Chapter 2
Ubuntu Ethics

Beauchamp and Childress define the term ethics as a "generic term covering several different ways of examining and understanding the moral life."[1] Childress and Macquarrie describe ethics and ethical questions in three different ways. The first are "questions as to what is right, good, etc, or of how we ought to behave (normative ethics, morals)." The second are "questions as to the answers given by particular societies and people as to what is right or good." The third are "questions as to the meanings or uses of the words used in answering questions of what is right, good."[2] Emmet describes morality as "Considerations as to what one thinks it important to do and in what ways; how to conduct one's relations with other people; and being aware and prepared to be critical of one's basic approvals as disapprovals."[3] Dewey asserts that "interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest."[4]

As an ethic, Ubuntu is generally in conformity with the definitions and descriptions of ethics given above. Ubuntu, however, is unique in its substance, in its method and in its worldview. As an indigenous culture Ubuntu presents an ethical worldview (referred to in this work as Ubuntu ethics) with three constituent components. The first component of Ubuntu ethics deals with the tension between individual and universal rights; the contribution of this component to global bioethics emerges by considering the Ethics of Care as a crucial aspect of bioethics discourse.

The second component of Ubuntu ethics concerns the cosmic and global context of life; the contribution of this component to global bioethics emerges by considering UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights as crucial for bioethics discourse. The third component of Ubuntu ethics deals with the role of solidarity that unites individuals and communities within a cosmic context; the contribution of this component to global bioethics emerges by considering the Roman Catholic tradition on social ethics as a significant aspect of discourse on global bioethics. This chapter explores those three major components of Ubuntu ethics.

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[1] Beauchamp and Childress (2009, p. 1).

[2] Childress and Macquarie (1986, p. 206).

[3] Emmet (1979, p. 7).

[4] Dewey (1929, p. 418).

2.1 Tension Between Individual and Universal Rights

The first major component of Ubuntu concerns the tension between individual and universal rights. The meaning of this context is enlightened by considering the Ethics of Care. This component has three related concepts. The first concept is inalienable rights. Every human individual has inherent inalienable rights to be recognized and respected by other human beings. The second component is human relationships. Recognition of personhood necessitates the development of human relationships with other persons in the society and with the society as a whole. The third concept is reciprocity of care. Fostering reciprocity of care occurs through personal acceptance and assumption of duties and responsibility in society.

2.1.1 Inalienable Rights

Ubuntu protects the inalienable rights of individuals. Each person's uniqueness is connected with rights and obligations.[5] However, individual rights are only recognizable in the context of society.[6] In Ubuntu culture every human being is entitled to all basic human rights. However, there is a very deep implied understanding that personal human rights are subordinate to, and dependent on, the basic communitarian interests and wellbeing.[7] Even if a person has inalienable rights such as right to life and to personal human dignity, it is the community that recognizes those rights. There is, therefore, a tension between individual human rights and societal basic rights and interests.

2.1.1.1 Personal Rights within Communitarian Context

One of the greatest scholars of African communitarianism is Leopold Senghor from Senegal. In his view Africans view community as precedent to its component individuals. Consequently the community is more important than it's the individuals who make it. Likewise, according to Senghor's views, solidarity should take precedence to individual decision and activity. Community needs should be precedent to individual needs. He contends that Africans place more emphasis on the "communion of persons than on their autonomy."[8] In his work titled *Consciencism*, Nkrumah argues that from the African perspective everything that exists is in a complex web of dynamic forces in tension but with necessary interconnection and complementarity.[9] Nkrumah's views are consistent with Senghor's observation of

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[5] Macquarrie (1972, p. 110); Shutte (1993, p. 49, 51).

[6] Holdstock (2000, pp. 162–181).

[7] Asante et al. (2008, p. 115).

[8] Senghor (1964, p. 49, 93–94).

[9] Hord and Scott Lee (1995, p. 58).

the African worldview. However, Nkrumah emphasizes the inevitable conflict and tension within the African ideal of universal unity in Ubuntu culture while Senghor places greater emphasis on the importance of societal and cosmic unity within African culture.[10] Both authors shed light on the examination of the conflict between individual and universal rights while simultaneously considering the individual's inalienable rights.

Gyekye explores the tension between basic personal rights (autonomy, freedom and dignity) and the underlying need for the society in realization of individual's potential.[11] Gyekye states that there is a relationship between the individual and the society which is reflected in the "conceptions of social structure evolved by a community of people."[12] To explain the relationship between the society and the individual, Gyekye cites an Akan proverb which goes, "The clan is like a cluster of trees which, when seen from afar, appear huddled together, but which would be seen to stand *individually* when closely approached."[13] This proverb is an analogy which implies that even though some branches of the trees may touch, or even interlock each tree stands individually and has its own identity. Relationships in Ubuntu should not overshadow the importance of individual autonomy. There is need for discernment and distinction of the delicate balance between the two aspects of Ubuntu.

In sum, Gyekye observes an inevitable symbiotic mutuality between personal inalienable rights and the society. The society is a needed context for realization of personhood and self-actualization. However, "Individuality is not obliterated by membership in a human community."[14] Each individual retains his or her uniqueness and basic human rights regardless the role and importance of community to the individual. According to Gyekye "the most satisfactory way to recognize the claims of both communality and individuality is to ascribe to them the status of an equal moral standing."[15]

The Ubuntu ideal of maturity is such that one retains one's individual rights without losing touch with the community which facilitates individuality. Ntibagirirwa states that Ubuntu arms one with "normative principles for responsible decision-making and action, for oneself and for the good of the whole community."[16] Individualistic action which leaves out the community would consequently be unethical. Once an individual has acquired enough ethical maturity to act simultaneously for self and for the community, such person is considered morally mature. In the words of Ntibagirirwa, "S/he no more does things because the community expects him/her to do so, but because it is the right thing to do for both him/herself

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[10] Hord and Lee (1995, pp. 46–50).

[11] Gyekye (1997, p. 35).

[12] Gykye (1997, p. 35).

[13] Gyekye (1997, p. 40).

[14] Gykye (1997, p. 40).

[15] Gyekye (1997, p. 41).

[16] Ntibagirirwa (1999, p. 104).

and the community."[17] In Ntibagirirwa's view "It is Ubuntu alone that can allow the individual to transcend, when necessary, what the customs of the family or the tribe requires without disrupting the harmony and the cohesion of the community."[18]

2.1.1.2   Individual's Personal Rights are Defined by Others' Personal Rights

One of the criticisms against Ubuntu is that it limits personal autonomy and freedom. On the contrary, Ubuntu champions realistic ethical freedom. Weil explains this position when he states that "It is not true that freedom of one man is limited by that of other men." Freedom is always relative to the freedom of others. "Man is really free to the extent that his freedom fully acknowledged and mirrored by the free consent of his fellow men finds confirmation and expansion of liberty. Man is free only among equally free men." Ubuntu recognizes the fact that "the slavery of even one human being violates humanity and negates the freedom of all."[19] Freedom in particular and virtue in general, therefore, are contingent to, and defined by community society and the common good. No individual is greater than the society; individual members of the society are parts of, and enabled by the society. However, Kasanene notes, "individuals are able to think and act independently, as long as their actions do not harm others, and so the individual has to always bear in mind that excessive individualism is regarded as being a denial of one's corporate existence."[20]

   Thus, strictly speaking, from the perspective of Ubuntu there can be no absolute individual rights. All individual rights are understood within the matrix of the community. Consequently, Kamwangamalu argues that Ubuntu is communitarian since "the group constitutes the focus of the activities of the individual members of the society at large…the good of all determines the good of each or… the welfare of each is dependent on the welfare of all."[21] Since the individual rights are based on, and facilitated by, common good, individuals in the culture of Ubuntu should act for themselves and the community rather than for themselves against the community. The tension between individual rights and the community is resolved by considering inalienable individual rights in the context of societal common good.

2.1.2   Human Relationships

Ubuntu protects human relationships. Although personhood is intrinsic and innate to human beings its recognition is of vital importance. Morality is based on mutual recognition of personhood in any human parties in relationship with each other.

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[17] Ntibagirirwa (1999, pp. 104–105).

[18] Ntibagirirwa (1999, p. 104).

[19] Weil (1973, p. 182, 188–189).

[20] Kasanene (1994, p. 143).

[21] Kamwangamalu (2008, p. 115).

Thus, independent of human relationship the innate personhood in human beings remains only potential.[22] In Ubuntu culture, it is the community that defines a person by judging whether one has attained full moral maturity. This judgment is based on the individual's relationships with the community, that is, whether one has moral values, feelings and empathy that facilitate others' wellbeing. One contributes to the definition of oneself through everything one does. A person's identity or social status and the rights that are attached to that identity go hand in hand with that person's responsibility or sense of duty towards, and in relation to, others.[23]

2.1.2.1   Anthropological and Epistemological Perspective

In order to understand Ubuntu ethics, one has to first understand African anthropology and epistemology. One of the most important clues into Ubuntu mindset is an insight into the African traditional way of thinking. Traditional African thinking is "not in 'either/or,' but rather in 'both/and' categories."[24] The second clue is related to the first. That is, understanding the primacy of community in Ubuntu ethics. Bujo recognizes "community as a starting point in African ethics."[25] John Macquarrie explains that in Ubuntu individuals can only exist as human beings in their relationship with other humans. The word "individual" therefore, "signifies a plurality of personalities corresponding to the multiplicity of relationships in which the individual in question stands." Hence, "being an individual by definition means 'being-with-others.'"[26] The phrase 'being-with-others' in itself defines the nature of the relationship either as good or bad, right or wrong. It is evaluative. Relationships reveal how beneficent the parties are.

2.1.2.2   Otherness

To underline the importance of human relationship in the culture of Ubuntu, Van Der Merwe emphasizes the importance of the concept of otherness, which implies relationship. He observes that the African worldview is based on the understanding that "A human being is a human being through the *otherness* of other human beings."[27] This observation is far reaching in Ubuntu Ethics since it is the 'otherness' of another human which helps to prove one's humanity. Consequently, personal maturity is measured by the way one relates with others. That is, self-actualization happens in the process of fulfilling one's obligations and duties toward others. Menkiti states that assumption of responsibility towards others "transforms one from the *it*-status of early child-hood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the personhood

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[22] Shutte (1995, p. 46); Holdstock (2000, pp. 162–181).

[23] Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2003, p. 224).

[24] Bujo (2001, p. 1).

[25] Bujo (2001, p. 1).

[26] Macquarrie (1972, p. 104).

[27] Van Der Marwe and Willie (1996, pp. 1–3).

status of later years marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense—an ethical maturity without which personhood is conceived as eluding one."[28]

Due to the importance of "otherness" in self-recognition, self-actualization and moral development, human relationship is vital in the culture of Ubuntu. It is the community which defines a person and enables that person to find the self through the vehicle of human relationships. Thus, there is a delicate balance between individual autonomy and the role of society in personal life within Ubuntu culture. Using the words of Macquarrie, true Ubuntu "preserves the other in his otherness, in his uniqueness, without letting him slip into the distance."[29] This statement indicates the role and importance of human mutuality and interdependence. The self always stands in need of an-other both for the self and for the other, since there cannot be self without an-other.

2.1.2.3   Communitarianism

One of the distinguishing features of Ubuntu ethics is the significant role of community in comparison to that of individuals in any particular ethical situation. Ubuntu ethics is based on, has as its goal, and is validated by societal common good. The role of community in Ubuntu ethics is based on the premise that none of community members would be what he or she is without the community. Thus, naturally the community takes precedence over the individual without underestimating individual personal rights. Teffo argues that Ubuntu "merely discourages the view that the individual should take precedence over the community."[30] The objective of Ubuntu ethics is the balance between individual rights and the necessary communitarian conditions which facilitate and support those rights.

Each member of the community has a right to self-determination which finds its limitation in common good. The justification of this assertion is given by a number of Ubuntu scholars. Michael Battle argues that personhood happens through other persons. He observes that "we don't come fully formed into the world…we need other human beings in order to be human. We are made for togetherness; we are made for family, for fellowship, to exist in a tender network of interdependence."[31] Mkhize states that "the African view of personhood denies that a person can be described solely in terms of the physical and psychological properties. It is with reference to the community that a person is defined."[32] However, Ubuntu neither overlooks nor underestimates individual self-determination.

Macquarrie, writing in *Existentialism,* cautions against a misunderstanding of Ubuntu. He states that when communitarianism becomes oppressive, then Ubuntu is

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[28] Menkiti (1984, p. 172).

[29] Macquarrie (1972, p. 110); Shutte (1993, p. 49, 51).

[30] Teffo (1994, p. 7, 12).

[31] Battle (1997, p. 65).

[32] Nhlanhla Mkhize, "Culture, Morality and Self, In Search of an Africentric Voice," Cited in, Barbara (2003) http://www.barbaranussbaum.com/downloads/reflections.pdf, February 15, 2012.

abused. Ubuntu respects individual autonomy, "true Ubuntu incorporates dialogue. It incorporates both relation and distance." Ndaba addresses the two aspects of Ubuntu when he argues "that the collective consciousness evident in the African culture does not mean that the African subject wallows in a formless, shapeless or rudimentary collectivity…it simply means that the African subjectivity develops and thrives in a relational setting provided by ongoing contact and interaction with others."[33]

Because of the role of community and human relationships in Ubuntu, Nkonko Kamwangamalu argued that Ubuntu is communitarian since, in his view, the society dictates "not only the rights of an individual but also individual's duties, obligations and limitations/boundaries."[34] What underlies this observation, however, is the important role of human relationship in Ubuntu culture. In his work, *Ubuntu in Comparison with Western Philosophies*, Ndaba asserts that "African subjectivity develops and thrives in a relational setting provided by ongoing contact and interaction with others."[35] Ndaba's assertion, however, is not limited to Africans. All human beings stand in need of human interaction for their personal actualization and thriving of the society.

2.1.3   Reciprocity of Care

Ubuntu fosters reciprocity of care. Individual/universal human rights are conjoined with human reciprocity of care and the assumption of responsibility.[36] All beings exist in reciprocal relationship with one another. In Ubuntu culture every individual has an irreplaceable role to play. Everything that exists contributes to the equilibrium necessary for sustenance of ecosystems and integrity of the biosphere and the cosmos.[37] It is the reciprocation which facilitates individual, societal and the biospheric survival and progress. Proper reciprocation generates harmony while failure to do so may generate violence.[38] Reciprocity is a sacred duty. Exploitation is unethical and immoral. Life from this perspective is only real if it is shared and shares in the lives of others. In his work *Ubuntu Management and Motivation*, John Broodryk notes that Ubuntu is both a state of being and of becoming, both of which are anchored in reciprocity of care, thus as a process of self-realization through others, Ubuntu enhances the self-realization of others.[39] Ethics of Ubuntu rest on the assumption that as one is enabled by the community to find oneself and grow as human person, one should use one's potential for the good of the community. Life is about receiving and giving. Failure to reciprocate is tantamount to violence. It is unethical.

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[33] Teffo (1994, p. 7, 12).

[34] Kamwangamalu (2008, p. 115).

[35] Ndaba (1994, p. 14).

[36] Van Der Marwe and Willie (1996, pp. 1–3).

[37] Richards (1980, pp. 76–77).

[38] Richards (1980, pp. 76–77).

[39] Broodryk (1997, pp. 5–7).

