

A Critical Assessment of Ubuntu as a Source for Moral Formation in Contemporary Africa

By

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A dissertation submitted to the University of the Western Cape, South Africa in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

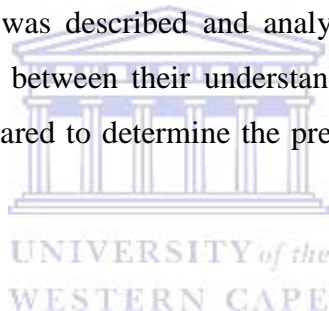
Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor: Professor John Stephanus Klaasen

May 2022

ABSTRACT

This study presented a critical evaluation of Ubuntu as a source of moral formation in contemporary Africa. In African society, Ubuntu as a notion of African humanism has been and still is subject to much criticism. Although Ubuntu plays a role in African literature, philosophy, anthropology, ethics and theology, scholars on the continent and beyond find it to be a contested concept. The concept and approach to moral formation described in this study contributes uniquely to the already existing corpus of literature. The study explored African thinkers' perspectives of Ubuntu as a resource of moral formation and assessed its relevance in contemporary Africa. This was done by reviewing three diverse notions of Ubuntu as a source of moral formation as advocated by three different African scholars, namely: Augustine Shutte – South Africa; John Mbiti – Kenya; and Kwame Gyekye – Ghana. The views of these scholars were juxtaposed to critically investigate the possible commonalities and contestations for moral formation. Their understanding of Ubuntu as the foundation for moral formation was described and analysed based on a close reading of various sources. The differences between their understandings of Ubuntu as the basis for moral formation were then compared to determine the prevailing state of this worldview in present-day Africa.



KEYWORDS

Africa

African Humanism

African Worldview

Community

Gyekye, K

Klaasen, J

Mbiti, J

Metz, T

Moral Formation

Shutte, A

Tutu, D

Ubuntu



DECLARATION

I, Benson Onyekachukwu Anofuechi, declare that '**A Critical Assessment of Ubuntu as a Source for Moral Formation in Contemporary Africa**' is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Benson Onyekachukwu Anofuechi

Date: May 2022

Signed:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank all those who, in one way or another, helped bring this study to fruition:

- Firstly, I would like to express my profound appreciation and give glory to God the Creator and Redeemer for providing me with the wisdom, guidance, and strength to complete this research project, and without whom this study would not have been possible.
- Secondly, I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to my wonderful supervisor, Professor John Stephanus Klaasen, for his patience and critical supervision. His insightful remarks and invaluable feedback contributed to the successful completion of this thesis. It has been an extraordinary privilege to study under the guidance of such a remarkable individual with so many intellectual strengths and qualities – his character has been an inspiration to me. Prof, I have so much admiration for your scholarship and appreciate the confidence you have instilled in me. I am proud to have been one of your students.
- Thirdly, I am also grateful for the generous bursary awarded me by the University of the Western Cape which covered the necessary costs for my study.
- Fourthly, I am also immensely thankful for the assistance provided by the staff and the librarian of the University of the Western Cape, and Dr. Lee-Anne Roux for professional editing/proof-reading of this dissertation.
- Fifthly, a sincere thanks to my former supervisor (Prof Ernst Conradie) and lecturers, Prof Hans Engdahl, Prof Christo Lombard, Prof Douglas Lawrie, and Dr Miranda Pillay, who contributed immensely to my academic formation for which I remain truly grateful. Also, thank you Dr Teddy Sakupapa, Dr Oritsegbubemi Oyowe, Dr Demaine Solomon, Dr Kenny Chiwarawara, Dr Evans Ondigi, Dr Onyinye Akunne, Mrs Blessing Anofuechi, Glory Anofuechi and Mrs Helen Adelusi, for your constant encouragement and support.

- Sixthly, a special thanks to my brother, Benjamin Anofuechi, and to my other siblings – Angelina, Obed, Jeremiah – for their constant thoughts and sound advice.
- And finally, thank you as well to my wonderful friends – Saibu, Newton, Samson, Emmanuel, Adaobi, Jonathan, Daniel, Patrick, Chisom, Ntombodidi – for their words of inspiration and ongoing encouragement.

I am forever grateful to all of you for your unique contributions!



DEDICATION

To the Glory of God

and

the memory of my parents

John and Patience Anofuechi



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral Treatment
ATR	African Traditional Religion
Covid-19	Coronavirus
FBO	Faith-Based Organisation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV	Human immunodeficiency Virus
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NISET	Nijmegen Institute of Studies in Empirical Theology
NIV	New International Version
PLWHA	people living with HIV/AIDS
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCT	University of Cape Town
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
USA	United States of America
WCC	World Council of Churches

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Ubuntu, as a notion of African humanism, refers to a multifaceted African worldview that embraces the values of human interconnectedness. Although it is defined in a variety of ways, it remains a highly contested phrase, worldview, value system, and problematised notion within Africa. Ubuntu is commonly understood in the South African context from the Xhosa maxim, '*abantu ngabantu ngabanye abantu*', meaning that "people are people through other people".¹ According to Samkange (1980), some of these Ubuntu maxims or statements are often expressed as follows:

- *Motho ke motho ka batho* ("A person is a person through other people") – (Sotho/Tswana).
- *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* ("A person is a person through other people") – (Zulu).
- *Umntu ngumntu ngabantu* ("A person is a person through other people") – (Xhosa).
- *Munhu munhu nevanhu* ("A person through other people") – (Shona).
- *Ndiri nekuti tiri* ("I am because we are") – (Shona).

Attempting to define or interpret Ubuntu has proven to be a challenge. This sentiment was echoed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999) when he noted that Ubuntu is very tough to render into Western language, other than to claim that it means: "my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in what is yours". He understood Ubuntu as "the essence of being human and that it is part of the gift that Africa will give the world". Furthermore, his approach to Ubuntu affirmed that "I am human because I belong which speaks about wholeness and compassion" (Tutu 2004).

Moreover, other definitions from West Africa include: "I feel the other, I dance the other, and therefore I am", or that "a tree cannot make a forest" (a Benin proverb from Edo State, Nigeria). All of these exemplify the importance of communal connectivity and

¹ For additional reading see: J. Broodryk, 2002. *Ubuntu. Life Lessons from Africa*, Ubuntu School of Philosophy, Pretoria; A.O. Ogbonnaya, 2001, *African ways: A Christian education philosophy*, Urban Ministries Inc., Illinois; K.D. Kaunda, 1966, *A humanist in Africa: Letters to Collin M. Morris from Kenneth D. Kaunda*, Longman, London; N. Mandela, 1994, *Long Walk to Freedom*, cited in D. Rothstein, 1994, 'Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or model?', *Ethics & International Affairs*, 18(1), 112+; and K. Nkrumah, 1964, *Consciencism: Philosophy and ideology for decolonization and development with particular reference to the African revolution*, Heinman, London.

togetherness (Nussbaum 2003).² The perspectives or notions of Ubuntu used in this research as a source of moral formation include those from Kenya (John Mbiti), South Africa (Augustine Shutte), and Ghana (Kwame Gyekye), respectively.

The term Ubuntu as a notion of African humanism has made its way into various dimensions of everyday life, for example, politics, business, education, health care, nation-building, moral renewal, arts and media, work (solidarity and creativity), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process, technology, HIV and AIDS epidemic, Covid-19 pandemic, Ebola outbreak, and theology. The term is not absolute in nature, as individuals generally interpret and define it according to their perceptions and experiences. By implication, Ubuntu finds itself subject to overuse, misuse, or even abuse, which in turn provokes criticism. Ubuntu as an African worldview (formation) is defined by its values, which include, among others, caring for the wellness of others, respecting them for who they are, sharing one's possessions with the needy, being moved by compassion, and always acting in loving kindness. Ubuntu carries considerable worth for the people of Africa and globally. It helps as a shared ideology of orientation, shaping peoples' attitudes, conduct, behaviour, and manners.

Similar to Ubuntu principle, moral formation means the outwards behavioural manifestations of virtue in a group's or person's life comprising of service, reconciliation, love, forgiveness, respect, etc., which are interrelated to formation of humanity towards growth and development of individual or community. Moral formation refers to internalisation of moral norms and values. It involves cultivation of virtues and characters and the development of dimensions of moral life in order to express ethical principles and standards of one's life.

