect WBE to advance it, at least under certain conditions that are widespread in

developing societies. There are two kinds of justice, each of which WBE would plausibly promote, namely, ideal justice, on the one hand, and non-ideal justice, on the other. The latter sort of justice concerns the way that agents should respond to infractions of the former sort. Non-ideal justice, at least in the West, is largely understood to be a matter of criminal justice, the punishment of offenders for wrong-doing, and of compensatory justice, restitution to those who have been wrongfully harmed. Stealing an item would violate principles of ideal justice, whereas failing to punish the thief and to help see the stolen item returned (when an impartial third party could do so at little cost to other ends) would violate principles of non-ideal justice. In this section, I use the most space to argue that WBE could help promote non-ideal justice, particularly conceived in light of an African morality.

Traditional sub-Saharan societies are well known for responding to wrongdoing with forms of what Westerners tend to call 'restorative justice'. In response to many crimes, many such communities would 'look forward', doing what would be likely to repair broken relationships between the offender, the victim, their respective families and the broader community. Such mending of frayed ties would often involve elders encouraging wrongdoers to apologize directly to those they have harmed and to offer some kind of compensation for the harm done, as well as prompting victims to forgive them. As Ali Mazrui, the famous pan-African social theorist, remarks, 'What is distinctive about Africans is their short memory of hate'.[8]

Thinking of non-ideal justice basically in terms of what is likely to heal rifts between people differs radically from purely 'backward-looking' approaches typical in the West. For example, it differs from a retributive stance according to which a person should be punished in proportion to, and simply because of, the crime he committed. Sometimes traditional African societies have imposed punishment and even quite severe penalties such as death or banishment. However, the typical rationale for doing so is to protect the community from the wrath of angry ancestors, namely, to make things right with them (or to prevent disruption to communal ties threatened by incorrigible witches).

In addition, using compensation as a way to express remorse and to do what can be expected to foster reconciliation differs from a more Western, strictly historical approach to it, by which the one liable for wrongful harm should pay back those he has injured precisely to the degree that would make up for their loss. Achieving the aim of overcoming unfriendly dispositions does not require that, at a level of principle, the benefits conferred on victims precisely make up for burdens they wrongly suffered.

The restorative approach to non-ideal justice that is characteristic of many traditional black peoples naturally grows out of a value system that prizes community; it was such a value system, and not Christianity, that was largely responsible for South Africa's establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in response to apartheid-era crimes.[9] Appealing, now, to the Afro-communitarian moral theory above, one's basic obligation is to esteem relationships of identity

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[8] Said during an interview and quoted in Nussbaum (2003: 5).

[9] Tutu (1999), Louw (2006), Krog (2008).

and solidarity, which is naturally understood to entail two principles in the context of non-ideal justice (both of which are mentioned in the case of punishing plagiarism above). First, response to infraction ought to promote the ends of ending antisocial behaviour and of fostering community between the offenders and his victims, both direct and indirect, and second, any burdens, compensatory or punitive, should be imposed only as necessary to achieve those ends and only on those who have been antisocial.[10]

What does this restorative conception of non-ideal justice have to do with WBE? My suggestion is that those who have been responsible for, or benefited from, historical injustice could use WBE as a particularly effective way to repair broken relationships between themselves and those wronged. To make things concrete, consider how WBE would be apt for contemporary South African society. Recall that under apartheid, a white minority controlled political power and used it to segregate people, such that people of different races were legally forbidden from: having sexual and romantic relationships with one another, living in the same territory, attending the same schools or using the same beaches or restrooms. Blacks were not merely separated from whites, but whites also forcibly took the lion's share of the country's wealth. They removed black people from desirable land, to the point where white people, no more than 13 % of the population, controlled about 87 % of the territory, particularly that with arable farmland on top and minerals underground. Whites also monopolized access to well-resourced hospitals, schools, transportation, policing and other public services, and generally relegated black people to physical labour, such as mining or harvesting for men and domestic labour for women.

In the early 1990s, the laws enforcing such segregation and oppression were dismantled, but the effects of them remain in the twenty-first century. Land redistribution has proceeded slowly, and the small amount of reallocation that has taken place has failed, in the sense that a very large majority of new black owners have not been able to make productive use of the land (and in many cases have sold it back to the white families who previously lived on it). In addition, largely because of inferior education, black people tend to lack the skills needed to obtain work in a modern economy. This is true not only for older black people who lived under apartheid but also those in their teens and 20s, who have suffered from poorly trained teachers at the primary and secondary levels of education. The official unemployment rate stands at 25 %, but that of course excludes those who have stopped looking for work and includes many jobs that pay extremely poorly. About half of South Africa's 50 million people, nearly all of them black, continue to live below the poverty line of a dollar or two a day, while a large majority of the white population is employed and reasonably well paid for the skills they have been able to acquire.

South Africa might be unique in the extreme degree to which it has been warped by historical injustice. However, it is also representative of several dozen other societies. Nearly all other countries below the Sahara suffered from centuries of British

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[10] For more precise renditions of these principles, see Metz (2010b: 91–95).

and Continental colonialism and exploitation. A majority of countries in South America were initially colonized, primarily by those from the Iberian Peninsula, and then for about a century ruled in quasi-feudal manner by small numbers of local families owning large amounts of land, with the large majority of the population being peasants. In the United States, Native Americans were subjected to genocide and forced removal, and Africans and their offspring suffered from racial slavery. In all these societies, opportunities for indigenous people and people of colour are often less than what they would have been in the absence of historical injustice. Concretely, most of them suffer from being unable to acquire the skills needed to compete on the labour market that is part of a global capitalist economy.