2.1.3.1 Reciprocity as the Bond Between the Community and an Individual

Broodryk posits that, "as a process of self-realization *through* others, Ubuntu enhances the self-realization *of* others."[40] Macquarrie observes that "being with others…is not added on to a pre-existent and self-sufficient being; rather, both this being (the self) and the others find themselves in a whole wherein they are already related. By nature, a person is interdependent with other people. Due to this interdependence, reciprocity is *sine qua non* within the culture of Ubuntu. By nature a person receives and reciprocates care. The community or society is a prerequisite for personhood. Society facilitates reciprocation which, in turn, facilitates personhood and self-actualization. Personal reciprocation of care creates, sustains and strengthens the community. Reciprocity in form of giving back to the community and proactive living for the community and others defines a person and his moral maturity. This approach to morality is unique since it defines personhood for community not *against* community. Macquarrie explains this perspective in detail in his work titled *Existentialism*.[41]

Morality is about human relationships while a human relationship is about reciprocity. Wrong doing separates people, disturbs harmony, and is against life. Verhoef and Michel, in their article titled "Studying morality within the African context," assert that "what is right is what connects people together; what separates people is wrong."[42] Now what connects people together involves reciprocity since human relationship is anchored on reciprocity. In agreement with Verhoef and Michel, Thaddeus Metz identified a concise ethical principle based on African relationality, solidarity and reciprocity: "an act is right just insofar as it is a way of living harmoniously or prizing communal relationships, ones in which people identify with each other and exhibit solidarity with one another; otherwise, an act is wrong." In other words indigenous sub-Saharan ethics' (Ubuntu) objective is harmony which favors human life. Harmony, however, is a product of mutually favorable human actions. Reciprocity is a necessary component in sub-Saharan ethics. Metz explains solidarity with one another as "to act in ways that are expected to benefit each other…solidarity is also 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."[43]

2.1.3.2 Ujamaa as Praxis of Ubuntu Reciprocity

Many post-colonial African intellectuals tried to force Ubuntu into a political theory. Politicians such as Julius Nyerere[44] of Tanzania, Kwame Nkrumah[45] of Ghana

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[40] Broodryk (1997, pp. 5–7).

[41] Macquarrie (1972, p. 104).

[42] Verhoef and Claudine (1997, p. 397).

[43] Metz (2010, p. 84). http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjhr20, February 15, 2012.

[44] See Nyerere (1968, 1973); Russian Academy of Sciences Institute for African Studies (2005).

[45] See Nkrumah (1964). Although Nkrumah's objective was to help Africa deal with the changes from Islam and the West without losing its Identity, Ubuntu remains the most important element within African cultural identity.

and Leopold Senghor[46] of Senegal are some of the leading examples. Their zeal for Ubuntu as a political theory failed to come to fruition primarily because Ubuntu, being an ethic, could not be reduced to a political ideology. This section explores Nyerere's *Ujamaa*, a Swahili word for familyhood or fraternity, (which Nyerere interpreted as African socialism) as praxis of Ubuntu reciprocity.

In Nyerere's own words, Ujamaa "is an attitude of mind." It is that "attitude of mind, and not the rigid adherence to a standard political pattern, which is needed to ensure that the people care for each other's welfare."[47] Ujamaa is about care and reciprocity. Nyerere, while trying to show that Ujamaa is socialism, ended up demonstrating that it really is not. Contrasting socialism and capitalism to justify Ujamaa as socialism Nyerere writes: "Destitute people can be potential capitalists—exploiters of their fellow human beings. A millionaire can equally well be a socialist; he may value his wealth only because it can be used in the service of his fellow men." This statement of Nyerere not only contradicts the meaning of socialism, it affirms Ujamaa as Ubuntu ethic. While socialism is imposed on the people, Ubuntu is a cultural ethic, not a political ideology. Nyerere describes such ethic. He paradoxically further describes it even as he contrasts socialism from capitalism. Nyerere writes, "The man who uses wealth for the purpose of dominating any of his fellows is a capitalist. So is the man who would if he could. …a millionaire can be a good socialist."[48] Nyerere argued that Ujamaa "is opposed to capitalism, which seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man; and it is equally opposed to doctrinaire socialism which seeks to build its happy society on a philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man."[49] What Nyerere neither defines nor explains in detail is the meaning of Ujamaa. By his own statements with regards to Socialism and Capitalism, Nyerere shows that Ujamaa is an attitude of mind and a moral mindset. It is not a socio-political and economic theory. Ujamaa is an ethic. As an ethic, Ujamaa transcends political and economic theories and systems. Ujamaa is simply praxis of Ubuntu. It is essentially an ethic.

In the traditional society, everybody who was able to work had to work hard for personal needs and the needs of the sick, the old and children. Provision for those who could not provide for themselves was imperative. The traditional society didn't force its constituents to distribute their produce. It did not emphasize equality of possession but of personhood. Recognition of human dignity and personhood in all humans, including those with disabilities, and safeguarding that dignity is the ethical ideal of both Ujamaa and Ubuntu. Thus, individual ownership of major means production such as land was discouraged but without the use of force or

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[46] See Washington (1973). Senghor uses the concept of Negritude in poetry to explore African culture, the basis of which is Ubuntu. Some of his main concepts include human and cosmic unity, rhythm, importance of human emotion and the power of art to communicate what cannot be easily verbalized.

[47] Nyerere (1968, p. 1).

[48] Nyerere (1968, p. 1).

[49] Nyerere (1968, p. 12).

political ideology.[50] People were allowed to participate in the process of production of wealth according to their ability. Consequently, there was naturally a division of labor and subsidiary.

Traditional Ujamaa gave members of its respective society, specifically people with physical disabilities, the less fortunate, the old, children and the sick the security they needed to live a meaningful and dignified life in spite of their limiting conditions. Nyerere argues that such security which was common in, almost all traditional societies must be preserved and extended beyond tribal, national and continental boundaries because all people are equal.[51]

The Arusha Declaration was founded on the traditional African way of life. The declaration recognizes human equality, human right to life, dignity and respect; equal rights as citizens, equal right of expression, movement, religious belief, right of association, right to be protected by the society, right to just reward for human labor, equal right of access to national natural resources and major means of production.[52]

In sum, Ujamaa is systematized Ubuntu in praxis. Ujamaa is based on the need to recognize human equality and the ethical imperative of investing in the community based on each individual's need for the community and the community's need for its constituents. It is ultimately about giving back to the community, for the good of all, without denying personal rights and entitlements.

2.1.3.3   Importance of Marriage and Procreation

Most traditional African societies hold marriage as the focus of both individual and societal existence. Mbiti observes that in marriage all members of the society, the living, the dead and the yet to be born meet. Whoever does not participate in it "is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and a law-breaker, he is not only abnormal but 'under-human'. Failure to get married under normal circumstances means that the person concerned has rejected the society and the society rejects him in return."[53]

From the individual's perspective, the importance of marriage is based on the belief that parents are reproduced in their progeny, which means parents with children will be immortal as long as their children don't break the chain by not making children.[54] Having descendants is also crucial because one's immortality (in the world of the living-dead) is acquired by having descendants who will keep the diseased in memory. "To die without getting married and without children is to be completely cut off from the human society, to become disconnected, to become an outcast and

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[50] Nyerere (1968, pp. 2–12).

[51] Nyerere (1968, p. 12).

[52] Nyerere (1968, p. 14). The Arusha declaration was passed on February 5, 1967. Being derived from the traditional society way of life, the Arusha declaration proves not only the inherent ethics in the traditional society but also its authenticity and validity as compared to modern ethics.

[53] Mbiti (1969, p. 130).

[54] Mbiti (1969, p. 130).

to lose all links with mankind."[55] Naturally, therefore, the society hopes and expects that everybody marries and begets children. Each person has an ethical obligation to marry both for the sake of the self and of the community.

Traditionally, the society improvised a system whereby a couple who have biological impediment such that they cannot have children of their own could have children who would keep them alive in their memory after they die. In patrilineal societies, a brother or another designated close relative of the childless deceased or incapable parent would help by having intercourse with the wife of the deceased or the incapable parent for the purpose of making children for him.[56] Bujo asserts that "the main presuppositions of African ethics are not the same as those involved in natural-law approaches. The main goal of African ethics is fundamentally life itself. The community must guarantee the promotion and protection of life by specifying or ordering ethics and morality."[57] Marriage is the main way the community fulfills its duty to promote life.

The centrality of marriage is based on the event in which two persons willingly express their desire to cooperate to keep the society immortal. Most peoples in Africa south of the Sahara hold that humans owe their existence to many generations of ancestors. There are many sayings to the effect that we received our existence from them and we must in turn give existence to the next generation. Marriage is an ethical responsibility and a religious sacred obligation. We walk on the graves of our ancestors; we should let others (our progeny) walk on our graves. We stand on their shoulders. It is their selflessness, best expressed in marriage, that they generated progeny. Marriage is the unique opportunity that reveals a couple's willingness to give back to the society by accepting the role of keeping the chain of generations going. Failure to do so contributes to killing of the society by rendering it futureless.[58]

2.2   Cosmic and Global Context

The second major component of the culture of Ubuntu concerns its sense of a cosmic/global context. The meaning of this context is enlightened by considering the UNESCO Code of Bioethics. This component has three related concepts. The first concept is restorative justice which is necessary in order to maintain lasting peace and order. The second concept is respect for diversity in order to achieve personal and societal fulfillment. The third concept is respect for and protection of the cosmos as the context which supports the biosphere and human society.

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[55] Mbiti (1969, p. 131).

[56] Mbiti (1969, pp. 141–143).

[57] Bujo (2001, p. 2).

[58] Mbiti (1969, pp. 130–145).

2.2.1   Justice

Most indigenous African cultures that embrace Ubuntu require restorative justice[59] which is founded on human dignity and equality within human society. Its objective is restoration of peace and order.[60] In his autobiography, Nelson Mandela explains Ubuntu restorative justice. He states that the oppressor and the oppressed both need liberation since a person who takes another person's rights is a prisoner of his own hatred and prejudice. "The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity."[61] Mandela's views about human freedom, which represent the Ubuntu cultural meaning of justice, are expressed in the statement, "to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."[62]

2.2.1.1   Ubuntu Justice is Reparative Rather than Retributive

Mandela's insight is shared by most liberation fighters during the era of apartheid in South Africa. Addressing the role of Ubuntu during and immediately after apartheid in his work, *Concept of Ubuntu as a Cohesive Moral Value*, Teffo expresses the general prevailing spirit, "there is no lust for vengeance, no apocalyptic retribution."[63] On the contrary there is a yearning for justice, and for "release from poverty and oppression, but no dream of themselves (black South Africans) becoming the persecutors, of turning the tables of apartheid on white South Africans."[64] The Ubuntu ideal of justice is restorative rather than retributive or punitive. Ubuntu restorative justice is founded on the understanding that human community is analogous to an organism. If one part is hurt the whole organism hurts. Restoration of tranquility, equilibrium and order is the ethical ideal. Violence is harmful not only to its direct victim, but also to the perpetrator and the society. The objective of justice in Ubuntu is peace and community building.[65] Consequently, Maphisa attributes that the transformation of an apartheid South Africa into a democracy to what he termed "a discovery of Ubuntu."[66]

Thaddeus Metz observed an unwritten ethical principle in sub-Saharan peoples that most African communities South of Sahara hold that it is immoral "to make policy decisions in the face of dissent, as opposed to seeking consensus."[67] In case

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[59] Mandela (1994, p. 544).

[60] Teffo (1994, p. 11).

[61] Mandela (1994, p. 544).

[62] Mandela (1994, p. 544).

[63] Teffo (1994, p. 5).

[64] Teffo (1994, p. 5).

[65] Van Der Marwe (1996, p. 1).

[66] Maphisa (1994, p. 8).

[67] Metz (2007, p. 324).

of dispute, there is no clear distinction between conflict resolution and execution of justice. The resolution process aims at mutual education, community education, character formation and consensus seeking. Since the objective is reparation and restoration of peace and harmony, the parties, along with the rest of the community, engage in active reflective listening and the discussion continues "until a compromise is found and all in the discussion agree with the outcome."[68] Dispute and conflict occasion a moment to teach and reinforce virtues of Ubuntu. Tutu describes a virtuous person from the perspective of Ubuntu as "welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share."[69] Elsewhere he describes such a person as are "open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole."[70] Ubuntu sense of justice is, at the same time, educative and community building.

In sum, Ubuntu justice is restorative since it is based on the maxim "I am human because I belong. …my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in yours."[71] Because of such interconnection and symbiotic interdependence, virtuous persons know that "they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are."[72] The objective of criminal justice in Ubuntu is reconciliation, not retribution.[73] As a result, from the perspective of Ubuntu, retributive punitive justice is unethical and counterproductive. It is destructive of the ideal and objective Ubuntu.

2.2.1.2   Ubuntu Justice is Distributive

Ubuntu is radically opposed to libertarian philosophy represented by Locke regarding property and individual liberty. According to Locke, property means both material possessions and liberty.[74] The concept of property is the kernel of individual freedom. Civil government is a product of social contract whose objective is to ensure protection of private property from the encroachment of others. Lockean freedom, therefore, simply means control and possession of one's own person and possessions.[75] American tradition has historically placed great faith in the Lockean vision of the individual with its emphasis on negative freedom and private property

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[68] Metz (2007, p. 324).

[69] Tutu (2009, p. 2).

[70] Tutu (2009, p. 2).

[71] Tutu (http://www.tsabcc.org/ubuntu/philosophy.htm. February 15, 2012).

[72] Tutu (2009, p. 2).

[73] Metz (2007, p. 325).

[74] J. Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and His Adversaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 38–50, 59–63.

[75] A. M. C. Waterman, "Property Rights in John Locke and in Christian Social Teaching," *Review of Social Economy* 11, no. 2 (1982): pp. 97–115.

rights.[76] Nozick agrees with Locke in many ways. In his view, distributive schemes unjustly redistribute assets already owned by individuals, without taking into account the way in which assets have been acquired.[77] Most tax redistributions to fund health care or any other need are unfair. They fail to recognize that individuals are entitled to their personal holdings.[78] This position implies that the poor may be unfortunate but their plight is not a moral problem. They have no just claim to others' entitlement.[79] Due to the Lockean influence in American thought, the legacy of the firm entrenchment of property rights led to an exaggerated importance of the concept of individual property rights over the claims of other human values such as equality and fraternity.[80] The healthcare insurance market can be characterized in the very same terms.[81]

Rawls sought to resolve conflicts between the values of liberty and equality based on fairness. He argued for an original position in which individuals were considered to be under a veil of ignorance such that they were ignorant as their specific interests.[82] The individual in this original state is free, rational and essentially self-interested. The aim of this imaginary original position is to question what would the individuals under the veil choose as a principle for guiding justice. In Rawls' view, two principles would emerge: first, each person would have the most extensive liberty compatible with similar liberty for others. Second, social and economic inequalities would be ordered so that they are to everyone's advantage and be attached to positions open to all.[83]

Daniels further develops Rawls' concept of justice as fairness in the context of health care provision.[84] Daniels emphasizes an equality of opportunity range and the need for a basic level of normal species functioning to provide for the degree of equality of opportunity. Health care that promotes the normal range of species functioning can be justified for all on the basis of a commitment to the idea of equality of opportunity.[85] Daniel's views are in conformity with the Ubuntu ethics.

Ubuntu is more agreeable to welfare liberalism and Rawls concept of justice. Welfare liberalism challenges the classical liberalism of Locke. It is represented by Charles Fried,[86] Allen Buchanan,[87] Norman Daniels,[88] and the President's

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[76] Mary Ann Glendon, "'Absolute' Rights: Property and Privacy," *The Essential Communitarian Rader* (Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), pp. 107–114.

[77] Nozick (1974, pp. 118–163).

[78] Nozick (1974, pp. 167–169).

[79] Nozick (1974, pp. 233–235).

[80] Ryan (1976, pp. 126–141).

[81] O'Keeffe (1994, pp. 35–64).

[82] Rawls (1971, pp. 10–17).

[83] Rawls (1971, pp. 17–65).

[84] Daniels (1985, pp. 42–49).

[85] Daniels (1985, pp. 36–42).

[86] Fried (1976, pp. 29–34).

[87] Buchanan (1984, pp. 55–78).

[88] Daniels (1985, pp. 79–333).

Commission,[89] all of whom have argued for the need to ameliorate the conditions of the market and provide enablement opportunities for all. They have argued for a two-tier system as a safety net for the poor, often expressed as a decent minimum. Ubuntu goes much deeper than mere ethics of market economy.

According to Ubuntu ethics one's personhood is a potential that is realized to the degree one participates and contributes to the life of the community. Arguing for Ubuntu development theory of personhood Menkiti states that personhood is progressively realized through personal relationships and functioning in society. From his observation personhood is attained especially by doing one's obligations in the society.