This study endeavoured to offer a critical assessment of Ubuntu as a notion of African humanism as a resource for moral formation in contemporary African societies by evaluating three notions of this theory from diverse African viewpoints of mostly Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). To this end, the study analysed the three notions of Ubuntu and investigated the commonalities and contestations for moral formation. The study builds an exclusively and valued contribution to the field of African Theological Ethics. The researcher, firstly, unpacked the concept of Ubuntu; secondly, provided the origin of the concept and its historical development in modern Africa; thirdly, explored how contemporary philosophers' approaches to Ubuntu have argued in favour or contested Ubuntu as the root of moral

² Also see: B. Nussbaum, 2009. 'Ubuntu: Reflections of a South African on our common humanity', in Munyaradzi F. Murove (ed.), *African ethics. An anthology of comparative and applied ethics*, pp. 21-26, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Scottsville.

formation; fourthly, assessed the perspectives of these various scholars on Ubuntu as the centre for moral formation from three selected countries, namely: Kenya (John Mbiti), South Africa (Augustine Shutte), and Ghana (Kwame Gyekye); and finally, compared and contrasted the views of the three selected prominent scholars and theologians to see how Ubuntu as an African worldview can facilitate moral formation in contemporary Africa.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. After presenting the research problem below, which includes the research question formulated to guide this study, the methodology is explained, along with the rationale and background of the study. Thereafter, Ubuntu as the foundation for moral formation is discussed, and African views on Ubuntu as a resource of moral formation are reviewed. The final section outlines the forthcoming chapters.

1.2 The Research Problem

This study investigated the critical evaluation of Ubuntu as a source of moral formation in contemporary Africa. It is abundantly clear from the available literature that Ubuntu has been understood in diverse ways. The researcher therefore identified, described, and assessed the divergent ways in which Ubuntu has been understood in the literature, giving particular attention to the views of three African theologians (their philosophical approaches), namely: Kenyan – John Mbiti, South African – Augustine Shutte, and Ghanaian – Kwame Gyekye.

The primary question that was addressed in this study was: “What are the commonalities and contestations of Ubuntu as a source for moral formation?”

The following research problem was investigated in this study: Ubuntu for moral formation has been used by different influential African and Western scholars in varying ways to support the African notion of moral good. In the discussion of the three scholars, the tension between the individual and community for moral formation is foregrounded. The role of the individual in moral formation is critically engaged. Is the individual embedded within the ontological and epistemic community (Mbiti)? Coupled with this notion of the individual is the question about the idea that the community forms the individual through symbolic and ritualistic patterns (Matolino 2009:162). Gyekye’s use of the tension between the individual and community is somewhat different. Gyekye refers to Mbiti’s community as a “radical community”, and he uses the phrase “moderate community”, assuming that reason and individual goals are supported by the community. Shutte is closer to Gyekye’s perspective. What is common to all three scholars is that moral formation and, in fact, a person, is under continuous formation, and can be defined in terms of moral achievement. Community is also

a commonality of Ubuntu for moral formation. The degree to which community plays a role in moral formation differs amongst the three scholars. In the case of Mbiti, the community is normative for moral formation whereas both Gyekye and Shutte give a lesser role to the community. This will be discussed again in more detail later on.

The reason for selecting the theories of the three African thinkers (John Mbiti, Kwame Gyekye, and Augustine Shutte) was to identify the contestations and commonalities in the Ubuntu principles as the foundation for moral formation. Specific questions were therefore asked to obtain an understanding of the perspectives of each scholar from the selected African countries. By contrasting the views of these scholars through their notions, perspectives, and the understanding that shaped their ethos and societies, a different notion of Ubuntu was discovered as a resource for moral formation: Shutte's approach focused on the *metaphysical* background of Ubuntu; Mbiti adopted a *normative* understanding of Ubuntu and the community; and Gyekye's *conceptual* perspective to Ubuntu is of a moderate community in moral formation.

The scope of the study was limited to three notions based on their distinctive specialised similarities and difference approach to Ubuntu community in contemporary Africa and globally. The study helped to fill the gap of the current controversy or debate of understanding of this African worldview as the foundation for moral formation. The scholars were selected based on a wide range of critical debates and contributions to the field of African Theological Ethics and I am quite familiar with the writings of these philosophers or theologians. They are also from different SSA countries with different approaches to Ubuntu philosophy and represent different traditions that ultimately influence their notions of moral formation. The study also established a new leading edge to the perspective to Ubuntu ethics through South African notion of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu theology, reconciliation, moral renewal and nation building for moral formation in addressing societal issues in our communities. I added Tutu after the discussion of the three main scholars in order to strengthen and sharpen the contrasts of the different notions of Ubuntu. Tutu brings different theological perspective than Shutte and Mbiti which enrich the investigation of the research question. By investigating these African scholars' ideas, this research endeavoured to juxtapose the state of the Ubuntu concept in modern Africa and further afield, as well as explore whether Ubuntu for moral formation still has a place in the changing world.

1.3 Research Methodology

A comprehensive literature study formed the key foundation of this study through a qualitative approach. The dominant sources consulted included books and journal articles drawn from widespread sources to compare and contrast diverse Ubuntu worldviews. Comparative analysis is of paramount importance for a key aspect of scholarly work especially the theories of the three selected thinkers across Africa. According to Stausberg and Engler (2013:34), comparison is part of every process of interpretation and understanding, as well as reflexive awareness of one's interpretative point of departure, including limitations, and it is also part of established (but all too often ignored) hermeneutical standards.

This study aimed to interpret and understand different African worldviews to introduce new understandings of Ubuntu as African humanism as a resource for moral formation in current Africa. This research offered a critical understanding of the concept of Ubuntu by reviewing its commonalities and contestations as perceived in three African countries.

Notwithstanding, the general objective of this research was to challenge and change the current conceptual outlines and practices by evaluating three theories of this notion from an African viewpoint. According to Collier (1991), comparative analysis sharpens the powers of description and plays a central role in concept formation by bringing into focus suggestive similarities and contrasts among theories or cases. In addition to it being routinely used in testing hypotheses, it can also contribute to the inductive discovery of new hypotheses and theory building.

This study explored the possibility of Ubuntu as the basis for moral formation in consideration of the moral decay of contemporary societies, broken communities, social injustices, and inequality. It therefore makes a conceptual contribution to addressing the confusion of the notion of Ubuntu by reconstructing and gaining understanding from the scholars selected for this research.

The principal methodology utilised entailed comparing, contrasting and interpreting by critically assessing the commonalities and contestations of the approaches of John Mbiti, Augustine Shutte, and Kwame Gyekye. The study hoped to relate these to possible notions of African humanism in contemporary African societies as a means for moral development and further afield. This research hypothesis was tested and developed through an in-depth and critical analysis of the available literature. For this purpose, a literature-based research approach was used.

1.4 Rationale & Background

The background and rationale framework of this study explored the historical development and contested meaning of Ubuntu with divergent understanding of this African worldview across Africa. The researcher provided detailed characteristics and core values of Ubuntu as the etymology for moral formation in precisely SSA. It further provides the different notions of this African humanism plus its important contribution to the academic discipline of African Theological Ethics.

The relevance of this study is situated in the context of Ethics and Morality that constitutes an exceptional and valuable contribution to the field of African Theological Ethics. It addresses very topical and important ethical and moral issues and dilemma with greater importance amongst Africans through Ubuntu. The significance of the study was planned towards the future of Ubuntuism among other things focusing on systems of thought and resources that emerged from African philosophers and theologians that involved and informed the major understanding of the Ubuntu concepts as basis for moral formation in variety of contexts that make up the African continents and across the globe. My study therefore contributed through South African perspective of scientific knowledge in this field by filling the gap of the neglected shared aims and differences of three scholar's approaches to Ubuntu as a resource for moral formation in present-day Africa, and thus introduced a new perspective to Ubuntu community through the work of His Grace Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu theology and the role as the chairperson of TRC process in South Africa.

1.4.1 The development of Ubuntu

It is commonly known that the term Ubuntu resists being easily defined.³ It has been termed variously as an ancient and old-style African worldview, a usual value system, or a philosophy of life, which plays a significant and solid role in influencing communal behaviour (Mokgoro 1997:2). According to Swartz (2006:560), Ubuntu proposes a “unifying vision of a community built upon compassionate, respectful, interdependent relationships” and helps people with “a rule of conduct, a social ethic, the moral and spiritual foundation for

³ See, for example, Mogoba, 1996, ‘The church’s task in reconciliation and harmony’, in A.P. Burger (ed.), *Ubuntu. Cradles of peace and development*, pp. 89-96, Kagiso, Pretoria; T. Bennett & P. James, 2011, ‘Ubuntu: The ethics of traditional Religion’, in T.W. Bennett (ed.), *African religions in South African law*, pp. 223-242, University of Cape Town Press, Cape Town; and N.M. Kamwangamalu, 2008, ‘Ubuntu in South Africa: A Sociolinguistic Perspective to a Pan-African Concept,’ in A.K. Molefi, M. Yoshitaka & Y. Jing (eds.), *The global intercultural communication reader*, pp. 240-250, Routledge, New York.