WBE would be one way for the well off in such societies to help effect restorative justice, to do something to overcome the stark racial and class divisions that linger from colonialism, exploitation, slavery and the like. Returning to South Africa to illustrate, think about white families and conglomerates that still own substantial amounts of farmland. They could begin by formally apologizing for retaining control over land that was wrongfully taken from blacks. And then they could individually, or ideally collectively, decide to impart skills to blacks and to transfer a certain percentage of fertile land and other requisite means to those with the demonstrable ability to make use of it.

As indicated above, merely returning land to black people has failed to improve their conditions, as they have by and large lacked the skills and capital needed to make the land productive. Furthermore, the South African government, like most governments in the southern hemisphere, is not in a position to provide the training and resources needed for people to become able farmers. However, many white people still running farms are in such a position. If they were to adopt WBE, making apprentices of blacks interested in becoming farmers, and, upon the acquisition of knowledge and skills on the job, transferring land and other means to them, then not only would blacks genuinely benefit from this kind of compensation but it would also be most likely to help bring people together. Blacks would be more likely to let go of resentment and to forgive upon being aided in this way, and both communities would share a greater sense of togetherness. Note that current agricultural associations would be sufficient to coordinate such a redress programme; neither state implementation nor even supervision would be necessary.

Moving from farms to firms, similar projects could be undertaken by companies in urban centres. Here, too, those excluded from participation in the economy by virtue of lacking access to quality education could in many cases best obtain it from business owners. I have noted the poor instruction that most pupils receive from teachers in grade school and high school. In addition, it is of course a commonplace among friends of WBE to note that a standard university education does not prepare one adequately for a job, and I here also point out that very few people in developing societies even register for a higher degree, let alone obtain it. However, profitable businesses able to compete on the world market are in a position to train prospective employees. They could provide paid internships to unemployed people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, that would attempt to groom them into proper candidates for a permanent job. Ideally this would be done in combination

with some kind of more formal education, leading to a certificate or diploma. NGOs and other non-profit institutions could adopt similar projects.[11]

Just as merely giving blacks land would not be the right sort of compensation in a rural context, so merely giving them money would not be the right kind in an urban one. In order for restorative justice to be obtained, those who have benefited significantly from past injustice must acknowledge that fact and go out of their way to provide victims with a *sustainable* benefit, such as the skills needed to hold a job. Widespread adoption of WBE would not fully make up for all the losses resulting from apartheid, but it could go a long way toward healing racial conflict and alienation, namely, obtaining the aim of reconciliation. Similar remarks apply to societies with similar contexts.

WBE could also be useful with regard to fulfilling ideal justice, for example, economic justice. If one believes that the wealth of one's parents should not determine one's chance of getting a job and instead believes that those born into a lower economic class should be given the education needed to compete effectively for a job, then one might reasonably think that an internship-plus-diploma scheme would help those who cannot attend university. In addition, if one thinks that distributive justice requires providing education not merely to the young but to those of just about any age, then a similar kind of scheme could be apt as a way to underwrite 'lifelong learning' (Oduaran 2002).

In this section, I have argued that there is good reason to think that WBE could advance social justice, particularly of the non-ideal sort, if implemented systematically in societies that have suffered from colonialism, slavery and similar atrocities. In these societies, there are large pools of unskilled and consequently unemployed and impoverished people, whose governments are usually not in a great position to help them. A number of those who have benefited from historical injustice could adopt WBE, in the form of internships and apprenticeships, as a way to express remorse for having so benefited and to compensate victims by imparting the sustainable benefits of skills.

Conclusion

I have sought to evaluate work-based education (WBE) from a moral perspective, and, in particular, one informed by communitarian values prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa. I first pointed out that WBE was the predominant form of learning in precolonial, small-scale black societies and then argued that an underappreciated moral theory grounded on salient facets of African culture entails that there are

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[11] My own university has adopted this kind of scheme. Its New Generation Scholars Programme targets principally black South Africans by paying their tuition, giving them a generous stipend, providing the kind of attention and support needed for them to succeed at obtaining their PhDs and moreover ensuring them a job at the university upon suitable completion of the doctorate.

reasons for contemporary societies to use it. For one, WBE could, better than merely returning once-stolen objects such as land and money, help to foster restorative justice or reconciliation in societies that, as a result of systematic historical dispossession, have large numbers of unskilled people. For another, WBE could, better than a traditional classroom setting, help to promote virtue in individual learners, where this is conceived as a matter of identifying with others and engaging in solidarity with them.

Beyond these ethically relevant potential *outcomes* of WBE, it would be worth exploring, in another context, the *process* of WBE, enquiring into which forms it should take in order to satisfy ethical criteria. Beyond the obvious considerations of complying with contracts and being respectful toward colleagues, what moral requirements are there on WBE participants? In particular, what would the Afro-communitarian perspective articulated in this chapter entail for the way that learners, mentors and other participants in WBE ought to conduct themselves? The project of evaluating WBE from a moral perspective has only just begun.

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