In Menkiti's own words, executing one's obligations "transforms one from the *it*-status of early child-hood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the personhood status of later years marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense—an ethical maturity without which personhood is conceived as eluding one."[90] Thus, every member of the community should be an active player in the life of the community for the sake of every other person, especially those with disabilities. It is through being an active player in the life of the community that personhood is realized. Broodryk articulates that greatest personal moral obligation in Ubuntu "is to become more fully human which implies entering more and more deeply into community with others."[91]

Ubuntu community is experienced practically in sharing of the necessities that sustain human life. Gyekye notes that according to Ubuntu ethics to be a member of the community also means to be entitled to the decent minimum of means of production and property such as land and cattle.[92] Possession of property is never absolutely personal. Bujo articulates that "the final aim is never personal enrichment. Property belongs to the individual, but only so that, in case of need, it may be placed at the disposal of the community. Attached to all property is the notion of stewardship and ministry."[93]

There is no absolute right to ownership of property. For instance, one cannot spoil food that belongs to him or her. One should keep it for any person who may need it. Bujo notes that helping the needy in the traditional society is an ethical obligation. He notices the western influence and its impact on the African values. Bujo states, "Africa is of course changing under the impact of foreign cultures, but in traditional times no one questioned the obligation of clan-members to help each other, and no one was allowed to go without the necessaries of life."[94] Equally utilization of personal potential by each person through hard work was a moral obligation.

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[89] *Securing Access to Health Care: A Report on the Ethical Implications of Differences in the Availability of Health Services* (Washington, D. C.: President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1983).

[90] Menkiti (1984, p. 172).

[91] Broodryk (1997, p. 101).

[92] Gyekye (1997, pp. 146–152).

[93] Bujo (1992, pp. 35–36).

[94] Bujo (1992, pp. 35–36).

Consequently, "any kind of laziness or parasitism was vigorously denounced." As for theft, this was never tolerated.[95]

People with disabilities, the sick, the orphaned, widows or elderly members of the African traditional society south of Sahara are naturally protected so that they don't feel insecure or inferior to the rest of the members of the society. If a member of an ethnic group is prosperous, the whole ethnic group is prosperous. If the ethnic group is prosperous each member considers himself/herself prosperous. Land is communally owned in that; no one has absolute right to it. Members of the community use it according to need. Laziness or refusal to work is a curse and source of shame to the respective individual and his/her family.[96] Although Ubuntu is not socialism, in the sense that it does not enforce equal distribution of wealth, it does not tolerate disproportionate economic inequality. The gap between the poorest and the richest is minimized for the sake of maintenance of harmony in the community.[97]

Creation of wealth is a duty that all have to fulfill. However, there is always division of labor so that the principle of subsidiarity is naturally in operation. Everybody participates in the community in what he/she does best. No one should do what can be done by those who are younger or specialized in their field such as bee keepers, goldsmiths and crop cultivators. Each person has to work for his/her personal needs, for the needs of those who cannot work and for the society in general. Acquisition of wealth for prestige, control of other people or power is immoral.[98] "To create wealth largely on a competitive basis, as opposed to a cooperative one" is immoral.[99]

As a matter of principle people are "expected to be in solidarity with one another especially during the hour of need."[100] Broodryk uses simple traditional terms to demonstrate the ideal of Ubuntu; that is, "If you have two cows and the milk of the first cow is sufficient for your own consumption, *Ubuntu* expects you to donate the milk of the second cow to your underprivileged brothers and sisters. You do not sell it: you just give it."[101] Caring is an important pillar in the *Ubuntu* worldview. [102] "One can say that *Ubuntu* ethics is anti-egoistic, as it discourages people from seeking their own good without regard for, or to the detriment of, other persons in the community."[103]

Metz notes that in the traditional societies south of the Sahara there is always and underlying and unwritten ethical principle that it is immoral "to distribute wealth largely on the basis of individual rights, as opposed to need."[104] This principle is

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[95] Bujo (1992, pp. 35–36).

[96] Nyerere (1968); Hord and Scott Lee (1995, pp. 65–72).

[97] L. Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 277–8.

[98] Nyerere (1968, pp. 2–5).

[99] Metz (2007, p. 325).

[100] Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2003, p. 223).

[101] Johann Broodryk, *Ubuntu. Life Lessons from Africa* (Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy, 2002) p. 8.

[102] Broodryk, *Ubuntu. Life Lessons from Africa*, 2002, p. 48.

[103] Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2003, p. 224).

[104] Metz (2007, p. 326).

based on Ubuntu general principle of common human equality and communitarian understanding of human mutual need for each other. This Ubuntu ideal of distributive ethical principle can be summarized in the following phrase: From each according to ability; to each according to need.

2.2.1.3   Ubuntu Justice is Communitarian

Ubuntu ethics revolves around all that favors life. Each individual and the community as a whole have a sacred duty to promote life. To underline the duty of the community in promotion of life and the individual duty to support community Bujo simply states that in traditional sub-Sahara Africa, "Individuals live only thanks to the community…life is the highest principle of ethical conduct."[105] Onah notes that promotion of life is "the determinant principle of African traditional morality and this promotion is guaranteed only in the community."[106] Metz notes that African respect for personal dignity is expressive of its respect for the sacredness of human life.

Metz articulates with clarity one of the cardinal principles of Ubuntu ethics. Basing his argument on Shutte's work Metz states that "An action is right just insofar as it positively relates to others and thereby realizes oneself; an act is wrong to the extent that it does not perfect one's valuable nature as a social being."[107] This statement explains the communitarian nature of Ubuntu justice. Justice is a socio-ethical principle which guides human interaction and relationships. The principle also entails the fact that self-realization happens within the communitarian setting. The starting point of a moral act is 'other-oriented.' Moral action should not infringe on the rights of others. In Metz's words, "an act is right if and only if it develops one's social nature without violating the rights of others."[108] This principle is necessary for community life.

Just action is that which facilitates or enhances personal realization. However, individual realization can only happen in the context of community. Moreover, self-realization should be both for self and for other related humans. Actually, Ubuntu contends that human self-actualization happens through other humans, which means that it cannot happen in isolation. Ubuntu justice is based on the identity of the self which is always inter-subjective, thus contingent to community. This phenomenon is best described by Seyla Benhabib. She states that "Individuation does not precede association; rather it is the kind of associations which we inhabit that define the kinds of individuals we become."[109] In other words society precedes an individual, defines the individual and helps the individual to self-realize.

The individual is a product of the community and owes his existence to the community. There is mutuality of responsibility, duty and rights between the community

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[105] Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic*: *Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, 2001, p. 2, 3, 4, 52, 62, 66, 88.

[106] Godfrey (2012).

[107] Metz (2007, p. 331).

[108] Metz (2007, p. 332).

[109] Benhabib (1997, p. 73).

and its members. Such mutuality is based on individuals' neediness of the community for survival. Using Mbiti's words, the "community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group."[110] Mbiti explains, "Nature brings the child into the world, but society creates the child into a social being, a corporate person, for it is the community which must protect the child, feed it, bring it up, educate it and in many other ways incorporate it into the wider community."[111]

Consequently, the child has an obligation to live in such a way that his individual rights nurture and enhance the existence and flourishing of the community which enables not only the possibility of such rights but more importantly human individual life.

Community building is represented and expressed in almost all important activities of an individual or family. Everybody should play a role in nurturing community bonds. There cannot be a completely exclusive individual right. Among the Chagga and Setswana society, for example, slaughtering an animal and consuming it with the immediate nuclear family without giving rightful portions to members of the extended family, however little the piece meals may be is considered immoral. It is equivalent to theft.[112]

While from the western perspective there is naturally no entitlement in what one does not own, among the Bantu people, the entitlement is validated by the duty of each person to build the necessary bonds which foster and nurture community building. By being a member of the community everybody has a valid claim to what maintains the bonds without which the community cannot survive.

In sum, Ubuntu justice is essentially and always communitarian. Metz sums up Ubuntu ethics of communitarianism by the moral principle he identified from his research in Ubuntu that "an action is wrong insofar as it fails to honor relationships in which people share a way of life and care for one another's quality of life, and especially to the extent that it esteems division and ill-will."[113] This perspective on justice is different from the popular tendency which focuses on justice from the perspective of individual rights and claims. Individual rights are only real in the context and matrix of community or society.

2.2.2   Diversity

Ubuntu respects human diversity. Diversity is beneficial to societal fulfillment; plurality enhances both personal and societal self-realization.[114] The culture of Ubuntu realizes the importance of diversity for personal self-realization as human beings, for societal prosperity and for moral living. This understanding is summarized in the

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[110] Mbiti (1990, p. 107).

[111] Mbiti (1990, p. 107).

[112] Metz and Gaie (2010, pp. 273–290).

[113] Metz (2009, p. 183).

[114] Broodryk (1997, pp. 5–7).

previously cited maxims that "a person is a person through other persons,"[115] and "a human being is a human being through the otherness of other human beings."[116] Van Der Merwe observes that Ubuntu dictates that to be human is to recognize the genuine otherness of fellow citizens. The recognition of and respect for each person's uniqueness is an essential component of society. This uniqueness involves the diversity of languages, histories, values and customs, all of which constitute human society.[117] This dissertation will explore in depth the need and respect for diversity in human society and ethical discourse in light of the culture of Ubuntu. As a result of the Ubuntu perspective of society as analogous to an organism, Ubuntu appreciates difference and diversity as richness. Diversity allows for variety of contribution to the community by each member for each member. Consequently, human society flourishes on diversity.

2.2.2.1 Anthropocentrism and Respect for Diversity

Most Sub-Saharan ethnic communities are radically anthropocentric. Bujo writes that "life is the highest principle of ethical conduct."[118] Everything revolves around the mystery of human life. Human life is so important that everybody has to take responsibility to nurture it prior to birth and post mortem in form of the 'living-dead'. All human life, regardless of differences in color, ethnicity, wealth, and nationality is sacred. God is revered through human moral life. Consequently, there is not so much direct reference to God. Respect for any human life is considered an act of worship and reverence to God.[119]

In praxis, as Bujo well expresses it, "the living members of this 'mystical society'[120] have an inalienable responsibility for protecting and prolonging the life of the community in all its aspects."[121] Such responsibility extends to all humans. One should only be allowed to kill in self-defense. However different or unconforming human life is, it should be treasured and respected. No wonder Bujo notes that "the morality of an act is determined by its life-giving potential."[122] This respect for human life implies tolerance, patience and respect for diversity. Bujo observes, however, that "since the common good must have precedence over the individual good, an individual who is really a danger for the community, or threatens the clan with loss of life or goods, must be simply removed."[123] However, "the main goal of African ethics is fundamentally life itself." The community is at the service of each life.[124]

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[115] Shutte (1993, p. 46).

[116] Van Der Marwe and Willie (1996, pp. 1–3).

[117] Van Der Marwe and Willie (1996, pp. 2–3).

[118] Bujo (2001, p. 3).

[119] Bujo (1992, pp. 17–37).

[120] Bujo (1992, p. 22).

[121] Bujo (1992, p. 22).

[122] Bujo (1992, p. 22).

[123] Bujo (1992, p. 34).

[124] Bujo (2001, p. 2).

2.2.2.2   Otherness as Source, Objective and Rationale of Morality

Even though Ubuntu is basically Unitarian, diversity is an important part of it. Diversity belongs to the very essence of Ubuntu. It is the diversity that underlies the importance of unity. One of the maxims most expressive of the core meaning of Ubuntu and which has been discussed earlier in this work underlies importance of diversity for any meaningful community and individual social, moral, and psychological development. The differentness of others helps people recognize their own uniqueness, role, importance, duty and neediness."[125] The differentness of others includes diversity of languages, histories, values and customs, all of which constitute human society.[126]

Mbiti writes that "in traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group."[127] Implied in Mbiti's statement is the fact that the community helps the individual become different and unique while at the same time instilling in him or her communitarian accepted moral norms and ideals.

Personhood is a developmental concept in the culture of Ubuntu. Such development is facilitated by the community. Mbiti relates that, "Physical birth is not enough: the child must go through rites of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the entire society." The initiation rites are usually age-related and vary depending on the specific ethnicity. According to Mbiti the rites signify moral, social, religious and behavioral development. "These rites continue throughout the physical life of the person, during which the individual passes from one stage of corporate existence to another. The final stage is reached when he dies and even then he is ritually incorporated into the wider family of both the dead and the living."

The dead members of the society remain living-dead until they are no longer remembered by any living person. They are believed to be constantly undergoing rites of incorporation into the world of the dead even as they are gradually forgotten by the living. Rites of initiation imply the role of the society in the work of creation. Mbiti elaborates this role when he writes that "Just as God made the first man, as God's man, so now man himself makes the individual who becomes the corporate or social man." Initiation rites need other people. Personal existence, completely independent of the society, is absurd. Thus Mbiti writes that "only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people."[128]

In the process of individual formation by all other individuals and in all formal processes of initiation individual uniqueness is not only accepted or tolerated, it is cherished and given a special role in the society. The person is helped to know that he or she is unique, thus a needed organ within the community. Diversity is a bless-

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[125] Van Der Marwe and Willie (1996, pp. 1–3).

[126] Van Der Marwe and Willie (1996, pp. 2–3).

[127] Mbiti (1990, p. 106).

[128] Mbiti (1990, p. 106).

ing to the community. To the individual, diversity and pluralism helps distinguish the self from the rest of the community members.

Initiation processes aim at cutting the umbilical cord continually so that the child is continually born into the wider human family, incorporated in it as his personhood unfolds. One moves from one's mother into the nuclear family then extended family, then the ethnic group and then human family in general.[129] Mbiti writes that those initiation rites have great formational and educational purposes. "The occasion often marks the beginning of acquiring knowledge which is otherwise not accessible to those who have not been initiated. It is a period of awakening to many things, a period of dawn for the young. They learn to endure hardships, they learn to live with one another, they learn to obey,"[130] to mention but a few things.

Initiation, therefore prepares the candidates to deal with, accept, and use diversity for the common good. The continual rites of initiation aim at helping the youth, to accept their role in the wide human society, honor, respect and nurturing of every human life. One of the most important tests in the rites is a lesson of accepting diversity and using it for both communal and self-benefit.

Just as an individual cannot survive without the support of other individuals and the community at large, Ubuntu believes that no community can survive in the cosmos alone without being in solidarity with the rest of communities which share the earth. Diversity and uniqueness, both among individuals and among societies is riches, especially because, according to Ubuntu, humanity is, by large a product of human relationships. This world-view is seen in Ubuntu's emphasis on establishment and maintenance of harmony between different ethnicities.

2.2.2.3   Tension Between Diversity, Communitarianism and Human Freedom

According to Mbiti there can neither be freedom nor real ethical existence independent of the community. Mbiti states that individuality is based on plurality, in the sense that among the Bantu peoples of the sub-Saharan Africa individual existence is based on communal existence. This is a major contention in ethics of individual rights, since such ethics does not necessarily view individual existence as contingent to communal or societal existence; at least it does not emphasize the role of the community as Ubuntu does. Ubuntu communitarian ethics is based on the indebtedness of any particular individual both to the current community and to his ancestors who are responsible to who any particular individual becomes.[131]

Mbiti's interpretation of Ubuntu worldview reveals tension between individual autonomy, which is necessary for real human freedom, and Ubuntu communitarianism which is *sine qua non* of individual existence. Since the community defines the individual and that it takes precedence over individual personal autonomy and

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[129] Mbiti (1990, pp. 118–129).

[130] Mbiti (1990, p. 119).

[131] Mbiti (1990, p. 106).

liberty, individual existence is only significant within the confines of the community. Obviously, Ubuntu's understanding of individual identity as interpreted by Mbiti resonates with Taylors' but it goes much further. According to Taylor, one's identity is not worked out in isolation. It is a work in progress, a negotiation through dialogue "partly overt, partly internalized, with others." Self-identity, therefore, cannot be independent of others or society.[132]

Mbiti posits that "the community must therefore make, create or produce the individual…Physical birth is not enough: the child must go through rites of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the entire society."[133] This later statement reveals yet another difficult tension between Ubuntu respect for diversity and Ubuntu communitarianism. If the society produces the individual through continual initiations throughout life, one could validly question Ubuntu's tolerance of diversity and pluralism within and outside the community. However, Ubuntu does not only nurture diversity, it encourages diversity provided that it doesn't threaten communal existence. Communal existence is the measure of morality of a human act in Ubuntu.