African societies”. What Ubuntu entails remains a highly contested subject in most learned and philosophical circles.

Several authors contend that this worldview cannot be defined satisfactorily by non-African terminology. Yvonne Mokgoro (1997:2-3) writes:

The concept of Ubuntu, like many African concepts, is not easily definable. To define an African notion in a foreign language and from an abstract as opposed to a concrete approach is to defy the very essence of the African worldview and can also be particularly elusive ... because the African worldview cannot be neatly categorized and defined, any definition would only be a simplification of a more expansive, flexible and philosophically accommodative idea.

Praeg and Siphokazi (2014:96-99) argued that the elusiveness and contestation surrounding the definitions of Ubuntu praxis, in particular as a notion of African humanism, is still paramount. Ubuntu as an African worldview has been a foundation of African communitarianism, Pan-Africanism, moral formation, moral identity, and African socialism in their struggles for survival and the existence of a good society. Similarly, the African philosophy of Ubuntu has been instrumental to the political development in South Africa and former President Thabo Mbeki’s call for an African renaissance, and the search for an African philosophical explanation of the experience gained under TRC has also added momentum to this interest in the emergence of this philosophy today. Ubuntu morality is at the root of the African philosophy of life and beliefs systems in which the peoples’ daily-lived experiences are reflected. It has been the basis of African hope, courage, forgiveness, and reconciliation in their struggles to survive and exist as a human society.

One may also deduce the understanding of Ubuntu concept as a radical moral or ethical vision/formation. More precisely, such understandings of Ubuntu morality resonate with various aspects of solidarity and hospitality. Notably, solidarity is stretched not only to neighbours and friends but also to enemies. Mercy Oduyoye⁴ in this aspect argues “the limitation of hospitality to one’s own ethnic group” as a “perversion of hospitality in Africa” (2001:100). Thus good solidarity as well-versed by the Ubuntu ethics or morality also involves respect for others and environment. A community that is informed by the Ubuntu ethics can rightly be spoken of in terms of a moral community in so far as Ubuntu centres of moral formation and human development.

⁴ Mercy Amba Oduyoye is a Ghanaian Methodist theologian known for her work in African women’s theology. She is currently the director of the Institute of African Women in Religion and Culture at Trinity Theological Seminary in Ghana.

Remarkably, the work of Danish scholar, Christian Gade (2011:303-330), traced the historical development of Ubuntu in written dissertations. According to Gade, since 1846, Ubuntu has regularly appeared in scholarly writings and has been illustrated in five stages, namely:

Stage 1 (1846 – 1962): During this stage, Gade shows that the Ubuntu notion almost exclusively referred to a unique human excellence, which elevates a person to a plane near godliness. Here, Ubuntu refers to humanity and its goodness.

Stage 2 (1962 – 1975): During this time, according to Gade, a new knowledge began to appear in scholarly writings that connected Ubuntu to philosophy in principle. In Ubuntu philosophy, the notion of humanity in the world of the living must be *umuntu* (a person) in order to give a response to the fundamental instability of being. Gade says that during this stage Ubuntu was seen as a philosophy that encouraged the communal good of humanity and included a vital component of human development.

Stage 3 (1975 – 1990s): During this period, some authors identified Ubuntu as African humanism. This notion includes solidarity, charity, good living (*buen vivir*), empathy, giving, forgiveness, sympathy, conviviality, care, love, hope and showing compassion.

Stage 4 (1990s – 2000): Ubuntu here was defined as the lens through which Africans view reality. For example, according to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, it was Ubuntu that constrained many victims of apartheid in South Africa to choose to pardon rather than to exact vengeance. Gade shows that scholars who identified Ubuntu as a worldview admitted that should Ubuntu be abided by and lived out, Africa and the world at large would be free of enormous social challenges like climate change, social injustice, crime, racism, tribalism, ethnic conflict, HIV and AIDS, Covid-19 pandemic, malaria, GBV, soil erosion, inequality, unemployment, consumerist culture, domestic violence, fundamentalism, homelessness, malnutrition, pollution, rape, corruption, hunger, tuberculosis, polio, poverty, cholera, and religious conflict.

Stage 5 (2000 – 2011): During this time the notion of Ubuntu was acknowledged as being related to the South African Zulu maxim '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' ("a person is a person through another people") used from 1993 to 1995. But in a more philosophical sense it means the belief in the universal bond of sharing and giving that connects all humanity.

Gade attests that after 1995 the adage advanced into a very significant position for describing the Ubuntu concept. Since then, this adage has been quoted or referred to in relation to human interconnectedness. The ideology of Ubuntu is a term that is widely used

and applied in an African context predominantly in SSA. When the ideology is encountered, it is in most cases difficult to describe because it is understood and applied diversely in different contexts.

Ironically, Praeg's in his writing of *A Report on Ubuntu* (2014) articulated the relationships between what he calls 'ubuntu' (small "u"), understood as a certain pre-colonial African thinking or way of life and 'Ubuntu' (capital "U"), understood as a post-colonial philosophy, ethics, morality or ideology that enunciates aspects of the former in the form of principles or perhaps a system. Interestingly, one could submit that Ubuntu with a capital "U" is a product of, and potentially a critical reaction to modernity. Therefore in South Africa for example, the Ubuntu of reconciliation and nation-building which valued forgiveness and a sense of togetherness were outstanding, however, was one-sided of the neglects of the need for the work through the large-scale effects of apartheid both economically and emotionally.

In light of the above, it is important to provide a comprehensive description of this African worldview.⁵

1.4.2 African worldview of Ubuntu

Ubuntu as an African worldview has a common point of reference rooted in the African culture. This African continent could generally be referred to as Mother Africa, or as the United States of Africa, belonging to all the people living therein, binding them with a sense of belonging and togetherness in the spirit of familyhood (Broodryk 2006:23). Africans, particularly the societies of SSA, share a unique sense of solidarity that often transcends family or community boundaries (Hydén 2000:8). In many countries, it is quite remarkable how after a great deal of affliction and injustice, people can extend forgiveness and be reconciled with each other (Krog 2005). This is the Ubuntu spirit at work, and if applied successfully, it not only provides the groundwork through which experiences of modernisation and diversity are interpreted, but it could considerably aid the development of the capacity of the African continent to feature more prominently on a global scale (Msengana 2006:83).

The work of Poovan, du Toit and Engelbrecht (2006) detailed that the application of the spirit of Ubuntu has fortified people to work harmoniously and collectively. In a widespread evaluation of the inspiration of the social values characterised by Ubuntu, they began their analysis by demonstrating that Ubuntu has been a vital constituent in determining

⁵ Some of the other sources include: M.B. Ramose, 1999, *African philosophy through Ubuntu*, Mond Books, Harare; D. Tutu, 1996, 'Preface', in A.P. Burger (ed.), *Ubuntu. Cradles of peace and development*, pp. x-xi, Kagiso, Pretoria; and J. Teffo, 1998, *Ethics in African humanism*, Ubuntu School of Philosophy, Pretoria.

the existence of different African communities. Their investigation revealed that Africans have learned to live through collective action, mutual care and support, and not by individual independence. In order for such mutuality to flourish, Poovan et al., (2006) developed a shared spirit that allows them to pool possessions for communities to work together collectively. That personal interest is less important than community needs is a lesson learned from an early age. This characteristic of Ubuntu (commonality) pervades all facets of African life. They observed that “Ubuntu is not having a brother but being part of the bigger picture of the community” and advocated that “it is basic neighbourliness... that’s one of the biggest things about Ubuntu” (Poovan et al., 2006). The importance of community is summed up by John Mbiti: “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am”.

A quotation from Leopold Senghor (1964), a West African social philosopher, describes another dimension of Ubuntu: “I feel the other, I dance the other, and therefore I am”. Nyathu (2004), from his philosophical perspective, believes that Ubuntu’s significance as a value system is seen in the way that it has “been the backbone of many African societies” and it is “the fountain from which many actions and attitude[s] flow”. He also perceives Ubuntu as a declaration of being the fundamental rudiment that qualifies any person to be human.