The ideal of Ubuntu ethics is moral identification of an individual and the community. The approach Mbiti uses can be simplified by analogy of an organism. Since the community and the individual are one, whatever hurts the individual hurts the community and whatever hurts the community hurts the individual just as whatever hurts any part of an organism hurts the whole organism and whatever hurts the whole organism hurts all its parts. To be cut off from the community is tantamount to homicide since "to be is to belong." Interpreting Mbiti's perspective of Ubuntu, Chachine[134] states, since "to 'be' is to 'belong,' therefore to separate the individual from his social existence is to deny the individual the very freedom he seeks."[135] Interpreting Mbiti's perspective on freedom Chachine writes, "One cannot extricate the individual from his or her social environment without harming the very foundations of his or her freedom; without undermining the very social surroundings where he or she belongs."[136]

This statement means that moral life require human freedom, while human freedom is limited by the community or society in which a person is a member. "So to understand the context of the self is equivalent to understanding what one's freedom entails or should be."[137] Consequently, freedom is a relative term whose definition is provided by the community. The self being part of its social environment, "the ideal of freedom which may follow is that of 'situated' freedom as contrary to the

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[132] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1991), p. 47.

[133] Mbiti (1990, p. 106).

[134] Chachine (2008, p. 233).

[135] Chachine (2008, p. 233).

[136] Chachine (2008, p. 233).

[137] Chachine (2008, p. 233).

idea of freedom as autonomy, 'choice', or self-determination. Therefore, the ideal of social solidarity is a central concept in Mbiti's justification of freedom."[138]

Individual existence along with all its rights, duties, and responsibilities is absurd and unintelligible outside of the community since "in African terms, one's freedom is correspondent to one's ability to harmonize oneself with one's own social surroundings."[139] Traditional African communities' regard the self as an extension of the community and the community as an extension of the self. There can only be freedom to relate, not to dissociate. Dissociation from the community is fatal. Gyekye contends that the community and the individual should be ascribed the same moral status because the community cannot exist without the individuals who gives it its corporate existence while, at the same time, no individual could survive without the conducive supportive environment provided by the community. Gyekye concludes that "the most satisfactory way to recognize the claims of both communality and individuality is to ascribe to them the status of an equal moral standing."[140]

The process of helping a person deal with diversity and plurality starts at birth. Mbiti notes how the "placenta and umbilical cord symbolize separation of the child from the mother, but this separation is not final since the two are still close to each other."[141] The society has to help the child get into the process of gradually and continually belonging "to the wider circle of society… [It] begins to get away from the individual mother, growing into the status of being 'I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am.'"[142] Some traditional societies have a way of expressing this important symbolism ritually by, for example, throwing the placenta into the river, whose symbolic meaning is: "the child is now public property, it belongs to the entire community and is no longer the property of one person, and any ties to one person or one household are symbolically destroyed and dissolved in the act of throwing the placenta and umbilical cord into the river."[143]

The child grows away from its nuclear family into the wider world to embrace global pluralism and diversity without losing touch with its original circles of relationship. The more a person can recognize other persons as his equals, and address their needs with empathic understanding regardless their uniqueness, the more ethically mature that person is. In this way Ubuntu communitarianism is as well, and at the same time, pluralistic and universalistic.

Ubuntu meaning of freedom is different from the popular western meaning of freedom. Justification of human freedom in Ubuntu is absurd if it is does not involve the community or society. Chachine and Mbiti easily show why this is the case: if "to 'be' is to 'belong', this implies that to be 'free' is to 'relate.'"[144] This

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[138] Chachine (2008, p. 233).

[139] Chachine (2008, p. 233).

[140] Gyekye (1997, p. 41).

[141] Mbiti (1990, p. 110).

[142] Mbiti (1990, p. 110).

[143] Mbiti (1990, p. 110).

[144] Chachine (2008, p. 233).

understanding of freedom is almost foreign to the popular understanding of freedom as detachment and non-relationship, if need be; or freedom as "self-mastery, the elimination of obstacles to my will, whatever these obstacles may be—the resistance of nature, of my ungoverned passions, of irrational institutions, of the opposing wills or behavior of others."[145]

The traditional concept of freedom is different from the understanding of freedom as equality. Freedom as equality means that individual humans are considered of equal moral standing and the society as of secondary moral standing. This perspective holds individual's dignity as much more important than any societal or corporal moral entities.[146] However, realistic freedom is always relational. Interpreting Mbiti, Chachine distinguishes freedom from liberty: "'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am' inspires us to see freedom as tolerance and inclusion, it invites us to distinguish mere freedom from liberty, whereby freedom stands as being, as a natural endowment; since all human beings are born free." Chachine implies that realistic freedom involves personal relationships and engagements, since human beings are by nature relational and their realization is enabled by personal relationships with other humans.

In other words one cannot be humanly free if one does not have human relationships with other persons. Freedom thus understood, "stands as what a person is in the original stage; while liberty by being a process in itself it stands as a practical action into becoming, emerging in the context of social interactions, as one's capacity or attempt to become free." In Chachine's observation, therefore, liberty is a means to an end, which end is freedom. He states that Liberty "results in the context of human striving for freedom, in the context of one's attempt to become free or to become fully human."

Consequently, liberty is a process not an end in itself. Chachine explains that "ethically, in the Ubuntu conceptual moral scheme liberty, thus defined, emerges as our human attempt to move from *is* moral universe into *ought* moral platform." Thus, liberty is a fluid transitional term which "implies action into becoming." Its end is more freedom because "in the context of *is* it expresses what one ought to be, while in the context of act it illuminates what one ought to do."[147]

Freedom however is an end, not a means. Human growth and development aims at greater freedom. However, freedom does not exclude human need for, and capacity to relate. According to Mbiti "what gives our lives meaning and purpose is our belonging and our capacity to exercise our own freedom in the realm of our human commitment and relationships."[148]

Ubuntu freedom is consistent with Temple's description of freedom. He states that freedom may be justified "only when it expresses itself through fellowship; and

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[145] Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002), p. 193.

[146] MacIntyre (1984, p. 250).

[147] Chachine (2008, p. 234). In this passage Chachine cites and interprets Mbiti's distinction of freedom from Liberty.

[148] Chachine (2008, p. 234). In this passage Chachine cites and interprets Mbiti's distinction of freedom from Liberty.

free society must be so organized as to make this effectual; in other words it must be rich in sectional groupings or fellowships within the harmony of the whole."[149] Ubuntu integrates and weaves together communitarianism, diversity and freedom as the ideal of morality.

There is no question that Africa is a composition of many unique cultures and languages; however, one can rightly speak of a common African culture, the unifying culture that underlies all the unique different sub-cultures.[150] Tangwa refers to this synthesizing ability of Ubuntu and similar African cultures when he states that African cultures are "characterized by diversity and, left to themselves, united in their tolerance and liberalism, live and let live attitude, non-aggressivity, non-proselytizing character and in their accommodation of the most varied diversities and peaceful cohabitation of the most apparently contradictory elements."[151]

2.2.3   Biosphere

Ubuntu calls for respect of the biosphere. The cosmos has an inherent hierarchy of rights on which human rights are based. Every society and individual has an obligation to promote and protect the rights of the biosphere.[152] The culture of Ubuntu respects and reverences the integrity of the cosmos which supports the biosphere and human society. Dona Richards expresses this Ubuntu attitude toward the cosmos when she states that exploitation of the cosmos is self-defeating.[153] Richards notes that there is harmony in nature that should be respected as a matter of justice.[154] Since religion permeates all aspects of life in the culture of Ubuntu, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life.

Likewise, morality permeates all aspects of life and environment. It matters how one treats wildlife or even non-living parts of creation. Violence towards anything inevitably meets a violent reaction.[155] It can be concluded that Ubuntu encourages a view of human life that is not independent of the biosphere, ecosystem and the cosmos. Ubuntu realizes that there is a network of interdependence without which individual and societal human life is impossible. Since the biosphere and the cosmos sustain human society, the society should preserve the integrity of the biosphere and the cosmos.

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[149] William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1950), p. 65.

[150] Godfrey B. Tangwa, Elements *of African Bioethics in a Western Frame* (Mankon, Bameda: Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group, 2010), 12.

[151] Tangwa (2010, p. 11).

[152] Tempels (1946).

[153] Richards (1980, pp. 76–77).

[154] Richards (1980, pp. 76–77).

[155] Mbiti (1990, p. 1).

Consequently, Senghor notes that African culture conceives the world beyond the diversity of its forms, as a fundamentally mobile, yet unique, reality that seeks synthesis.[156] This work enlightens this aspect of the culture of Ubuntu as useful for discerning ethical concerns when applied to modern trends in global bioethics regarding pollution, climate change, extinction of some species, and the human role in the destruction of the biosphere.

2.2.3.1   The Self and the Cosmos in Relationship

In order to understand the indigenous African conception of reality, causality and the network of relationships between realities, one has to study the work of Placide Tempels[157] and his idea of 'force.' Even though some scholars have criticized Tempels' work and many have discredited it especially because of its exaggerated ambition, pride and generalization,[158] the work has a basic world view that is fairly representative and universal, at least to most indigenous African communities South of Sahara. In his view, Africans perceive and conceive of the world as a field of forces. Force is, in their view, nature of beings. Such forces are ordered hierarchically with God as the source of all force. God is the one "who has force, power, in himself. He gives existence, power of survival and of increase to other forces."[159]

Because all forces in their hierarchy of ability come from the same source, God, they are all related and interconnected. God enables all of them, consequently they are all related. In Tempel's words, "Created beings preserve a bond with one another, an intimate ontological relationship, comparable with the causal tie which binds creature and creator. For Bantu there is interaction of being with being, that is to say, of force with force."[160] According to Tempel the concept of force is metaphysical.

He observed that Africans perceive not only the empirical forces but their causality. He states that "Transcending the mechanical, chemical and psychological interactions, they [Africans] see a relationship of forces which we should call ontological…the Bantu sees a causal action emanating from the very nature of that created force and influencing other forces."[161] Simply stated being or existence is perceived as force and it all comes from and is sustained by God. It is all related although there is a hierarchy as per the kind of force and its influence on other forces.

The hierarchy of the forces is explained by J. Jahn who adapted the categories of A. Kagame.[162]

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[156] Leopold Sedar Senghor, "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century," in *I am Because We Are: Readings in Black Philosophy* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. 48.

[157] Tempels (1946).

[158] Mbiti (1990, p. 10).

[159] Tempels (1946, p. 61).

[160] Tempels (1959, p. 58).

[161] Tempels (1959, p. 58). The word in brackets is mine.

[162] Jahn and Kagame as cited in Mbiti (1990, pp. 10–11).

The categorization separates everything into basic four categories.

Muntu is the philosophical category which includes God, spirits, the departed, human beings and certain tress. These constitute a 'force' endowed with intelligence.
Kintu includes all the 'forces' which do not act on their own but only under the command of *muntu*, such as plants, animals, minerals and the like.
Huntu is the category of time and space.
Kuntu is what he calls 'modality', and covers items like beauty laughter etc.[163]

Mbiti proposes an ontology which is slightly different from Kagame's although it is equally anthropocentric. According to Mbiti there are five categories of being or forces:

God as the ultimate explanation of the genesis and sustenance of both man and all things *Spirits* consists of extra-human beings and the spirits of men who died a long time ago *Man* including human beings who are alive and those about to be born. *Animals and plants*, or the remainder of biological life Phenomena and objects without biological life.[164]

The root—*ntu* is shared by all different kinds of forces and it represents force/being in general. Since being manifests itself only in particular beings. The root never appears without its manifestation as *Muntu*, *Kintu*, *Huntu* or *Kuntu* since it is the metaphysical being in itself or universal force. The universal force, however is the base of all force and by necessity relates all forces. No force can dissociate itself from it. Thus, reality is a unity which appears in a hierarchy of manifestations according based on the four categories mentioned above.[165]

Humans being are a force that is endowed with intelligence, freedom and autonomy. They are responsible for the necessary order and harmonious interaction of forces around them without detaching themselves from the lower forces in the hierarchy and the higher forces (elders, ancestors, spirits, divinities and ultimately God himself). Senghor explores how individuals in traditional African society are supposed to be responsible for ecosystems around them. Violence to nature was considered as violence to humanity, including the subject[166] since, as Sindima puts it, "nature and persons are one, woven by creation into one texture or fabric of life."[167] Consequently, the interests and wellbeing of an individual are subordinate to and dependent on the community and cosmic wellbeing.[168]

That is why Murove argues "that our human well-being is indispensable from our dependence and interdependence with all that exists, and particularly with the immediate environment on which all humanity depends."[169] To underline the direct relationship and symbiotic mutuality between an individual and the biosphere and the role of human individuals in within the cosmos Kasanane states that "An indi-

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[163] Mbiti (1990, p. 11).

[164] Mbiti (1990, pp. 15–16).

[165] Mbiti (1990, p. 10).

[166] Leopold Sedar Senghor, "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century, "p. 52.

[167] Sindima (1995, p. 127).

[168] Asante et al. (2008, p. 115).

[169] Murove (2004, p. 196).

vidual's good health is buttressed when he or she maintains environmental equilibrium, for instance, in the preservation of nature."[170] The interactive and symbiotic interrelationship between living beings and between the biosphere and the cosmos is fundamental in Ubuntu. The relationship is not only physical, biological and ethical; it is as well religious and eschatological. Writing about the role of a forest to human life, for example, Sindima states that "The forest provides the African with all basic needs—food, materials for building a home, medicine, and rain; it also provides a sanctuary for religious practices as well and a home for the fugitive; in addition, it serves as a cemetery and the abode of ancestral spirits." There is, therefore, recognition of the role and significance of nature in Ubuntu which calls for ethical responsibility on the part of humans who stand in constant need of the rest of biosphere and cosmos. With regards to the role of forest to Africans, Sindima concludes, "In short, the forest is everything for the African. It is this understanding of belonging to one texture of life which gives Africans the sense of respect and care for creation."[171]

Thus, while striving to promote and maintain both individual and societal wellbeing, indigenous Africans have always strived to attain and maintain personal and societal integration and equilibrium with their environment. They have always known that holistic human wellbeing is illusive if it excludes the environment which maintains it and without which human existence, live alone its wellness, remains an illusion. The environment is a partner and an extension of the individual and the community.[172]

2.2.3.2 Role of and Respect for Other Forms of Life

It must be stated that there is no treatise or consistent written account that explains the rationale behind most practices of African peoples south of Sahara. Most practice is based on unanimous understanding deducted from the nature of reality itself. Such understanding is based on the observation of cosmic interrelationships. Shutte observes that "Bantu psychology cannot conceive of man as an individual, as a force existing by itself and apart from its ontological relationships with other living beings and from its connection with animals or inanimate forces around it. The Bantu cannot be a lone being."[173]

He finds himself in a web of necessary ontological relationships with other beings including both past and future beings. His greatest value and objective is life itself. Consequently, Mbiti states that "average Africans see no need to enter into a

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[170] Kasanene (1994, p. 350).

[171] Sindima (1995, p. 127).

[172] Kasanene (1994, p. 142).