Murithi (2009) claims that Ubuntu is an African way of viewing the world and a worldview that attempts to capture the crux of what it means to be mortal. In the same view, Dandala (1994) proposes that Ubuntu is a ‘cosmology’ that describes the “harmonic intelligence” that is inherently part of indigenous philosophy in Africa compared to Western notions of communities that seem progressively geared towards individuality and competition. Mangaliso (2001) opined that Ubuntu as an African notion is able to encourage sincere harmony and continuity throughout the wider human system. Ramose (1999), on the other hand, suggests that “African philosophy has long been established in and through Ubuntu ... there is a family atmosphere, that is, a kind of philosophical affinity and kingship among and between the indigenous people of Africa”. He maintains that the philosophical view of Ubuntu is not just constrained to Bantu speakers but is found throughout SSA. For example, in Senegal, the concept of ‘Teranga’ replicates a similar spirit of Ubuntu as shared hospitality and responsibility. Tutu’s (2004) theological model of Ubuntu is highly inclusive as humanity signifies the right that human characteristics are exclusively made to be more cooperative than competitive. This Ubuntu concept is like the African worldview of ‘seriti’ which identifies life force by which people in a community are linked to each other.

1.4.3 The notion of the worldview of Ubuntu

Although the notions of Ubuntu as an expedient for moral formation have been highly contested and debated, the basic principle remains the same globally. On the African continent, the concept is momentous, powerful, and holds enormous value. For Africans, it signifies the most important quality of being human, and it has sustained their way of living for many years (Munyaka & Motlhabi 2009:63). Archaeologically, the term Ubuntu is derived from the Bantu languages of Africa. In this regard, Munyaka and Motlhabi (2009:64-65) cite the work of Bantu Mfenyana, a sociolinguist who displays a special interest in the African way of life. He maintains that understanding the original meaning of Ubuntu requires a separation of the prefixes and suffixes surrounding the root 'ntu'. The prefix 'ubu' pertains to the abstract, and 'ntu' is an ancestor who modelled the way of life for human beings. The two authors also state that the most common definitions of Ubuntu regard it as being derived from the term 'muntu', which implies a person or human being. In addition to that, Ubuntu finds recognition in the different languages all over Africa, for example, in isiZulu it is *Ubuntu*; in seSotho it is *botho*; in shiVhenda it is *vhuthu*; in Akan (Ghana) it is *Biakoye*; in Yoruba (Nigeria) it is *Ajobi*; in Shangaan it is *Numunhu*; in xiTsonga it is *Bunhu*; in Shona (Zimbabwe) it is *Nunhu*; in Kiswahili (Tanzania) it is *Ujamaa or familyhood*; in Swahili (Kenya) it is *utu*; in Uganda it is translated as *abantu*; in English it is *humanness*; and in Afrikaans *mensheid/medemenslikheid*, to mention a few examples.

Ubuntu is also commonly referred to as *African humanism*. Gaylord (2004:3-4) argues that there is a history of humanistic thinking among African leaders generally linked with the decolonisation process and African socialism. He maintains that this can be drawn through Kenneth Kaunda's discourse of 'African humanism' in Zambia, Julius Nyerere's introduction of 'Ujamaa' in Tanzania, and Kwame Nkrumah's idea of 'conscientism' in the newly independent Ghana. Others include Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, and Jomo Kenyatta and Tom Mboya of Kenya, all examples of leaders who enshrined one form of socialism or another. Those scholars were inspired by practical urgency to express an ethical or moral blueprint for the modernisation of their own countries in terms of culture, politics, and economics.

One could argue that their philosophical interpretations were deeply influenced by the political, social, economic, and communal earnestness of their environment. Ubuntu concepts attempt to link spiritual and democratic principles with the desires of economic development and resources for the moral formation of African societies and beyond. African scholars emphasise that Ubuntu, as an African philosophy, begins within a community and changes to

individuality whereas Western philosophy changes from individuality to community (Battle 1997). Ubuntu has been placed forward by several critics as an instrument to reduce self-interest, aid community transformation, and reach a grade of interconnectedness at a community level. Most critics highlight the collective nature of Ubuntu and the mode that Ubuntuism plays as a counterbalance to leading ideas of individualism.

However, Khoza (1994) argues that the Ubuntu notion should not just be associated with collectivism, which stresses the social component that depersonalises the individual and their own humanity. Bell (2002) also warns against the easy acceptance of clichés about how Western values are driven by individualism, and African values are driven by communalism. He claims that, on the range between individualism and communalism, there are many diverse cultural types that are multifaceted and multi-varied. Louw (2002) suggests that the notion of Ubuntu must not just be understood through a Western ethical lens, but as a local process, even an art connected to people's humanity and the way people's humanness is reached through their meeting with the broader community. African humanism relates to the notion of Ubuntu and its beliefs which, because of its emphasis on the individual and the community, varies from dominant Western moral models that are deep-rooted in the Cartesian dichotomy of mind and matter.

Conradie (2006) argues that the spirit of Ubuntu in modern urbanised and industrialised societies is often criticised by many who wish to retrieve the dignity of social harmony characterised in traditional African villages. He argues that the concept of Ubuntu should guard against the idealised notion of the "sweet African village of a bygone period". He further submits that the traditional culture and the spirit of Ubuntu do not always stay within the rules; unkindness against outcasts, the domination of women and children, and ruthless moral struggles still prevail. The concept of Ubuntu for African humanism could be understood as a moral vision of a good society, that is, a society that has never existed before.

The definition of Ubuntu and its use will now be deliberated.

1.4.4 Ubuntu defined

The notion of Ubuntu, like numerous African concepts, is not easy to define. In seeking to unpack what is meant by this concept, this section will first reflect on several definitions, and then look at the characteristics of Ubuntu as a foundation for moral formation, followed by an explication of relevant basic values connected to this concept.

Firstly, the concept has been defined as a worldview of African societies. This worldview influences the creation of insights which in turn affects communal behaviour.

Furthermore, Ubuntu has also been defined as a way of life, which, in its basic sense, signifies personhood, humaneness, humanity, and morality (Brack, Hill, Edwards, Grootboom & Lassiter 2003:319). Although there are diversities of these African cultures that are commonly found in their value systems, beliefs, and practices. Ubuntu essentially reflects the African worldview. The greatest long-lasting principle of this worldview is known as Ubuntu or Botho (humaneness or humanism). Ubuntu is an old philosophy and way of life that has for aeons persisted in communities throughout Africa (Mnyaka & Motlhabi 2005:215; Ntibagirirwa 2009:298). The belief is that Ubuntu originated in various forms in numerous societies throughout Africa. More precisely, in the *Bantu* languages are a largest family of languages spoken by the *Bantu* peoples of East, Central, and Southern Africa, Ubuntu is a cultural worldview that attempts to capture the spirit of what it means to be human (Murithi 2009:226). Ubuntu is about sculpting into existence a humanoid being. People are trying to live out their Ubuntu philosophies in a similar way, for instance, where religious people endeavour to be decent (Broodryk 2005:1).

Secondly, the *characteristics* of Ubuntu include: (1) the human experience of treating people with respect; (2) humanness, which means being human, comprises values such as universal brotherhood and sharing, and treating and respecting others as human beings; (3) a way of life contributing positively to sustaining the wellness of people, the community or society; and (4) a non-racial or non-tribalistic or non-ethnicity philosophy applicable to all people as human beings (Shutte 2001:2-24).

Ubuntu can be defined as humanness, a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness that individuals and groups display for one another. Ubuntu is the foundation for the basic moral values that manifest themselves in the ways African people think and behave toward each other and everyone else they encounter (Sulamoyo 2010:41). Nussbaum (2003:15) opined that Ubuntu is the capacity in African culture to express compassion, conviviality, reciprocity, dignity, good living (*buen vivir*), harmony, and humanity in the interest of building and maintaining the community. Furthermore, Nussbaum captures this as follows, Ubuntu calls on people to believe and feel that: “Your pain is my pain; My wealth is Your wealth; Your salvation is My salvation”.

According to Fox (2010:123-124), in Ubuntu, the emphasis is placed on the human aspect, and teaches that the value, dignity, safety, welfare, health, beauty, love, and development of the human being are to come first and should be prioritised before all other considerations, including economics, financial and political factors are considered, especially in these modern times. In essence, Ubuntu is African in the sense that it is the art of being a

human being. Therefore, Ubuntu may be defined as an all-inclusive, deep-rooted African worldview that pursues the primary values of intense humanness, caring, sharing and compassion, and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in a family atmosphere and spirit (Fox 2010:124).

Thirdly, Mbigi (1997, cited by Poovan et al., 2006:18) argues that the five key *values* of Ubuntu are *solidarity spirit, compassion, survival, respect, and dignity*⁶. These values, which have always been part of the African culture, are briefly discussed below.

Solidarity Spirit: Africans from early childhood are socialised to understand that difficult goals and tasks can only be accomplished collectively. The bonds of solidarity, which to an African consists of interpersonal, biological, and non-biological bonds, are created and maintained through spiritual values. The solidarity spirit permeates every aspect of an African's life and is collectively expressed through singing, effort at work, initiation and war rites, worship, traditional dancing, body painting, hymns, storytelling, hunting, celebrations, rituals, and family life.

Compassion: In the African milieu, compassion is reaching out to others and practicing humanism so that friendships and relationships can be formed. The underlying belief amongst Africans is that all human beings shared a communal responsibility interconnected for each other.

Survival: This can be described as the ability to live and exist despite difficulties. The African people learned how to survive through brotherly care and not individual self-reliance. Africans have developed a collective psyche that allowed them to pool their resources to preserve and create African communities. Through a collective and collaborative spirit, Africans have developed a shared will to survive.

Respect and Dignity: Respect and dignity are considered important values in most cultures and societies. In the African culture, it is even considered as one of its building blocks. Significantly, from childhood, Africans learn that behaviour towards those in authority, such as the king, the elders, and other members of the community, should always be respectful and these members of society become dignified through respect. Respect and dignity, together with survival, a spirit of solidarity, and compassion, constitute the African value system of Ubuntu. As more and more Africans are empowered to progress within, work

⁶ For more details, see: K. Dartey-Baah and K. Amponsah-Tawiah, 2011, 'Exploring the limits of Western corporate social responsibility theories in Africa', *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(18), 133; U. Nwagbara, 2012, 'Leading a postmodern African organisation: Towards a model of prospective commitment', *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(9), 84.

in, and even manage African institutions, this concept must be taken into consideration for managing diverse teams in Africa effectively (Poovan et al., 2006:19).

It is apparent from the above definition of Ubuntu as a concept of African humanism that this worldview holds tremendous value for Africans. This section enabled people to obtain a detailed understanding of this African worldview. The following section scrutinises the practical use of Ubuntu as the potential basis for moral formation.

1.5 The Use of Ubuntu as a Source of Moral Formation

Ubuntu as a notion of African humanism and as a resource for moral formation has been applied in numerous ways including business management, education, gender relation, moral renewal, politics, the TRC process, religion, the HIV and AIDS epidemic, environmental preservation, arts and media, technology, health care, modelling and nation-building, and theology. There has been a particular unease to incorporate several Ubuntu morals into people's daily and professional conduct (Broodryk 2006:97). There are various declarations and movements that foster this idea and attempt to make it a reality. For this composition, there is a need to access how Ubuntu's ethical principles have been used as the root of moral formation in societies.⁷

There is a constant change in the cultural settings in Africa; the concept of Ubuntu as a notion for African humanism and source of moral formation, therefore, requires ongoing contact and interaction. A concern is that this African way of life is gradually being erased by modernisation. Many believe that there is no contemporary medium or mechanism to continuously resuscitate and foster Ubuntu morals. There is thus a need to look at prominent voices and access how Ubuntu can be used as the heart of moral formation. The views of three scholars from three selected African countries are therefore observed. These include South African – Augustine Shutte, Kenyan – John Mbiti, and Ghanaian – Kwame Gyekye. Their views are in turn compared in terms of moral formation and assessed as a source to keep Ubuntu alive in a changing world.

⁷ For further reading, see: J.K. Nyerere, 1968, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*, Oxford University Press, London; A. Impey & B. Nussbaum, 1996, 'Music and dance in Southern Africa: Positive forces in the workplace in Lessem', in R. Lessem & B. Nussbaum (eds.), *Sawubona, Africa: Embracing four worlds in South African management*, Zebra Press, South Africa; and M. Eze, 2008a, 'The Historicity of Ubuntu: An African Humanism within Contemporary South African Socio-Political Discourse', PhD Dissertation, Universität Witten-Herdecke, Germany.

1.5.1 Moral formation and Ubuntu

Moral formation refers to the forming of the good self. It involves growth of being; knowing and doing which lead together to moral living, moral relationships, belonging and flourishing of humanity and all creatures in harmony with God. The concept of moral formation is linked to the ones of moral education, spiritual formation and discipleship. It is the process, like Ubuntu that addresses the need of moral development, growth or regeneration of individuals, groups or communities resulting in their moral empowerment and helping them to become effective moral agent. The dimensions of the moral live in this view include beliefs, norms, identity and values as well as vision, virtues, character, decision-making and behaviour. Within moral philosophy, the focus has been narrowed down to morality. In this sense, the focus has been on the right thing to do and not what it means to be good. To put it differently, moral philosophy was about the “content of obligation” and not so much about the “nature of the good life” (Taylor 1989:3).

In *Formation of the moral self*, Johannes Van der Ven (1998) identifies seven teaching and learning processes of moral formation which he termed ‘modes of moral formation’, including informal modes (*discipline and socialization*) and five formal modes that can be found in educational institutions. The five formal modes are *value clarification, emotional development, transmission, cognitive development, and character formation*. These modes involve knowing, being and doing, which are essential for a relational model of ethics. Value clarification, transmission, and cognitive development all focused on the dimension of knowing. Van der Ven favours character formation, which he says involves knowing, being, and doing. In his discussion, being and doing are seen as additional categories (not simply subsumed under ‘character formation’) because of their importance; moral formation takes place in a social and relational context.

In addition, Ernst Conradie’s (2006) textbook *Morality as a way of life*, identifies at least five distinct approaches or conditions that promote moral formation, namely: vision, narratives, role models, friendship, and faith communities. He asserts that moral formation is certainly possible through reorientation and adopting a new moral vision and appropriate virtue that can take place within a period of a few months. He also however states that the formation of a person’s character takes place over an extended period and requires the collective efforts of parents, teachers, community leaders, and other educators. In a similar view, a definition by Kretzschmar (2015:8) is “a process by which people become in their deepest selves, as well as in their attitudes and actions, genuinely committed to becoming good persons and acting justly and mercifully towards others and the natural world”.

Hauerwas (2002) and Gill (1987) refer to faith communities and MacIntyre (1981) to communities, as the significant notion of moral formation.

Stanley Hauerwas and Robin Gill are two of the contemporary ethicists who were influenced by classical figures such as Aristotle, Aquinas, Augustine, and Calvin, and contemporary scholars such as the Niebuhr's, Barth, Ramsey, Gustafson, and MacIntyre. Both support MacIntyre's (1981) critique of contemporary philosophical moralities and give the community a significant role in the moral formation of persons. With regard to freedom, Hauerwas (1996:44) views "the presence of the other" as noteworthy. The importance of "the presence of the other" is not only about "natural affinities" as is the case of biological bonds such as between parents, but it is instrumental in the formation of habits and character through habits (Hauerwas 2002:300).

Whilst Gill (1987:67) criticises Hauerwas' community as idealistic, which results in antagonism, he does assert that communities are kept in tension through "moral planks that span over different cultures". Unlike the rejection of rationality for moral formation by Hauerwas, Gill (1996a:64-65) asserts that pointing out the importance of moral communities in fashioning and sustaining values in our society need not become an excuse for irrationality. It is rather a claim that individual, isolated rationality is quite simply in it, and insufficient resources for a profound morality. Moral communities without the critique of rationality can become tyrannical, arbitrary, and perhaps demonic. Nevertheless, atomised rationality without moral communities seems incapable (despite many attempts) of fashioning and sustaining goodness beyond self-interest.