[173] Shutte (1993, p. 55). Bantu people are the people who mainly share the Ubuntu worldview. They are basically indigenous south of Sahara. However, the world view is not limited to the Bantu. Peoples south of Sahara such as the Nilotes and Cushites share the worldview.

rational and theological squabble, to justify what they do, their concern is life and its wellbeing, how to protect and enhance it. 'Their philosophy of forces serves as sufficient guide'."[174]

Most indigenous peoples south of the Sahara believe that God created the world and established the order which humans discover. Human beings should respect the natural order as a matter of justice and respect for God. Nature serves human beings but injustice to it is punishable by God. For the Chagga, Akan, Ankore, Igbira, Kpelle and Illa, for example, the sun is central as a proof of God's providence in sustenance of living creatures for human beings. For the majority of African peoples rain is the most important expression of God's care for human beings. People like the Illa, Ngoni and Akamba hold that rain is the most important of the activities of God. When it rains God is generally happy with human beings. When there is drought, there is something amiss in people's relationship with God, especially in their treatment of nature.[175]

Ideally, the balance reflected in natural ecosystems should not be disturbed at all. Humans should limit the damage they inflict on animals and trees as much as they can. Food chains and the balance seen in habitats reflect God's wisdom and desire for order in creation. Human beings ought to respect it even as they have to fit into it and get their food from it. Destruction to nature should, therefore be minimal.[176]

Most African peoples South of Sahara believe in a real and organic relationship between humans and the land. Such relationship is usually expressed symbolically. Some Africans express this relationship by the burial of the placenta and the umbilical cord.[177] Some tribes plant the placenta with a seed of a fruit tree so that "as the person grows up, the tree also grows and he/she builds up a relationship with the tree. Since his/her umbilical cord has become part of the tree, the two (person and tree) are like brothers and sisters. Even if that person is to move far away there will always be a symbolic link of the invisible umbilical cord pulling the individual back to his/her homeland."[178]

The burial of the placenta and the umbilical cord serves as a covenant between the new-born child and the ancestral land. Exploring the relationship between land and African peoples, Ali Mazrui states that African attitude to land and nature in general is one of ecological concern and preservation. The "totemic frame of reference" is a caution against destruction or unjust exploitation of land.[179] Giles-Vernick observes that the solidarity between indigenous African peoples and nature is "mainly

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[174] Mbiti (1990, p. 66).

[175] Mbiti (1990, pp. 40–49).

[176] Some (1998, pp. 49–50).

[177] Kamalu (1997, p. 161).

[178] Kamalu (1997, p. 161).

[179] Ali Mazrui, *Africa's International Relations: The Diplomacy of Dependence* (London: Heinemann, 1977), p. 265.

an acknowledgement of mutual interdependence."[180] The interdependence implies co-responsibility which on the part of humans includes restraint from "plunder of nature"[181] because it would hurt the human species.

According to Sindima by "interacting with nature, both creation and people give themselves a new meaning of life and through this relationship people discover themselves within the totality of all creation. As nature opens itself up to human-kind, it presents possibilities of experiencing life in its fullness. In the interaction with nature, people discover their being inseparably bonded to all life."[182] It consequently breeds a sense of *oughtness*, which is the source of ethical reflection. Thus, African people South of Sahara "conceive the world beyond the diversity of its forms, as a fundamentally mobile yet unique reality that seeks synthesis."[183] Ubuntu recognizes the unity of matter and its relationship with humans.[184]

Violence to land and nature is violence to the self and humanity in general. This is because of the intimate and necessary symbiotic relationship between humans and the biosphere in particular within inescapable cosmic context. Consequently, sub-Saharan Africans have a great sense or respect for the biosphere and the cosmos. Their view of human life is so holistic and inclusive that nothing is left out. There is interdependence, not only between human beings and their environment but also between material and spiritual aspects of reality.[185]

The relationship between human beings and their environment can be described as one of reverence. The reverence given to material reality is based on human need for it. Such reverence takes into account not just the current generations but, even more, future generations. Kamalu notes that respect and protection of material reality expresses a sense of responsibility for future generations and for the cosmos. It is about the survival of human species and other species in general. It "implies an ecological responsibility for the current generation of the living whereby the consequence of any actions for future generations must be considered."[186]

2.2.3.3   Sacredness of the Biosphere

Most indigenous people south of the Sahara view nature with deep reverence. It is "their first home, the home that holds the wisdom of the cosmos…Nature is profoundly intelligent as it stands, and human beings would do well to learn from its wisdom."[187] Some articulates how the sub-Saharan indigenous people respect order in nature. They believe that there is an on-going almost sacred wordless

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[180] Giles-Vernick and Rupp (2006, pp. 61–62).

[181] Kinoti (1999, pp. 77).

[182] Sindima (1995, p. 126).

[183] Leopold Sedar Senghor, "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century," p. 48.

[184] Nkrumah (1965, pp. 56–57).

[185] Sindima (1995, p. 127).

[186] Kamalu (1997, p. 158).

[187] Some (1998, p. 49).

communication between different creatures which should not be disturbed. Sustenance of ecosystems and food chains reveals part of nature's mind which should be kept sacred. Humans should never disrupt natural order. Nature sustains itself, regenerates itself and supports all it contains. Its integrity is sacred.[188]

Most Africans don't have to prove God's existence because; they have no problem perceiving God in their environment, leave alone believing that he exists. In their view nature manifests God. Mbiti observes that "all African peoples associate God with the sky or heaven…the majority thinks that He lives there; and some even identify him with the sky…among many societies the sun is considered to be a manifestation of God Himself and the same word or its cognate is used for both." This association of God with the sun is based on the centrality of the sun in the universe and its role in generation and sustenance of life. Mbiti cites some examples of such societies to be "the Chagga (*Ruwa* for both God and Sun), peoples of the Ashanti hinterland (*We* for both), Luo (*Chieng* for both), Nandi (*Asis* for God, *asita* for sun and Ankore (*Kazooba* for both)."[189]

Other African peoples such as the Elgeyuo, Ibbo, Suk and Tonga associate God with rain. Some trees, hills, rivers and caves are associated with God, thus regarded sacred.[190] Mbiti argues that for an indigenous African "nature is filled with religious significance…God is seen in and behind these objects and phenomena. They are his creation, they manifest Him, they symbolize His being and presence."[191]

Human psychic, emotional or physical disease results from either broken relationships with nature or with community. Human integrity and wellness cannot be conceived independent of nature and its principles and intelligence which is the context which is the base for all that is human. Thus Some argues that "our relationship to the natural world and its natural laws determines whether or not we are healed. Nature, therefore, is the foundation of healing…within the natural world are all of the materials and tenets needed for healing human beings."[192]

Some argues that human emotion is a door that connects humans with natural energy around them. Emotional energy communicates with natural waves of energy emitted by other beings in the biosphere. One should always learn to listen to the voice of one's emotions. Holistic healing should include emotional healing which ultimately grounds us with the biosphere.[193]

The indigenous peoples' ultimate meaning of illness is a breakage of relationship. "Some connection is loose or completely absent, or has been severed. What the villager sees in the physical illness is simply an aftermath of something that has happened on the level of energy or relationship."[194] This means that healing is a form of reconciliation, a "conjuring up an energy that will repair the spiritual state

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[188] Some (1998, pp. 50–55).

[189] Mbiti (1990, p. 52).

[190] Mbiti (1990, pp. 52–56).

[191] Mbiti (1990, p. 56).

[192] Some (1998, p. 38.

[193] Some (1998, pp. 55–75).

[194] Some (1998, p. 73).

so that the spiritual healing can be translated into healing of physical disease."[195] In an attempt to bring about authentic healing one should know the proper herbs but, more importantly, one should know "the energetic background of the patient and the reason for the physical illness."[196] Moreover, the healer "has to go beyond the mere physiological and individual symptoms, until the proper psychological, moral and socially-conditioned cause can be traced and discovered."[197]

Human harmonious relationship with nature is of greatest importance since, as Some puts it, "when people die, nature is the only hospitable place where their spirits can dwell."[198] The dead maintain their relationship with the material world. They remember clearly the "experience of walking on the earth…the moments when they contributed to the greater good and helped to make the world better…they also remember with great remorse the failed adventures and the gestures that harmed others and made the world a less dignifying place."[199]

Indigenous people south of the Sahara have a holistic world view. The Dagara peoples, for example, have a cosmology which is inseparable from their psychology, ontology and eschatology. According to the Dagara, "matter and spirit are fused. The two phenomena are complementary, each a reflection of the other." The physical world we live in came into existence simultaneously with another world, a spiritual one which is more dynamic, expansive and much brighter. Each of the two aspects of reality, the material and the spiritual is manifestation of the other.

Humans are both spirit in form of matter. Some explicates the duality and mutuality of this cosmology in form of symbiosis. He states, "The connection to Spirit and the Other World is a dialogue that goes two ways. We call on the spirits because we need their help, but they need something from us as well…they look at us as an extension of themselves for their unrealized dreams which they can realize through us. They help us visualize and realize our own sacredness. We are looking up to each other and humans should take from this a sense of dignity."[200] In Mbiti's view, the "invisible world presses hard upon the visible and tangible world."[201] Although matter reflects the real reality, matter is a mere shadow of the reality; however, the real reality needs matter to express itself.

The Dagara view of reality is very similar to the platonic perspective of reality as a shadow of the ideal world; the world of ideas and concepts.[202] Mbiti views the spiritual and the physical as "two dimensions of one and the same universe. These dimensions dove-tail each other to the extent that at times and in places one is apparently more real than, but not exclusive of, the other."[203] Consequently, reality for

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[195] Some (1998, p. 73).

[196] Some (1998, p. 74).

[197] Bujo (2001, p. 97).

[198] Some (1998, p. 54).

[199] Some (1998, p. 54).

[200] Some (1998, pp. 43–57).

[201] Mbiti (1990, p. 56).

[202] Some (1998, pp. 61–66).

[203] Mbiti (1990, pp. 56–57).

an African is essentially one; separation from the unity of nature which manifests spiritual unity of all that is in existence is annihilation. Ubuntu unity as proof of individual existence is thus demonstrated in the holistic worldview of the sub-Saharan indigenous peoples.

2.3   The Role of Solidarity

The third major component of the culture of Ubuntu emphasizes the role of solidarity. The meaning of this role will later be enlightened by considering the Roman Catholic ethical tradition. This component has three related concepts. First, pursuit of common good in every human action; Second, inculcation and maintenance of social cohesion; Third, minority empowerment for the sake of common good as a sign of ethical maturity.

2.3.1   Common Good

One of the most important objectives of Ubuntu is the pursuit of the common good for current and future human and non-human generations.[204] One of the qualities that differentiate Ubuntu from modern western ethics is that Ubuntu does not seek to promote the individual's interests more than it seeks to promote community interests and vice versa.[205] The culture of Ubuntu considers human action to be social. Every individual action has social implications and repercussions. Consequently, Symphorien Ntibagirirwa notes that Ubuntu arms one with "normative principles for responsible decision-making and action, for oneself and for the good of the whole community."[206] An ethically mature person is one who acts for common good. Such a person "can transcend, when necessary, what the customs of the family or the tribe require without disrupting the harmony and the cohesion of the community."[207]

The ethically mature person in the culture of Ubuntu does things not because they are required or expected but "because it is the right thing to do for both him/herself and the community."[208] This understanding will be paralleled with both Kohlberg's and Gilligan's theories of moral development. Ubuntu ethics considers any human act which ignores the common good to be unethical on the grounds that personhood is facilitated by, and dependent on, human society. Moral maturity implies awareness that one is a product of present and previous generations of human

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[204] Nkrumah (1965, p. 59); Hord and Scott Lee (1995, p. 59).

[205] Nkrumah (1965, p. 59); Hord and Scott Lee (1995, p. 59).

[206] Ntibagirirwa (1999, p. 104).

[207] Ntibagirirwa (1999, pp. 104–105).

[208] Ntibagirirwa (1999, pp. 104–105).

community. Therefore giving back to the common good is a matter of justice rather than charity.

2.3.1.1   Common Ownership of the Major Means of Production

Indigenous African people fostered the common good. Common good is a contested phrase since it has been traditionally defined differently by different people. The nineteenth century individualist Jeremy Bentham defined it as "The sum of the interests of the several members who compose it."[209] Gyekye describes common good as "a good that is common to individual human beings—at least those embraced within a community, a good that can be said to be commonly, universally, shared by all human individuals, a good, the possession of which, is essential for the ordinary or basic functioning of the individual in a human society."[210] Gyekye further summarizes his description of common good as "that which inspires the creation of a moral, social, or political system for enhancing the well-being of people in a community generally."[211] It is Gyekye's understanding of common good that is employed in this work.

Indigenous sub-Saharan peoples resisted privatization of major means of production in order to safeguard the common good. Land, for example was almost always the property of all members of a given society. Everybody had a right of use according to the laws recognized by the society.[212] This was the community's way of ascertaining equality in acquisition and access to contribution to both the private and common good. Several post-independence African politicians interpreted this ethical regulation politically. They concluded that African traditional societies were socialist.[213] However, due to the fact that Ubuntu was an ethical culture which could not be reduced to political ideology, such politicians' ambitions failed.

To ascertain the decent minimum of survival requirements for all members of the society and to foster human dignity and security, Tangwa observes, "It was a taboo to sell or otherwise commercialize certain things, such as water, housing, fuel wood, the staple food, etc."[214]

In sub-Saharan Africa, human labor, as a means of production, has always been considered social and public. Although individuals retain their personal autonomy and private interests, there is a limit to the extent of private interest with regards to the outcome of their labor. The indigenous culture discourages extreme differences between the wealthiest and the poorest. There is a basic poverty line below which

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[209] Jeremy Bentham, An *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and legislation*, Cited in Gyekye (1997, p. 45).

[210] Gyekye (1997, p. 45).

[211] Gyekye (1997, p. 46).

[212] Tangwa (2010, p. 147).

[213] Nyerere (1968, pp 1–12). Nyerere, Nkrumah and Senghor are some of the proponents of African socialism.

[214] Tangwa (2010, p. 46).

no one should be permitted to sink. There is also a ceiling line of wealth above which no one should go, relative to average individual and community wealth. Human labor is for private needs but within the limits and conditions set by the community so that it is for all as well.[215]

2.3.1.2   Distribution of Wealth on the Basis of Need

Sub-Saharan indigenous African societies are not socialist as many early post-independence African politicians argued.[216] Helping others is considered a moral requirement that cannot be overlooked. It is inconceivable to amass excessive wealth while fellow humans are in dire need. Amassing wealth for selfish reasons, regardless common good is considered a very dangerous sign in the unity and life of the society.[217] In the traditional society an individual who proved to be so selfish that he would accumulate wealth while others are in need of basic human needs would be considered as a criminal and an enemy of the community.

   Distribution of wealth, was not forceful as is the case with political socialist approach, neither was it achieved through rhetorical persuasion. It rather happened naturally as an obvious moral requirement that everyone should observe. Wealth distribution aimed at attainment of the equilibrium that is considered by most sub-Saharan Africans to be an ethical ideal. In the words of Kasenene, "in all they do, Africans strive to promote the wellbeing of the members of society, and this is attained when there is personal integration, environmental equilibrium, social harmony, and harmony between the individual and both the environment and the community."[218] It is that equilibrium that will support life.

   Because human life is of the greatest value in African morality, and the health of the biosphere is necessary for flourishing of human life, Mbiti notes that "indigenous Africans see no need to enter into a rational and theological squabble to justify what they do. Their concern is life, its wellbeing, how to protect and enhance it. 'Their philosophy of forces serves as sufficient guide'."[219] Distribution of wealth helps protect and enhance human life. The one who refuses to support life is an enemy of life, thus poison to the community and its survival.

   The culture of Ubuntu had in place mechanisms to ascertain that every member of the society is enabled to employ his or her potential for the personal good and for common good. "In practice, if one had two cows for milk, he would donate one to a person who has none so that the person who has no cow would feed the cow loaned to him so that he can get a supply of milk for his family needs. Usually if the cow gets a calf, the first calf would belong to the owner of the cow and the second one would belong to the person feeding the cow, then the alternate cycle

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[215] Metz (2007, pp. 325–326)

[216] Nyerere (1968, pp. 1–12).

[217] Metz (2007, pp. 325–326).

[218] Kasenene (1994, p. 142).

[219] Mbiti (1990, p. 66).

repeats itself. In that way, laziness is discouraged and every member of the society is enabled to participate both in personal and common good. For immediate need food and other basic needs such as food, water and shelter should be provided without hurting the human dignity of the recipient. No one can claim to be free from the plight of any other person in the community."[220]

The donation in this case is not charity but a duty. Refusal to donate is an ethical violation, especially if the poor party's life is jeopardized in any way. This example shows that Ubuntu is not a socialist ideology but a cultural ethic which values life. Ubuntu sharing aims at supporting all life by the community and each of its members. This perspective of Ubuntu is a great contribution to global bioethics and an element of constructive dialogue.