According to John Klaasen (2012:11) in 'Open-ended narrative and moral formation', the narrative approach to morality should take its place as an important consideration for moral formation. This means that any moral norms do not wholly depend on any situations for their meaning. If an act cannot have meaning independently of situations, then the act cannot be applied universally and has no validity as a moral act. In this notion of an open-ended narrative in which morality is formed, law and principles cannot be rejected for moral formation to evolve. In his Ph.D. thesis he reiterated that Ubuntu, worship, the role of God in moral formation, and basic moral formation primarily occurs in the worshipping community (Klaasen 2008:210). Moral formation takes part in the renewal of the story of Jesus' birth, ministry, death, and resurrection.⁸

⁸ Also see J.S. Klaasen, 2015, 'The missionary role of mainstream Christianity: towards a narrative paradigm for social integration of minorities in pluralistic post-apartheid South Africa: original research', *HTS Theologiese Studies/HTS Theological Studies*, 71(2), 1-9

Thaddeus Metz sees Ubuntu as an asset, that an African moral theory is grounded through promoting the common good. Describing this in ‘Toward an African Moral Theory’, he asserts that “... it also would not sufficiently assist me to be given a list of the particular values often associated with Ubuntu, e.g., generosity, compassion, forgiveness, dignity, equality, brotherhood, humanism, equal consideration, a spirit of oneness, unity” (Metz 2007a:332). He further explains that: “These values, as they stand, are vague and, furthermore, can appear contradictory” (Metz 2007a:332). For example, during the South African TRC hearing, the question of how to measure compassion and forgiveness was raised. Perpetrators and offenders have different worldviews, which makes matters complicated as to act in whose favour or towards whose detriment. Here is where the true sense of Ubuntu as the basis for moral formation makes a difference within the community, where people can restore one another’s humaneness without measure.

On a related view, Metz (2007b:375) argues that: “A moral theory counts as ‘African’ for me insofar as it is informed and defended by beliefs that are common among people in sub-Saharan African, and particularly beliefs that are more common there than among Western societies”. His recent study addresses various issues in African ethics and, in particular, focuses largely on African moral judgement and Ubuntu, African theory of right action on Ubuntu, and African normative principles. Metz similarly recognised Augustine Shutte as one of the first academic philosophers in the English-speaking world engaged with African ethics, taking the morality of Ubuntu in the expression: “The moral life is seen as a process of personal growth” ... “Our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human ... deeply into the community with others ... the goal is personal fulfilment, selfishness is excluded” (Shutte 2001:30). Metz also referred to Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s concept of Ubuntu as how people are interrelated, forming wholeness in the community (a shared identity), and made to be moral (good), citing Tutu’s book, *No Future without Forgiveness*. Metz (2007a:341) holds Tutu in high regard when he convincingly says: “That the most promising way to construct a competitive African moral theory is to develop Tutu’s understanding of Ubuntu in terms of a basic obligation to promote harmonious relationships and to prevent discordant ones”.

Agreeing with Metz (2011:532-559), *Ubuntu as a moral theory and human rights in South Africa* highlighted various worldviews of Ubuntu as a moral theory, including (i) Ubuntu based-moral theory; (ii) Ubuntu moral-theoretic interpretation; (iii) Ubuntu as a moral theory and human dignity; and (iv) an Ubuntu conception of dignity as the basis of human rights. Notable here is that Ubuntu as a resource for moral formation provides

concrete guidance and indeed is reasonably thought to serve as the foundation value of enhancement towards public morality in contemporary African societies.

Metz and Gaie (2010:273-290) in 'The African ethic of Ubuntu/Botho: Implications for research on morality' highlighted the Ubuntu/Botho terms that designate an indigenous SSA approach to Ubuntu and morality. This African moral theory of action as a basic element of moral formation is often called *Afro-communitarianism*. The Afro-communitarian conception of morality entails empirical research into people's moral behaviour. Both authors illustrated the pragmatic approach of Ubuntu/Botho known as Kohlberg's (1986) influential framework, which includes the nature of *moral development, of moral reasoning and action, moral motivation, and moral knowledge*. Metz and Gaie also acknowledges the normative research to the conception of morality including the distribution of property, medical practice, criminal justice, family life, and moral education.

African expressions of Ubuntu as the heart of moral formation are discussed next.

1.6 African Voices on Ubuntu as a Source of Moral Formation

This section highlights the overview and perspective of three contemporary African thinkers from typically SSA, as an essential point of reference in gaining an understanding of the notion of Ubuntu in relation to ethical African humanism in current societies. Three scholars specifically from different SSA nations were chosen to assist in unpacking the modern understanding of the African worldview of Ubuntu, namely: John Mbiti – Kenyan, Augustine Shutte – South African, and Kwame Gyekye – Ghanaian. The motive for selecting these scholars is based on their different and significant inputs to philosophies of Ubuntu for moral formation and developing community. By understanding the views of these scholars through their opinions of the various concepts of Ubuntu principle, the role of moral commonalities and contestations were identified for moral formation in contemporary SSA and further afield.

The researcher focused classically on comparison and contrast of three theorise based on their similarities and differences to the perceptions of Ubuntu morality and African humanism in today's SSA and Africa. Their amazing contributions to African philosophy or theological principles including Augustine Shutte's expression of new moral philosophy of Ubuntu on his books *Philosophy for Africa* (1993a) and *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a new South Africa* (2001) – *healthcare, education, politics, religion, sex and family life, work, and gender relations, etc.*, John Mbiti's major book, *African Religions and Philosophy* (1989) and ideology of 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am' and Kwame Gyekye's

humanistic use of ‘Akan proverb’ and one of his widely read writings *Tradition and modernity: Reflections on the African experience* (1997), to the critical evaluation of Ubuntu philosophy as etymology for moral formation in present-day Africa.

The brief overviews of the assessments of these three philosophers’ (Augustine Shutte, John Mbiti, and Kwame Gyekye) are as follows:

1.6.1 A brief description of Augustine Shutte

Augustine Shutte (27 November 1938–23 May 2016) was a professor of philosophy at the University of Cape Town (UCT). He was a popular lecturer in the fields of Science and Theology. As a theologian, Shutte had earlier been an ordained priest, first in the Anglican Church, and later in the Catholic Church. At various points, he chaired the Catholic Theology Society of South Africa and the UCT Philosophy Society. His philosophy was generally Thomistic and Aristotelian but moved into the more contemporary discipline of intersubjectivity and subjectivity, as issued in his Ph.D. entitled, ‘Spirituality and Intersubjectivity’, in which the inspiration of John Macmurray and Karl Rahner was prominent. Moreover, Augustine Shutte’s writings dealt with the leading reductionist and materialist tendencies in philosophy in the English-speaking world. Shutte practiced as a minister in the Roman Catholic Women is Priest Movement and was very active in the reformed crusade ‘We Are All Church South Africa’. His poems have open-minded and pleased his numerous supporters. His novel *Conversion* was set largely in the mainly Dominican priory in Stellenbosch in the late 1960s.⁹

Augustine Shutte was well known through his books, including *Philosophy for Africa* (1993a) which covers deep-seated issues affected by this moral dilemma and Ubuntu. He maintained that the African traditional understanding of humanity expressed through the term ‘Ubuntu’ could be a useful corrective to the materialism and dualism that has characterised modern Western philosophical thinking. The book *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa* (2001) offered a new interpretation of the principal moral idea in Africa (Ubuntu). He engaged with some concepts central to traditional African thinking about human nature and society. He argued that Ubuntu complements the European principled notion of individual freedom and offered other contributions towards a better understanding of our humanity. He showed how the African worldview of Ubuntu could provide concrete guidance for people continuity and make a multi-cultural African continent a truly humane society. He discussed the application of ethical or moral principles in all areas of life, such as *education*,

⁹ For more details on Augustine Shutte, see the autobiographical account of his Christian theology.

healthcare, politics, religion, sex and family, work, and gender relations (Shutte 2001:viii). His proposition and understanding of Ubuntu ethical or moral principles are not only applicable to the Southern Africa context, perhaps more dominant in the rest of Africa as the heart of moral formation in contemporary societies.

Shutte's (1993a:9) distinction of the philosophical conception of humanity through expression that "two crucial points of similarity between the contemporary Thomist philosophy¹⁰ and traditional African thought can be found in the conviction that human persons transcend the realm of the merely material, and also that in order to develop as persons we need to be empowered by others". Thomas Aquinas used the interpreted writings acquired from Muslim philosophers in North Africa, of Aristotle, a non-theist Greek philosopher, to the revulsion of his fellow theologians and the authorities in Rome. Their inquiry concerning this outrage was: "How was it possible to express and explain the sacred doctrines of the faith using the concepts of a pagan and atheist philosopher?" (Shutte 1993b:13). Shutte had similar objections in using an African concept of philosophy in context with Western and Christian philosophy. By probing Aristotle and Aquinas, he affirmed tradition and wisdom as beneficial for today's philosophy, morality, and engaging with science.