Distribution of wealth in sub-Saharan Africa is a practical application of the indigenous meaning and objective of justice as reparation and restoration. In many ways it is similar to Jewish understanding of justice as *tzedakah*. The word *tzedakah* literally means righteousness, charity, justice and obligation to the needy. In absolute terms the word is applicable to God only. "For the Lord your God, he is God of gods and Lord of Lords… he doth execute justice for the fatherless and widow and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment" (Deuteronomy 10:19; 15:7–10; Psalm 132:15; 145:15–16). However, since human beings are created in God's image, they are challenged to be like God in holiness and justice. Actually, charity is analogous to lending to God as is indicated in Proverbs 19:17. In Judaism, as in sub-Saharan Africa, nothing really belongs to anyone. What is given to the poor, therefore, belongs to God and no human being has an absolute right to it.[221]

The Jewish scriptures reveal that justice is fundamental and a prerequisite if one is a believer or a member of society. If members of the society are just there will be no exploitation and each member will "enjoy at least a basic level of material security."[222] The poor, therefore, have a right and the rich have an obligation to give in *tzedakah* (charity) as a way of practicing justice. According to Jewish spirituality, "the poor man does more for the house holder (in accepting alms) than the house holder does for the poor man (by giving with charity)."[223]

The major difference between *tzedakah* and Ubuntu is that Ubuntu is neither enforceable nor does it have mathematical calculation of the exact amount to be given by each member of the community to the poor like *tzedakah* does. The second difference is that *tzedakah* does not limit one's possessions in relation to the average wealth of individuals in the community, that is, *tzedakah* does not have poverty line below which nobody is allowed to drop. The third important difference between Ubuntu and *tzedakah* is that *tzedakah* does not concern itself much about production. Ubuntu ethics compel every member of society to employ his potential and participate to the best of his ability and talent in the production of wealth for self and the community.

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[220] Sisulu as cited in Metz (2007, p. 326).

[221] Mackler (1991).

[222] Mackler (1991, p. 225).

[223] *Tzedakah*, a Hebrew term, is generally drawn from the Jewish Scriptures. This section is from Lev. 34:8.

2.3.1.3   Moral Obligation to Participate in the Process of Production

Ascertaining common good is not based only on distribution it is important that everybody who can work does work. Nyerere notes that "in traditional African Society *everybody* was a worker. There was no other way of earning a living for the community. Even the elder who appeared to be enjoying himself without doing any work and for whom everybody else appeared to be working, had, in fact, worked hard all his younger days."[224] Thus the system was so organized that there is assurance that the elderly would be naturally protected as a matter of justice. Nyerere states that "the wealth he [the elder] appeared to possess was not his, *personally*; it was only 'his' as the elder of the group which had produced it. He was its guardian. The wealth itself gave him neither power nor prestige."[225]

Nyerere argues that traditional society had no room for an 'idler' or a 'loiterer.' It was an offence to the society not to work. The society was very hospitable to strangers and guests. However hospitality did not allow exploitation. To explicate this point Nyerere uses a common Swahili saying: "*Mgeni siku mbili; siku ya tatu mpe jembe.*—or in English, treat your guest as a guest for two days; on the third day give him a hoe!"[226] Usually, the guest would ask for the hoe long before his host is obliged by the demands of Ubuntu to hand him one.[227] Observing the traditional sub-Saharan African community, one finds embedded within it the principle of subsidiarity which enabled each member to be a participant according to his ability.

Nyerere notes that the traditional community strives to make sure that each person has the means to realize his potential both for the self and for the society.[228] Membership right (which is essential for survival as a person) in any given indigenous sub-Saharan community, cannot be separated from individual rights and responsibility for the good of the self and the community.[229] Consequently, there is mutual need between an individual and the community. Neither the community nor the individual can survive without the other.

It can be safely concluded that sub-Saharan indigenous African societies were "moderate communitarian" since, as Gyekye states, "the communitarian ethic acknowledges the importance of individual rights but it does not do so to the detriment of responsibilities that individual members have or ought to have toward the community or other members of the community…responsibility is an important part of morality."[230] Gyekye suggests ascribing the community and the individual in such a community "the status of an equal moral standing."[231]

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[224] Nyerere (1968, p. 4).

[225] Nyerere (1968, pp. 4–5).

[226] Nyerere (1968, p. 5).

[227] Nyerere (1968, p. 5).

[228] Nyerere (1968, pp. 1–75).

[229] See Gyekye (1997, pp. 61–70).

[230] Gyekye (1997, p. 66).

[231] Gyekye (1997, p. 41).

2.3.2   Social Cohesion

Ubuntu fosters social cohesion.[232] Individual humans and the society as a whole exist in a symbiotic relationship. Each exists only in relationship with the other. The pursuit of the common good depends on all members of society recognizing of this relationship.[233] Since one becomes aware of one's own existence, duties, obligations and rights in and through, the community, Mbiti observes an implied but obvious bond between individuals so that when one suffers one does not suffer alone but one suffers with the whole group. The culture of Ubuntu views human society as an organism whose parts are all important for their contribution to the entire organism. That is why Mbiti argued that whatever happens to one affects the entire group; whatever happens to the group affects each member.[234] This reciprocal relationship between an individual and the community increases the sense of belonging. Mnyaka and Motlhabi affirm that in Ubuntu culture "Everyone belongs and there is no one who does not belong."[235]

Ubuntu is committed to upholding the values of the community. Community values are shared between "the living and their ancestors in a way that shows the living's commitment to fellowship with their ancestors and those values that have enabled them to live life in harmony with everything else in the community."[236] Social cohesion for the sake of protection, nurturing and fostering all human life is the ideal of Ubuntu.

2.3.2.1   Moral Responsibility to Participate in Community Building

Indigenous African people south of Sahara hold that it is a moral responsibility for members of communities to actively participate in all that contributes to the life of the community. Self-realization is undeniably dependent on the community. Individual self-realization is concomitant to, and in mutuality with community health. Consequently, Gyekye argues that, "the communal definition of constitution of the individual can only be understood in partial terms, requiring that both the individual and community be given equal moral worth."[237] Since individual life depends on communal life, one has to participate in the activities such as communal norms, rituals and traditions that contribute to the life of the community. Failure to do so is tantamount, not only to suicide but also to killing of the society. It is a crime.

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[232] Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness,* In Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 2009, p. 2.

[233] Nyerere (1968, pp. 1–12).

[234] Mbiti (1990, p. 1).

[235] Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2003, p. 222).

[236] Murove (2004, p. 200).

[237] Gyekye (1997, p. 52).

Personal behavior and conduct that upset integrity of the community is consequently immoral, therefore, to be discouraged.[238]

Normal interaction, spending time with others, and communication with one other in a community is not optional but a requirement for the life of the community. This societal obligation is best explained by a study done by Augustine Shutte. The study involves two groups of nuns in one convent: Africans and Germans. While the German nuns would continue engaging themselves in some materially productive activity after their daily chores, such as weaving and knitting, the African nuns spent a lot of time in conversations with one another. According to the study, each group blamed the other as morally lacking and irresponsible.[239] While the German nuns blamed the African nuns for wasting time and for being irresponsible, the Africans blamed the German nuns for caring more for their hobbies and practical matters than for people.

According to the African nuns it is unethical to not to engage others in maintaining and actively contributing life to the community. The German nuns did not see any sense in the mere lengthy *unproductive* talk among African nuns. This clash of cultures caused conflict based on different ethics. The German nuns failed to understand the significance of the dialogue between the African nuns. Its significance is in the very fact that it is not business oriented or geared towards any material gain. It was simply for the sake of community life in the sense of Ubuntu. This is best summarized by Ruch. For Africans living according to the ethic of Ubuntu, states Ruch, "What I am myself for and by myself, matters less than what I am with, in and through the others."[240]

The African nuns were there with, for, in and through their colleagues, and that is what really matters. Ideally their fulfillment is based on, not exclusive of, their confreres fulfillment. Life is all about participation and contribution in the rhythm of the community. Ruch says it in a very simple categorical statement: "to be is to participate."[241] According to Ubuntu participation is a moral ideal; failure to participate is an ethical omission.

While human dignity may be considered from an individualistic perspective, in Ubuntu human dignity is meaningless independent of the community. The role of community in recognition and ascertaining human rights cannot be exaggerated. Gyekye states that moderate communitarianism should not be obsessed with individual rights. "The communitarian society, perhaps like any other type of human society, deeply cherishes the social values of peace, harmony, stability, solidarity, and mutual reciprocities and sympathies." In Gekye's view such values are essential for existence of any real human community.

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[238] Metz (2007, p. 327).

[239] Augustine Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for the New South Africa* (Cape Town: Cluster Publications, 2001), pp. 27–28.

[240] E. A. Ruch, "Towards a Theory of African Knowledge," in *Philosophy in the African Context*, ed. D. S. Georgiades and I. G. Delvare (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1975), p. 18.

[241] Ruch, "Towards a Theory of African Knowledge," p. 10

He asserts that "in the absence of these and other related values, human society cannot satisfactorily function but will disintegrate and come to grief." In order that such values may be there, however, there is need for definition of individual limits. In Gyekye's words, "the preservation of the society's integrity and values enjoins the individual to exercise her rights within limits, transgressing which will end in assaulting the rights of other individual or the basic values of the community."[242]

It is the community which by recognizing one as human gives him his due respect as an equal and a participant in the life of the community. Mnyaka and Motlhabi state that a "person has dignity, which is inherent; but part of being a person is to have feelings and moral values that contribute to the well-being of others…it shows that one contributes to the definition of oneself through everything one does. One's identity or social status goes hand in hand with one's responsibility or sense of duty towards, or in relation to, others."[243] This means that human dignity is to be always understood in the matrix of the community.[244]

Kasanene explains this *status quo* at best when he writes, "one cannot regard even one's own life as purely personal property or concern. It is the group which is the owner of life, a person being just a link in the chain uniting the present and future generations."[245] The main contribution that this worldview illuminates to the global understanding of human dignity and human rights in general is the contingence of rights to community. It also highlights the responsibility of the individual to the community which prescribes the dignity due to any individual as human.

2.3.2.2 Respect for Personal Autonomy as a Requirement in Community Building

Teffo notes that due to the importance of social cohesion Ubuntu "discourages the view that the individual should take precedence over the community."[246] Ubuntu, however, does not suppress the individual's unique rights and privileges within the context of the community. Using the words of Macquarrie, Ubuntu "preserves the other in his otherness, in his uniqueness, without letting him slip into the distance."[247] In other words Ubuntu defines, respects, and promotes personal autonomy within the limits of common good. Common good is severely damaged if self-determination is not honored by the community. However, membership in the community is *sine qua non*. Bujo explains this when he states "—individuals live only thanks to the community."[248] Mbiti provides an explanation of the statement of Bujo when he writes "in traditional life the individual does and cannot exist alone

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[242] Gyekye (1997, p. 65).

[243] Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2003, p. 224).

[244] Gyekye (1997, p. 63).

[245] Kasanene (1994, p. 349).

[246] Teffo (1994, p. 7, 12).

[247] Macquarrie (1972, p. 110); Shutte (1993, p 49, 51).

[248] Bujo (2001, p. 1).

except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole." In other words self-hood does not develop entirely from within a person. Its stimulus is outside the person.

It also means that a person is really a product of both his or her current human society and preceding generations. "The community must therefore make, create, or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group." Although Mbiti does not mention it for the sake of emphasizing the role of the community in personal formation, reciprocity is essential in the process. Mbiti emphasizes that "physical birth is not enough: the child must go through a rite of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the entire society."[249] However, the child in the initiation process retains his or her uniqueness and autonomy as a person.

The child responds and reciprocates to the community by becoming a unique, proactive and productive member for the sake of the self and for common good. Michael Battle elaborates the same argument provided by Mbiti when he writes "We say a person is a person through other persons. We don't come fully formed into the world…we need other human beings in order to be human. We are made for togetherness; we are made for family, for fellowship, to exist in a tender network of interdependence."[250]

Being preceded by the community and being dependent on it for his survival, the individual needs the community just as the community needs the individual. To explain this fact Kwame cites Akan saying "When a human being descends from heaven, he [or she] descends into a human society." So the person should not live in isolation from other people since part of his constitution comes from inevitable social relationships, without which self-realization is impossible. There is, therefore, a delicate balance between individual self-determination and the context in which it is practiced, which context is the community.

Regarding this delicate balance Gyekye states "It might be thought that in doing so, such an arrangement tends to whittle away the moral autonomy of the person—making the being and life of the individual totally dependent on the activities, values, projects, practices, and ends of the community… that arrangement diminishes his freedom and capability to choose or re-evaluate the sheared values of the community."[251] However, as John Macquarrie, writes in *Existentialism,* when communitarianism becomes oppressive, then Ubuntu is abused. Ubuntu respects individual autonomy, "true Ubuntu incorporates dialogue.

It incorporates both relation and distance." Ubuntu maintains personal autonomy without encouraging individualism.[252] Ndaba makes this important point clear when he argues "that the collective consciousness evident in the African culture does not mean that the African subject wallows in a formless, shapeless or rudimentary collectivity." On the contrary it "simply means that the African subjectivity develops

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[249] Mbiti (1990, p. 106).

[250] Battle (1997, p. 65).

[251] Gyekye (1997, pp. 36–40).

[252] Macquarrie (1972, p. 110); Shutte (1993, p. 49, 51).

and thrives in a relational setting provided by ongoing contact and interaction with others."[253]

Although there is an inclination towards collectivism and a sense of communal responsibility in the philosophy of Ubuntu, individuality is not negated but affirmed in interpersonal relationships within the society. The 1997 South African Governmental White Paper for Social Welfare officially recognized Ubuntu as "the principle of caring for each other's well-being" It called it a "principle of mutual support."[254] Mutual support is not contradictory, but supportive of individual identity and autonomy. Teffo explains that Ubuntu "merely discourages the view that the individual should take precedence over the community."[255] Furthermore mutual neediness within community members is crucial as Broodryk explains. He posits that as a process of self-realization *through* others, Ubuntu enhances the self-realization *of* others.[256]

Realistically, Ubuntu recognizes the importance of human relationship without which autonomy cannot be comprehended. John Macquarrie explains that in Ubuntu individuals can only exist as human beings in their relationship with other humans. The word "individual" therefore, "signifies a plurality of personalities corresponding to the multiplicity of relationships in which the individual in question stands." Hence, "being an individual by definition means 'being-with-others.'"[257]

Weil affirms that Ubuntu champions realistic freedom; that is, "it is not true that freedom of one man is limited by that of other men." Freedom is always relative to the freedom of others. "Man is really free to the extent that his freedom fully acknowledged and mirrored by the free consent of his fellow men finds confirmation and expansion of liberty. Man is free only among equally free men." Ubuntu recognizes the fact that "the slavery of even one human being violates humanity and negates the freedom of all."[258]

Due to indigenous Africans' rootedness into community as the only way to survive and grow as an individual, colonialism and neo-colonialism had not only a political impact on indigenous African communities, but had also psychological, social, ontological and ethical impact. Mbiti refers to African situation after colonialism when he writes "modern change has brought many individuals in Africa into situations entirely unknown in traditional life…The change means that the individuals are severed, cut off, pulled out and separated from corporate morality, customs and traditional solidarity. They have no firm roots anymore."

One of the worst legacies of colonialism consists of taking a people from the culture and ethics that define them without replacing it with another. Mbiti describes such situation in a dramatic way. He says, "They are simply uprooted but not

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[253] Ndaba (1994, p. 14).

[254] South African Governmental White Paper for Social Welfare, http://www.welfare.gov.za/Documents/1977/wp.htm. February 15, 2012.

[255] Teffo (1994, p. 7, 12).

[256] Broodryk (1997, pp. 5–7).

[257] Macquarrie (1972, p. 104).

[258] Weil (1973, p. 182, 188–189).

necessarily transplanted. The traditional solidarity in which the individual says 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am', is constantly being smashed, undermined and in some respects destroyed." Colonialism imposed not only political and economic control over the peoples of Africa; it imposed a foreign culture which was opposite the traditional culture and ethics of Ubuntu. Mbiti noted that at his time emphasis was "shifting from the 'we' of traditional corporate life to the 'I' of modern individualism."[259]

In sum, personal autonomy is essential in Ubuntu caring since in its absence neither caring nor community is possible. Ubuntu forms persons to be autonomous, although always within the limits of what is acceptable by the society, since there cannot be real individual human existence outside human community. Personal autonomy in Ubuntu, therefore, is logically and simultaneously for the good of the self and for common good. In addition to its illumination on the necessity of human relationships, which are facilitated by the implied personal autonomy, Ubuntu reinforces the role of human society, which formulates principles of ethics, as indispensable.