In one of his edited books, *The Quest for Humanity in Science and Religion: The South African experience* (2006), he alluded to the current situation and experience in South Africa: "The scientific secular culture of Europe and the traditional religious culture of Africa, the dominant culture and the culture of the majority, did not interpenetrate and mingle as they did elsewhere. What we now have, therefore, is a situation where we are engaged, in every sphere of life, in intercultural contact, conversation, and conflict" (ed. Shutte 2006: xiii). Shutte also defines the relationship between the European philosophy and African Ubuntu as such: "European culture has taught us to see the self as something private, hidden within our bodies. The African image is very different: the self is outside the body, present and open to all" (Shutte 2009:37). This means a person cannot be a person by himself, but only in relation to others.

Shutte (2001:30) further emphasises "the morality of Ubuntu is intrinsically related to human happiness and fulfilment. It derives from our nature as human persons, not merely

¹⁰ Thomistic Philosophy is inspired by the philosophical methods and principles used by Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274), a Dominican Friar and theologian, in his explanation of the Catholic faith. Aquinas, who is most renowned for his five ways of proving the existence of God, believed that both faith and reason discover truth, a conflict between them being impossible, since they both originate in God. See the following website for more information: Thomistic Philosophy Page (n.d.), *Thomistic Philosophy*, viewed 1 January 2019, from <https://www.aquinasonline.com/>.

conventional or simple obedience to the arbitrary norms of society. Our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human. In addition, this means entering more deeply into the community with others. So, although the goal is personal, selfishness is excluded". The importance of quoting the Zulu maxim 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu', when saying: "The traditional African idea of the extended family as something that includes far more than parents and children, is perhaps the most common and most powerful protection of the value of *Ubuntu*" (Shutte 1993a:157).

More intimately and deeply, he said that: "Breathing together they have one breath, one spirit, one heart. A community is a unity of a uniquely personal kind" (Shutte 2001:27). He regards human development and fulfilment as of cardinal importance for all and not just the significant others, stating: "It is in belonging to the community that we become ourselves. The community is not opposed to the individual, nor does it simply swallow the individual up; it enables each individual to become a unique center of shared life" (Shutte 2001:9). As human beings, people have a sense and a need for belonging, this is what makes people human, and to share love and give support to one another and, at the same time value each other towards application or reinforcement of morality and the Ubuntu spirit. Shutte sees this as every individual and community's fundamental duty to live by and abide by in good with others which the Ubuntu principle entails.

1.6.2 A brief description of John Mbiti

John Samuel Mbiti (30 November 1931 – 6 October 2019) was a well-known Kenyan Christian spiritual philosopher and writer. He was also an ordained Anglican priest and subsequently became a canon in 2005. Mbiti studied in Uganda and the United States of America (USA) and got his Ph.D. in 1963 at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom (UK). He taught religion and theology at Makerere University Uganda from 1964 to 1974 and was a director of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Institute in Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland. He held visiting professorships at universities across the world and published widely on philosophy, theology, and African oral traditions across the continent. The African oral tradition can simply be defined as a form of human communiqué wherein knowledge, notions, arts, and cultural material is received, conserved, and communicated vocally from generation to generation.¹¹

¹¹ For additional reading on John Mbiti, see the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*; and the recent book published by Hans S. Engdahl, 2021, *African Church Fathers – Ancient and modern: A reading of Origen and John S. Mbiti*, African Sun Media, Stellenbosch.

Mbiti's epoch-making book, *African Religions and Philosophy* (1989), was the first work to challenge the Christian supposition that traditional African religious philosophies were "demonic and anti-Christian". His treatment of traditional religions was grounded on a large body of fieldwork. Mbiti was clear that his interpretation of these religions is from a resolutely Christian perspective, and this feature of his work has occasionally been harshly criticised. He defined Ubuntu as a philosophy of pastoral care when he stated: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti 1989:108-109). In other words, Mbiti expressed that, because I am ontologically connected to other people, I am obliged to care for their well-being. The notion of God in creation was for everything to be interpersonal and connected, for everything to depend on and be interdependent. Thus, the Ubuntu spirit is linked to the creation story of the Bible where God immediately assigns human beings – Adam and Eve – to extend pastoral care to each other and the rest of creation. Ubuntu is also linked to the historic nature of indigenous African epistemologies, where connectedness and interdependence are the norms of life and resource of moral formation.

According to Letseka (2013a:352), the Ubuntu philosophy of caring cannot be done independently but is a communal role. Furthermore, caregiving is attached to the moral principles of African epistemologies that encourage hospitality, good living (*buen vivir*), compassion, and respect for human dignity, conviviality, harmony, and generosity (Letseka 2013b:339). Consequently, Ubuntu is a principle of pastoral care (in support of Mbiti's perspective) that has biblical references; from Genesis to Revelation, humanity is constantly reminded of fairness, empathy, love, equality, and sympathy. Ubuntu is also supported by the African worldview and philosophy that is critical to the existence of communities and the base of moral formation, as Shutte envisaged above.

Mbiti also deliberated the place of the individual versus the community in the African context. He began his discussion by showing that in traditional African thought individuals belong to different ethnic or racial groups. These ethnic or racial groups have a distinct religious system with which they identify themselves within the community (Mbiti 1970a:35). It was crucial to find in these ethnic or racial groups a kindred spirit which regulates the life of all members. Indeed, through kindred, the relationship between Africans is found among the living, the dead, and the yet to be born. Mbiti argued that in traditional life, there is no isolated individual. A person needs other members of the community. The individual owes his/her existence to other people including those of past generations and his/her contemporaries. The community must, therefore, create or produce their individual. Mbiti further claimed that physical birth is not enough; the child must go through community

ceremony of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the entire society. These ceremonies continue throughout the physical life of the person, during which the individual passes from one stage of corporate existence to another (Mbiti 1970a:35). Mbiti maintained that whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group of community and whatever happens to the whole group community happens to the individual.

In the notion of morality for the individual and community alike, Mbiti's (1975a:174) obvious Christian beliefs are evident in his treatment of the perception of a Creator God responsible for the establishment of a religious and moral formation. He claimed, "God gave the moral order to people so that they might live happily and in harmony with one another" (Mbiti 1975a:176). He argued that one should view morality as an authoritative moral code of conduct directly sanctioned by God. The moral code is therefore not autonomous, but its autonomy is derived from the Creator God. Any breach of the moral code would accordingly be an offense against God and his instruction. He affirmed that these moralities are embedded in people's practices, act, ceremony, customs, rites and rituals, and are transmitted through the generations; it appears that the moralities are related to socially inscribed modes of actions derived from experiences of what is in the interest and wellness of the community (Mbiti 1975a:178). The African conceptualisation of moral formation is one and it has always been Mbiti's assertion that religion is the source and foundation of morality.

1.6.3 A brief description of Kwame Gyekye

Kwame Gyekye (10 November 1939 – 13 April 2019) was a Ghanaian philosopher and an important figure in the growth of contemporary African philosophy. He studied first at the University of Ghana, then at Harvard University, where he obtained his doctorate degree on Greek and Arabic Philosophy. He was a fellow of the Smithsonian Institution's Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars and a lifetime fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was educated at Mfantsipim School. Gyekye was a professor of philosophy at the University of Ghana and a visiting professor of Philosophy and African American Studies at Temple University.¹²

In his writing, 'Person and community', Gyekye challenged the opinion that in African beliefs, community confers personhood on the individual, and thus the individual's identity is merely a copy of the community. He associated this opinion with African philosopher Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984), also socialist political individual like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Léopold Senghor of Senegal, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. Nonetheless,

¹² For more information see Chapter 4 (section 4.2) of this dissertation.

Gyekye argues that African beliefs assign certain value to the individual. He cited the following Akan proverb: “All persons are children of God; no one is a child of the earth, in support of his argument that a person is conceived as a theomorphic being, having in their nature an aspect of God”. This soul (known as *okra* to be Akan¹³) is defined as divine and originates with God. Consequently, he claimed that a person is more than just a material or physical object, but children of God, and therefore, essentially valuable. This essential value contests the opinion that the individual’s value stems exclusively from the community (Ajume & Zalta 2017: 1-21),

Similarly, Gyekye asserted that a person is considered as a sole individual (as in the adage “antelope’s soul is one, duiker’s another”) meaning that individual is independent, and the realism of the person cannot be copied to that of the community (Gyekye 1987). Although Gyekye (1987) opined that the individual is ontologically sufficient, he also acknowledges that individual lives in the community, with the saying: “When a person descends from heaven, and descends into human society”. In his opinion, a person’s aptitudes are not adequate for existence, so that community is essential for the existence of the individual, as the saying: “A person is not a palm tree that he or she should be self-sufficient”. Gyekye (1987:104) also cited a Ghanaian artist who wrote, “we are linked together like a chain; we are linked in life, we are linked in death; persons who share a common blood relation never break away from one another”. In addition, the concept of moral formation is pivotal to humanness and the moral order of community as a bonding principle of the Ubuntu spirit of togetherness and hospitality.¹⁴

Gyekye (2003:275), with his concept of *moderate communitarianism*, argues that communitarianism understands the individual as an integrally communal being, rooted in a context of social relationships and interdependence. This means that from a communitarianism point of view, an individual is not understood in isolation but rather as he/she depends and relates on others.