2.3.2.3   Community as an Extension of the Individual

Ubuntu social cohesion is an expression of care that is essential for the existence of the human community as a whole and for each individual in it. It is the kind of care advocated by most care ethicists. Ubuntu social cohesion means assumption of responsibility and active participation in the community for self-realization and for other people's realization. For this reason Ubuntu culture fosters a feeling of integration between individuals and their society. The society is almost regarded as an extension of the self in the sense that whatever is done by any member of the society affects each other member of the society and the society as a whole. Such understanding fosters regard for responsibility, duty and care.

Due to its communitarian mindset, indigenous sub-Sahara African communities represented by Ubuntu world view define individuality by a different criterion from the popular western criterion. "It is not an individual *vis-à-vis* (against) community but an individual *a la* (with) community. It is pro-community rather than against community."[260] This mindset promotes a caring attitude. Caring for one's neighbor and community means taking part in all communal and neighborhood activities, and caring is crucial in the culture of Ubuntu. One is naturally "expected to be in solidarity with one another especially during the hour of need."

That kind of solidarity is clearly manifest in events such as death. Neighbors would spend hours, sometimes days with the bereaved family as a way of alleviating their pain and strengthening them.[261] Munyaradzi observes that in traditional African ethics, a patient would not go the doctor alone. He would usually be

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[259] Mbiti (1990, pp. 219–225).

[260] Macquarrie (1972, p. 104).

[261] Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2003, p. 223).

accompanied with his or her relatives and neighbors. The company of relatives and neighbors helps to provide for the needed support, counseling, interpretation and understanding of both the diagnosis and prognosis.[262] Munyaradzi's observation is one of many illustrations which helps explore the communitarian and Unitarian ethics of Ubuntu.

Simply put, the analysis means that there is no absolute secrecy. The communitarian nature of the culture of Ubuntu cannot allow the separation caused by the demand for privacy that modern medicine would expect. In fact, in some instances, the doctor would avoid giving the detail of the diagnosis of a patient directly to the patient while revealing it to family. Often times this happens to protect the patient from the pain of dealing with the bad news while, at the same time helping the family help the patient coup.

Ubuntu can rightly be said to be at least minimally moderate communitarian. Gyekye describes moderate communitarianism as "a model that acknowledges the intrinsic worth and dignity of the individual human person and recognizes individuality, individual responsibility and effort."[263] Ubuntu, however, is much more communitarian than moderately so. Senghor describes African communitarianism more elaborately when he states that among Africans community and community activity takes precedence over individuals and their individual activity without disregarding or underrating the importance of each individual, for himself or herself and for the community.[264]

Ubuntu therefore is essentially and inescapably communitarian. Gyekye explains, "Communitarianism immediately sees the human person as an inherently communal being, embedded in a context of social relationships and interdependence, and never as an isolated, atomic individual."[265] The Bantu people help to explicate this in their casual conversational language. Nussbaum notes how the Shona people of Zimbabwe, for example, have this morning greeting: "*Mangani, marara sei?* (Good morning, did you sleep well?)" The response is always: "*Ndarara, kana mararawo.* (I slept well, if you slept well)."[266] Mbombo writes about how an individual from the country would "go to town, to tell us the whole story of their illness and how somebody else is not well in the family, and how somebody is not well in the community."[267] Broodryk notes the same mindset in the greeting "*ninjane*" which represents not just an inquiry about personal well-being but also about the well-being of the subject's relatives, friends and neighbors.[268] Sanon observes that

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[262] Murove (2005, p. 146).

[263] Gyekye (1997, p. 40).

[264] Senghor (1964, pp. 93–94).

[265] Kwame Gyekye, "Person and Community in African Thought," in *Philosophy from Africa. A Text with Readings* ed. P. H. Coetzee and A. P. Roux (Durban: International Thomson Publishing Southern Africa, 1998), p. 319.

[266] Nussbaum (2003).

[267] O. Mbombo, "Practicing medicine across cultures: conceptions of health, communication and consulting practice." In M. Steyn and K. Motshabi, eds. *Cultural Synergy in South Africa. Weaving Strands of Africa and Europe* (Randburg: Knowledge Resources, 1996), p. 110.

[268] Broodryk, *Ubuntu. Life Lessons from Africa*, p. 101.

"Where a European may only inquire after the health of someone he meets, the African wishes to know, even from a total stranger, whether his family members are well.

Not only a 'How are you?' is important, but rather, 'How are your people?' is decisive in regarding health."[269] There is no doubt, therefore, that communitarianism is at the heart of indigenous African way of life, so much so that immediate community is viewed an extension of the self. This state of affairs is based on what Mbiti observed, that is, "the individual in African tradition does not and cannot exist alone, but that he or she exists corporately, such that they owe their existence to other people."[270]

Thus Ubuntu is about intrinsic connectedness of humanity. Using an analogy of a swimmer and the sea Ruch explores African perspective on life as that of interconnectedness.[271] In Ubuntu culture life is participation of an individual in the life of his or her community, in the eco-system, and in the cosmos even as the human community, the biosphere and the cosmos participates in the life of each individual. Thus life is about connectedness and participation. Individuals recognize the life of the community and affirm it in its riches; the community recognizes the life of each individual in it and affirms it in its uniqueness.

No one is exempt from Ubuntu communitarianism since there is no life outside it. Consequently Macquarrie observes that "being with others…is not added on to a pre-existent and self-sufficient being; rather, both this being (the self) and the others find themselves in a whole wherein they are already related. By nature a person is interdependent with other people."[272] Realization of human interdependence commands what Teffo calls "respecting the *historicality* of the other. Respecting the historicality of the other means respecting his/her dynamic nature or process nature."[273] Consequently, notes Tutu, a person who embraces Ubuntu is "open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed."[274] In brief, the community is an extension of the individual; ideally, the individual must see himself or herself in the community in whose existence he shares.

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[269] A. T. Sanon, "Heil und Heilung fur den Christen in Afrika," cited in Bénézet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998), pp. 182–183.

[270] Mbiti (1997, p. 141).

[271] E. A. Ruch, "Towards a Theory of African Knowledge," in *Philosophy in the African Context*, ed. D. S. Georgiades and I. G. Delvare (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1975), p. 2.

[272] Macquarrie (1972, p. 104).

[273] Teffo (1994, p. 11).

[274] Tutu (1999) cited by Battle (2009, p. 2).

2.3.3 Minority Empowerment

Ubuntu supports minority empowerment. Minority recognition, protection, enablement and empowerment for the sake of the common good are measures of a specific community's ethical maturity.[275] Minority empowerment in Ubuntu is not just a matter of charity, or a religious practice, it is an ethical imperative which defines a person and society at large. Mutual, peaceful co-existence with decent minimum for all is an inevitable ideal of life since there is no separation between human rights, religion, ethics and other aspects of life.[276] Ubuntu culture opposes the individualism that Naomi Scheman considers repulsive due to its marginalizing effect on the minority.[277]

2.3.3.1 Minority Empowerment as Defense of Basic Human Right to Life and Dignity

Sub-Saharan indigenous African communities have the concept of, and have been living according to human rights based on human dignity. Sundman defines right as "a legitimate claim and corresponding duties."[278] Sundman further defines human right as a "right which human individuals have simply by virtue of being human."[279] Generally, "human rights protect the value of welfare, but only to the extent that this corresponds with our authentic needs."[280] The fact that human rights incorporate both legitimate claim and corresponding duties, implies that human rights are based on human reciprocity. Thus human rights result from human relationships within society.

Since indigenous sub-Saharan Africans "do not think in 'either/or,' but rather in 'both/and' categories,"[281] their concept of human rights appears to weigh more on the side of duties of the society and its members rather than on the claim of an individual. The claim is implied in the duties because, as Ruch puts it "myself, matters less than what I am with, in and through the others…Existence is not merely 'being there;' it is power of participation in the pulsation of life. 'To be is to participate.'"[282]

The sub-Saharan concept of human rights revolves around human life. Bujo observes that "the community must guarantee the promotion and protection of life by specifying or ordaining ethics and morality."[283] The indigenous preoccupation

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[275] Nyerere (1968, pp. 1–12).

[276] Kasanane (1994, p. 140).

[277] Scheman (1983, p. 240).

[278] Sundman (1996, p. 183).

[279] Sundman (1996, p. 183).

[280] Sundman (1996, p. 183).

[281] Bujo (2001, p. 1).

[282] Ruch, "Towards a Theory of African Knowledge," p. 10.

[283] Bujo (2001, p. 2).

with human life has led some scholars to misjudge Africa to be too anthropocentric and communitarian to have a clear separation of claims from duties or ethics from religion.[284] Bujo states that in the past some scholars have argued that a person in Africa "is ethically subsumed under ethnic group to such an extent that he scarcely merits to be considered as an autonomous ethical subject."[285] If this were the case, it would be impossible to speak of individual human rights.

Bujo observes that recent research, however "has proven conclusively that the group does not at all dissolve the ethical identity of the individual. This is confirmed in a number of proverbs."[286] Consequently, Africans do have human rights. Actually, the community is at the service of each human life with its uniqueness as an irreplaceable organ of the community. At the same time, the role of community in ethical conduct and human individual human rights is indispensable. Cut off from human community, the individual loses personhood along with all its rights and privileges.[287]

In the culture of Ubuntu, the basis and objective of all rights are human rights. Human rights, however, are all geared towards promotion, protection, enhancement and maximization of human life. Kanyike states that "In traditional Africa, procreation—the reproduction and transmission of human life—is one of the most important values, if not the most important value in life.

An individual is simply not alive, if he/she is not engaged in transmitting life to another human being."[288] Thus, like many other scholars of African cultures Kanyike concludes that "Life is the greatest preoccupation of the African…Everything is centered on the communication of life, participation in that one life, its conservation and its prolongation."[289] No matter how broken human life is, it is held with almost absolute dignity and respect. The centrality of life in Ubuntu is the reason behind minority empowerment.

Due to the centrality of life in the culture of Ubuntu, marriage occupies a central place. Mbiti notes that "marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and a lawbreaker, he is not only abnormal but 'under human'."[290] Celibacy is inconceivable as Kanyike observes: "No one remains celibate just for the sake of it or in order to be free and no society can ever set celibacy as an ideal without running into the danger of extinction."[291] In Mbiti's interpretation celibacy is an abnormality. It is an offence against the primitive command "to increase and to multiply," and against

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[284] Bujo (2001, pp. 3–11).

[285] Bujo (2001, p. 6).

[286] Bujo (2001, p. 6).

[287] Bujo (2001, p. 1).

[288] Edward Kanyike, *The Principle of Participation in African Cosmology and* Anthropology (Balaka: Monfort Media, 2004), p. 139.

[289] Kanyike, *The Principle of Participation in African Cosmology and* Anthropology, p. 139.

[290] Mbiti (1990, p 130).

[291] Kanyike, *The Principle of Participation in African Cosmology and Anthropology*, p. 140.

'immortality'.[292] The right to life (even for the unborn, which implies the duty to generate life) is the center of all rights. The precedence of communal life over individual life in the culture of Ubuntu is based on the logic of utilitarian maximization of the greatest good, which in the case of Ubuntu is life.

The whole community is geared towards promotion of life. If an individual proves to be an obvious impediment to the community's concern with each and all life, that individual is suppressed or eliminated. The life of the community precedes each individual life. The community is the foundation of individual life. It is the community which, not only defines and enables individuation, but individuation is absurd if not based on the community. Using the words of Benhabib Seyla, "Individuation does not precede association; rather it is the kind of associations which we inhabit that define the kinds of individuals we become."[293]

For this reason Mbiti states that in sub-Saharan Africa the "community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group…Physical birth is not enough: the child must go through rites of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the entire society."[294] Consequently, the association must precede individuation. The community as a whole and the morally mature members of the community are responsible for each of its members, especially the disadvantaged and those with disabilities.

Due to the centrality of human life in the culture of Ubuntu, minority enablement and empowerment is naturally ascertained by the community in a very natural way. Decent minimum for all is ascertained in a variety of ways. Tangwa notes, for example, that "in traditional Africa practitioners of the medical and healing arts, like many other artists and specialists, normally did not charge any fees for their services" however, patients who were treated, as a matter of unspoken sense of justice and custom, "always voluntarily came back with appropriate gifts and rewards for their healer/doctor…Nso' traditional society, for instance was organized in such a way that what one needed for mere survival was at the disposal and within the reach of all and sundry."[295]

Tangwa also points out that land, being a major means of production, was not owned individually. The king ascertained that everybody who needed land for cultivation or building got it and that nobody had more than he needed. It was a taboo among the Nso' "to sale or otherwise commercialize certain things, such as the staple food, housing, water, fuel-wood, etc." Nyerere notes the same thing. He writes that in traditional African society no one was allowed to fall below the acceptable poverty line, just as no one was allowed to rise above an acceptable ceiling of richness relative to average community wealth. This spontaneous and almost natural unanimous agreement is based on the recognition of human dignity and equality, as Nyerere later observes.[296]

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[292] See Mbiti (1970, pp. 174–175).

[293] Benhabib (1997, p. 73).

[294] Mbiti (1990, p. 106).

[295] Tangwa (2010, p. 77).

[296] Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism. Uhuru na Ujamaa* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 338.

Necessities of life such as food, clothing and temporary shelter were given out or simply taken as needed.[297] Such practice would ascertain human life and dignity for all. Production of wealth in the culture of Ubuntu was never based on competition. Amassing wealth for individual security or for immediate family security only is anathema. Production was for the self without excluding the disadvantaged.[298] It is a shame for the entire society to have destitute people. It is unjust, inhuman, antisocial and an ethical/ moral immaturity on the part of the society to have desperately poor in their midst. It always meant that the society was in decadence and perishing. In sum, it is a moral obligation to help those in need. By the virtue of their being human, the poor and the people with disabilities who have a just claim to the labor, talent and time of fellow humans in whose lives they share. It is a moral duty and obligation to provide for those who cannot provide for themselves.

2.3.3.2   Minority Empowerment in Ubuntu is Based on Human Equality

Ubuntu's stance on empowerment of the minority is founded on a deep rooted understanding of human equality. It is also rooted in the fact that nobody is self-sufficient or perfect. Humans need each other. As a result of this understanding, every person in the society is equally important and a gift to every other person in it. The ability to empower the minority and 'going an extra mile' for them determines both personal and societal fulfillment and moral maturity. Personal fulfillment or actualization as human is based on the ability to engage and help other people in the community.

Using Ramose's words, "to be a human be-ing is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis establish human relations with them,"[299] whereby establishing human relations with other humans means engaging them and enabling them to the extent of their need and your ability. Consequently, "Ubuntu supports the Biblical teaching that there is more joy in giving than in receiving." (Acts 20:35). Human equality facilitates care and creates community. It can fairly be concluded that sub-Saharan indigenous Africa cannot conceive of humanity completely cut off from community.

Ubuntu's belief in minority empowerment and human equality is based on Ubuntu's communitarianism. Ubuntu communitarian world view holds that if one member of the community is suffering the whole community suffers. One cannot separate oneself from needy members of the community. Ignoring minority is a direct attack on Ubuntu communitarianism. Gyekye writes that "Communitarianism immediately sees the human person as an inherently communal being, embedded in a context of social relationships and interdependence, and never as an isolated,

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[297] Tangwa (2010, p. 77).

[298] See Marquard and Standing (1939, pp. 20–32).

[299] Ramose (2002, p. 42).

atomic individual."[300] Bujo perceive the Bantu communitarianism as a worldview. It is not based only on humans. It involves the entire cosmos. He writes, "In the African world-view, all things hang together, all depend on each other and on the whole. This applies particularly to human beings who are closely connected with each other and with the ancestors and God."[301] Bujo further explains that this Bantu worldview which is based on Africans' experience of the world is ontological, spiritual and eschatological. He writes, "The way they think and feel is in union, not only with other people around them, but, indeed, with the deceased, even God, and the entire universe is drawn into this flow of life."[302]

All the values that increase bonding between different people within the community were considered virtue. The values that break the bond between members of the community are considered vices. That is why Broodryk writes "Ubuntu demands respect for all other human beings irrespective of race, gender, beliefs, class, and material possessions: all are equal beings reliant on each other for a happy life."[303] Equality between human beings was based on the ontological fact of being human. Everybody is recognized, given attention and engaged by everybody else. To ignore others is considered immoral since everybody commands attention of everybody else. Metz sums up this state of affairs which has been researched by many scholars into a moral principle. He states that it is immoral "to ignore others and violate communal norms, as opposed to acknowledging others, upholding tradition and partaking in rituals."[304]

Ubuntu human equality is on the basis of subsidiarity. There is a systematic spontaneous agreement that everybody should, in his or her capacity, be helped to participate in the life of the community. Production is based on ability and distribution on need. Leopold Senghor attempts to define and explain and distinguish African communitarianism, which is based on equality, participation, inclusion and sharing of life, from what he called "collectivist society" using relativistic and comparative language. He states, "The collectivist society inevitably places emphasis on the individual, on his original activity and his needs. In this respect the debate between 'to each according to his labour' and 'to each according to his needs' is significant." According to Senghor, Ubuntu is not Collectivist in approach. He states that "Negro-African society puts more stress on the group rather than on the individual, more on *solidarity* rather than on the activity and needs of the individual, more on the *communion* of persons rather than on their autonomy." However, the value of the individual along with his or her basic human rights remains indispensable. Senghor clarifies, "ours is a *community* society. This does not mean that it ignores the individual, or that collectivist society ignores solidarity, but the latter bases this

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[300] Gyekye, "Person and Community in African Thought," in *Philosophy from Africa: A Text with Readings* ed. P. H. Coetzee and A. P. Roux (Durban: International Thomson Publishing Southern Africa, 1998), p. 319.

[301] Bujo (1992, p. 22).

[302] See Bujo (2001, p. 88); Masolo (1994, p. 498).

[303] Johann Broodryk, *Understanding South Africa—the uBuntu way of* living (Waterloo: uBuntu School of Philosophy, 2007) p. 40.

[304] Thaddeus Metz (2007, p. 237).

solidarity on the activities of individuals, whereas the community society bases it on the general activity of the group."[305]

In effect, individual contribution to the common good is not pronounced within Ubuntu culture. The maxim is "from each for all and all for each." Ruch verbalizes this mind set best when he states, "What I am myself for and by myself, matters less than what I am with, in and through the others."[306] Nyerere explains that within the culture of Ubuntu there was neither room nor tolerance for exploitation. He states, "In traditional society, everybody worked for his or her personal needs and for the needs of the extended family or ethnic group. Caring for the wellbeing of the sick, children, elderly and those with disabilities was a responsibility of each individual member of the society and of the society as a whole."[307]

Ideally, the culture of Ubuntu expects everybody to be responsible for everybody else in the community. Children, for example, belonged to the extended family and to the entire clan and tribe. Every adult would discipline or teach any child. Caring for people with disabilities is a responsibility of everybody. They need to be helped to feel equal to other members of the society. Nyerere notes that "in Ubuntu, the people with disabilities, the sick, the orphaned, widows or elderly members of the society are automatically protected so that they do not feel insecure or inferior to the rest of the members of the society." No one would be at peace if a minority is in need. The minority is a responsibility of everybody else. Any morally mature person should naturally take upon himself to address the plight of the minority in his environment. There is a delicate balance between individual property and common property. Nyerere elaborates on this fact when he writes "If a member of an ethnic group is prosperous, the whole ethnic group is prosperous. If the ethnic group is prosperous, each member considers himself or herself prosperous"

Ubuntu ascertains that everybody has the means necessary for production and that exploitation is discouraged. This was achieved as Nyerere notes by common ownership of the major means of production. "Land is communally owned in that no one has absolute right to it. Members of the community use it according to need. Laziness or refusal to work is a curse and source of shame to the respective individual and his/her family."[308] To underline African deep rooted communitarianism based on human equality Nyerere writes elsewhere that, "all basic goods were held in common, and shared among all members of the unit.

There was an acceptance that whatever one person had in the way of basic necessities, they all had; no-one could go hungry while others hoarded food." The gap between the richest and the poorest is minimized as a matter of virtuous society.

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[305] Senghor (1964, pp. 93–94).

[306] E. A. Ruch, "Towards a Theory of African Knowledge," in *Philosophy in the African Context*. D. S. Georgiades and I. G. Delvare (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1975), p. 18.

[307] Nyerere (1968, p. 4).

[308] Julius K. Nyerere, "Ujamaa—The Basis of African Socialism," in *I am Because We Are: Readings in Black Philosophy*, ed. Fred Lee Hord (Mzee Lasana Okpara) and Jonathan Scott Lee (Amherst, Boston: University of Massachusetts, 1995), pp. 65–72.

Nyerere observes that "within the extended family, and even within the tribe, the economic level of one person could never get too far out of proportion to the economic level of others."[309]

Ubuntu world view does not consider enabling or helping a needy person as a matter of choice or charity. One is obliged to share that which is necessary to make another human being live a dignified life. If one has more than he needs and another member of the society does not have the basic needs, the wealthy is considered as an immoral person. Refusal to provide for the basics of life is a moral omission which makes one a criminal.[310]

In sum, Bantu ethics is inseparable from human life lived in community and based on acceptance of human basic equality. Human rights in Ubuntu are rights because of the dignity of human life, its equality with any other human life and its helplessness independent of the community. It can safely be stated that the essence of Ubuntu ethics is human life in the context of community of human equals.

2.3.3.3 Minority Empowerment as a Matter of Religious and Ethical Imperative

Minority empowerment is not only an ethical imperative, it is a religious imperative. The objective of Ubuntu is tranquil and harmonious coexistence between humans and between humans and the cosmos. This objective is both ethical and religious because it supports life. The community is at the service of each life within it. God's will is order, peace and tranquility which are an optimal context for nurturing and protection of each human life. Like Mbiti, Bujo, Kasenene, Tangwa and Shutte, Onah observes that "The promotion of life is therefore the determinant principle of African traditional morality and this promotion is guaranteed only in the community." Consequently, community becomes necessary for the sake of life. The importance of community for human life is not only ethical but religious as well. Onah states that "Living harmoniously within a community is therefore a moral obligation ordained by God for the promotion of life. Religion provides the basic infra-structure on which this life-centred, community-oriented morality is based."[311]

Failure to enable and empower the minority works against the objective of Ubuntu because it violates life. Flourishing of their lives depends on those who are able in the community. Every person is religiously and ethically responsible for all life in accordance to his ability and enablement.[312] Onah concludes that "Living harmoniously within community is therefore a moral obligation ordained by God

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[309] Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism. Uhuru na Ujamaa* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 338.

[310] Broodryk, *Ubuntu. Life Lessons from Africa* (Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy, 2002), p. 8.

[311] Onah (2012).

[312] Bujo (2001, p. 2, 88).

for the promotion of life."[313] In line with Onah, Desmond Tutu writes, "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 a plague. Anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness, are corrosive of this good."[314] Failing to pay attention to, and address the plight of the minority is considered a violation of harmonious community life. One is not only guilty before oneself and the community for failing to empower the minority; he or she is responsible and culpable before God for the omission.

Minority empowerment among the Chagga people of Kilimanjaro Tanzania is much more sophisticated and realistic. However, it is one of the best examples of Ubuntu as practiced in real life with regards to minority empowerment. For the Chagga people instead of giving a poor person milk the poor person is helped to own a cow. However he has to prove over time to the society that he can assume the responsibility of taking care of the cow. He doesn't get to own it instantly.

He keeps the cow as borrowed property, gives back to the owner the first calf produced by the cow, then own the second calf; then the cycle repeats itself until he or the owner decides to terminate the contract. The Chagga of Uru calls this practice *iarà* (*iarà* is infinitive which means lending with an intention to help another person help himself. The verb and root of *Iarà* is *arà*). *Iarà* redeems the poor person from his misery, enabling him to salvage himself, be independent and be responsible. Interestingly, this practice is an application of the principle of subsidiary and a perfect illustration of recognition of human equality. *Iarà* is enablement per excellence. *Iarà* is an illustration of not only the presence of ethical principles within indigenous Bantu people but of a highly developed practical ethics, concept of justice, fairness, responsibility and human equality.

Minority empowerment is necessary for a peaceful community. For sub-Saharan Africans peace is not merely an absence of war and active conflict. Rather peace is conceived "in relation to order, harmony, and equilibrium." Peace in the universe is not only ideal for the survival of human life and other lives, but the will of God. God wills that there is harmony and favorable equilibrium in the universe. "The order, harmony and equilibrium in the universe and society is believed to be divinely established and the obligation to maintain them is religious." Peace is a moral value because its attainment and sustenance requires human proactive and initiative participation.[315]

Sub-Saharan Africans believe that the order ordained by God is upset when any human life is not treated in accordance with its due dignity and respect. The order is upset when there is no ontological, religious, social and economic equality among human beings. For both human dignity of the minority and equality of humanity, minority empowerment is *sine qua non*. If the minority is not empowered there can be no peace within the majority or the minority.

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[313] Onah (2012).

[314] Tutu (1999, p. 35).

[315] Onah (2012).

"Peace is good relationship well lived; health, absence of pressure and conflict, being strong and prosperous…"[316] "Peace is the totality of well-being: fullness of life here and hereafter…'the sum total of all that man may desire: an undisturbed harmonious life.'"[317] Absence of peace means, at the same time, a moral evil. According to Bujo personal health is contingent to community and the cosmos. Bujo concludes, "Health, therefore, implies safe integration into the bi-dimensional community as the place where life grows."[318] This means that personal health cannot exclude the minority in the community.

The ideal of health is on-going growth into bonding with other humans, especially by addressing recognizing their humanity, engaging it as an equal partner. In Broodryk words, it "is to become more fully human which implies entering more and more deeply into community with others."[319] Life as such is not completely a personal concern. To a very large extent all life belongs to the immortal community. The individual is "just a link in the chain uniting the present and future generations,"[320] using the words of Kasanene. It is the concern of everybody to bring every life to its fullness to the best of his ability.

Desmond Tutu explains the ideal personal stance towards other people from Ubuntu perspective in these words, human beings "are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are."[321] In other words, failure to empower minority in the society is not only a violation against them, it violates also the humanity of the subject who ignores the minority.

The community expects everybody to engage and empower the minority as a way of affirming not only the humanity of the minority but, especially, his own humanity.[322] Among the Chagga people of Tanzania, if one harvests crop from his land, he or she should leave a little portion on the land for the needy. The minority naturally know that it is meant for them. Among most Bantu people who are travelling don't carry much food with them. They would stop at any community village on their way and expect to be given something to eat, a drink and a place to spend the night if tired.

Ubuntu stance towards the minority is in line with what John Finnis recommends in his work *Natural Law and Natural Rights*. Nature of property rights requires it.[323] Julius Nyerere points out that in the traditional society the minority were protected so that they did not feel insecure or inferior to the rest of the members of the society.

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[316] Robert Rweyemamu, "Religion and Peace," p. 381.

[317] J. S. Awolalu, *The Yoruba Philosophy of Life*, in Robert Rweyemamu, Religion and Peace," p. 382.

[318] Bénézet Bujo (1998, p. 182).

[319] Broodryk, *Ubuntu. Life Lessons from Africa*, p. 101.

[320] Kasanene (1994, p. 349).

[321] Tutu, "Ubuntu and Indigenous Restorative Justice." http://www.africaworkinggroup.org/files/UbuntuBriefing3.pdf. February 15, 2012.

[322] Broodryk, *Ubuntu: Life Lessons from Africa*, p. 8.

[323] Finnis (1980, pp. 186–187).

From the perspective of Ubuntu culture prosperity of one member of the community was considered prosperity of the whole community.[324] As a way of assuring the decent minimum for all, and equality of access and ownership of the major means of production land and other major means of production is basically communally owned in that, no one has absolute right to it. This mode of owning and using major means of production ascertained inescapability of communitarianism and assurance of enablement and subsidiarity for all. Community members use it according to need and ability for self and the society.[325]

One ought to work for oneself and for the minority. Refusal to work is equivalent to suicide because it implies cutting oneself from the community.[326] Consequently Broodryk observes that caring for oneself and for other members of the community through human labor is a moral imperative in Ubuntu. Thus, responsible "Caring is an important pillar in the *Ubuntu* worldview."[327] Since care enables one to realize his humanity, Michael Battle argues that the minority helps the majority to realize their humanness in the very act of recognizing and empowering the minority.[328] Thus, Mnyaka and Motlhabi are justified when they state that "Ubuntu ethics is anti-egoistic, as it discourages people from seeking their own good without regard for, or to the detriment of, other persons in the community."[329]

Minority empowerment is within the kernel of Ubuntu worldview. It is ethical, social, religious and psychological imperative. Deliberate refusal to engage and empower the minority is self-defeating since it means annihilating one's own humanity by estranging him or her from oneself, from the community and from God.

2.4 Conclusion

In Ubuntu ethics, the community determines and defines individual rights and obligations. Even though individuals have innate individual dignity, Ubuntu assumes that the welfare of individuals is dependent on the welfare of the community as a whole, just as it assumes that 'being an individual is being with others' and that the self stands in constant need of an-other. Consequently the community takes precedence over its constituent individuals. Even though Ubuntu ethics recognizes the individual's need for the community for survival, self-definition, development and actualization, every individual remains unique and with autonomy.

Since each person has a right to self-determination, there is inevitable tension between individual rights and universal rights. Individual rights being subordinate to universal rights, there cannot be absolute individual rights in Ubuntu. This tension,

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[324] Nyerere, "Ujamaa—The Basis of African Socialism," pp. 65–72.

[325] Nyerere, "Ujamaa—The Basis of African Socialism," pp. 65–72.

[326] Nyerere, "Ujamaa—The Basis of African Socialism," pp. 65–72.

[327] Broodryk, *Ubuntu. Life Lessons from Africa*, p. 48.

[328] Battle (1997, p. 65).

[329] Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2003, p. 224).

however, is inevitable since existence itself is a web of interconnections, interactions, and symbioses between humans and between humans and the non-human part of the universe.

The tension between individuals and the community in Ubuntu ethics is managed by an on-going process of initiation into the wider community. Initiations are geared toward acknowledgement that ethically, individual rights meet their limit in the rights of other individuals represented in sum by the community. It is the continual process of initiation which enables sub-Sahara Africans to think in 'both/and rather than either/or' categories. In other words, individual autonomy is not practicable if it doesn't recognize other persons' right to autonomy. The community ascertains that. Since individuals realize their humanity in their relationships with other humans, the tension between individual rights and universal rights is constructive as it enables and facilitates cognitive and moral development.

From the perspective of Ubuntu, the poor and the underprivileged have a just claim to the labor, talent and time of the community in whose life they share. It is a moral duty to provide for those who cannot provide for themselves while recognizing and appreciating their contribution, according to the principle of subsidiarity. No human life is in vain. When human life is at stake, no individual rights holds. Human life overrides all individual rights, except when such life is a threat to more lives or the life of the community.

Ubuntu ethics not only recognizes cognitive and moral development with regards to ethical maturity, which in Ubuntu is equivalent to the ability to care, it facilitates the process. When an individual has objectively been proven to be mature, such individual is allowed to transcend the limitations and boundaries imposed by the community and act freely. Such individuals are allowed to do so because they are believed to be really mature, which means they always act in the interests of the community as they act in their individual interests. Recognizing human dependence on the biosphere and the cosmos, Ubuntu recognizes non-human biospheric and cosmic rights. Humans have duties and obligations to provide good stewardship, treasure and safeguard their environment for the current and for future generations as a matter of ethics.

Having analyzed the components of Ubuntu, clearly, at the core of Ubuntu is ethics of care. The following chapter explores ethics of care as it enlightens Ubuntu and as it is enlightened by Ubuntu. Ethics of care recognizes individual rights having merits because they have universal meaning. Individual and universal rights need to be interpreted in light of ethical responsibility having meaning within human relationships. There is need for reciprocity of care that clarifies the meaning of ethical responsibility.