Gyekye’s model of communitarianism is different from Mbiti and Shutte. Matolino (2009:166) postulates that Gyekye accuses both philosophers of failing to accommodate the rights and freedom of individuals within the community. Accordingly, Gyekye regarded Mbiti and Shutte’s account as radical and philosophically defenceless. In his moderate communitarianism, Gyekye (1997:49) views the community as a reality and not as a mere

¹³ Akan is the principal native language and central Tano language of the Akan people of Ghana, spoken more of the southern half of Ghana. About 80% of Ghana’s population can speak Akan, and about 44% of Ghanaians are native speakers. It is also spoken in some parts of Côte d’Ivoire.

¹⁴ K. Gyekye, 1988, *The unexamined life: Philosophy and the African experience*, Ghana Universities Press, Accra.

association of individuals. He thus argues that individual capacities should be recognised for they define who a person is in the community. However, he carefully concedes that these capabilities should be realised within the context of a community. Moreover, at the heart of Gyekye's model of *moderate communitarianism* lies an aspect such as the moral principle of a common good, a community of mutuality, the principle of responsibility, the notion of rights and the principle of reciprocity. These aspects together contribute to an understanding of a person in the traditional African thought as a basis for moral formation.

Another controversy that was a critic against Shutte by Gyekye is the proclamation that a full person is attained when one is older and has been a member of society for a long time. Gyekye claims that the terms "more of a person" and "full person" are incoherent and bizarre (Gyekye 1997:39). He further argues that if it is correct that personhood depends on age and the attainment of moral rectitude, it then raises a problem that Shutte failed to resolve. Accordingly, the difficulty is in considering elderly people as necessarily moral, or as necessarily having the disposition or ability to practice moral virtues reasonably. Gyekye (1997:49) argues that surely many elderly people are known to be wicked, ungenerous, and unsympathetic that their lives do not reflect any moral maturity or excellence. Perhaps, in terms of moral formation of personhood, such elderly people may not qualify as persons.

John Klassen (2017a:29-44) also intensely crafted the relative aspect of a developmental approach to personhood in the African perspective or context, thereby expressing the notion of personhood and personal responsibility for development as "African notion of a person embedded with the ontological and epistemic community and marked by various phenomena that impact the individual and community". He also highlights the three major theologians or philosophers that have common features to personhood within the African spectrum, namely: Ifeanyi Menkiti notion of communitarianism, Kwame Gyekye notion of interactionist, and Desmond Tutu notion of interdependence. Also, for Gyekye, individual rights and autonomy should not be compromised at the expense of the community and moral formation. Gyekye's moderate communitarianism constitutes rights and freedom, the community of mutuality, the common good, and the Ubuntu principle of reciprocity as well as responsibility as a principle of morality.

1.7 Chapter Outline

This study consists of the following seven chapters:

Chapter 1 serves as an introductory chapter to the study and provides the background, statement of the problem, and an outline of the forthcoming chapters.

Chapter 2 comprises of comprehensive definitions of Ubuntu, its origin, and the development of the concept. The chapter provides a detailed argument on how Ubuntu has been applied in various ways, including moral formation, which was the focus of this study.

Chapter 3 discusses the viewpoint of Augustine Shutte. Included is a general review of his life and work drawn from the contributions of, among others, scholars from Africa, to gain an understanding of his perspective of Ubuntu as the etymology for moral formation.

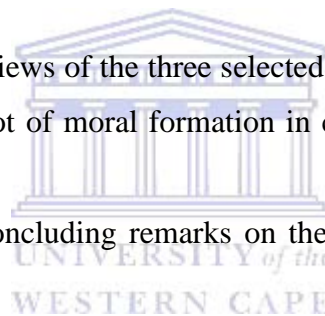
Chapter 4 investigates the view of Kwame Gyekye, drawing from his life and work to gain an understanding of his approach to the Ubuntu notion as a resource for moral formation. His perspective is presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5 entails a description of the view of John Mbiti. The detailed investigation of John Mbiti's perspective is provided, along with an assessment of his understanding of Ubuntu as the basis for moral formation. A survey of his life and work is also documented in this chapter.

Chapter 6 compares the views of the three selected scholars (as discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5) on Ubuntu as the root of moral formation in contemporary society, and thereby presents the results of the study.

Chapter 7 offers some concluding remarks on the preceding chapters, bringing this study to a close.

The African worldview of Ubuntu as the foundation for moral formation is discussed next.



CHAPTER 2:

THE AFRICAN WORLDVIEW OF UBUNTU AS A SOURCE OF MORAL FORMATION

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter introduced the topic of this study and described the methodology used to conduct this research. In addition to highlighting the notion of Ubuntu as a heart of moral formation by exploring the background or historical development of the concept in present-day Africa, the chapter also stated the research question guiding this study. Various African voices on Ubuntu as the basis for moral formation were also discussed, followed by a brief description of the three notions or perspectives under study, namely that of Augustine Shutte (South Africa), John Mbiti (Kenya), and Kwame Gyekye (Ghana). The chapter concluded with an outline of the forthcoming chapters.

Attention in the current chapter shifts to an examination of several definitions of Ubuntu, the origin of the concept, and its development in Africa as the potential cause of moral formation. A brief overview is given of the argument on the application of Ubuntu in life, which includes good corporate governance, and collaborative and competitive African communities. A background to the understanding of the African worldview of Ubuntu, the significance of this philosophy in practice, some of the critical challenges of the concept of the Ubuntu worldview, and the overall moral theory of the Ubuntu worldview to the success of African societies follows next. The chapter further distinguishes the notion of community and the individual in the African worldview, and discusses collectivism as a central theme. In addition, it also unpacks the various moral theories of Ubuntu including human rights, communitarianism, personhood, and its approaches to the development and objection of Ubuntu as personhood. Given the African worldview of Ubuntu as an origin for moral formation, the chapter also discusses various ways the notion of Ubuntu has been applied in contemporary Africa such as in education, moral renewal, politics, arts and media, the religious context, and environmental preservation.

2.1.1 Understanding the African worldview of Ubuntu

Ubuntu is a word derived from the Nguni (isiZulu) maxim: *'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'*, which can be translated as “a person is a person because of or through others” (Fraser-

Moleketi 2009:332; Tutu 2004:25-26). Ubuntu is well-described as the capability in African culture to express mutuality, compassion, reciprocity and dignity in the interests of maintaining and building communities with justice and mutual care (Mandela 2006: xxv; Tutu 1999:34-35). Ubuntu is an ancient African belief system that has been transferred over centuries and a quality that includes essential human virtues (Broodryk 2002: vii). It is regarded as the root of African moral philosophy however there is uncertainty as to how old these roots are (Eklund 2008:14).

In terms of anthropology, the historic origins of Ubuntu can be traced back to the first group of human beings. A limited number of resources were available, making it impossible to survive on individual initiatives. Members of the group therefore depended on each other for their continued existence. Moreover, labour was a collective activity, which included subsistence farming and the hunting of animals. Also, food was shared in equal portions among all the members of the community. Hence, the survival was dependent on the group's collective unity and harmonious living (Khoza 2006:6).

Ubuntu culture is deep-rooted in pre-scientific, pre-industrial and pre-literate (Shutte 2001:9). In the view of Broodryk (2006:87-88), Ubuntu has always been part of traditional African life. Its values were shared and orally transferred over many centuries. Moral storytelling was an essential means of achieving this with fables, narratives, and tales about historic battles and warriors. Legends usually contained a moral or Ubuntu lesson and were recited by the elders of the community or the family. Interestingly, details of these stories were remembered in full and were mentally preserved for the next generation. As such, people's lives were shaped by the oral tradition of these moral lessons, rituals, ceremony, customs, taboos, and rites.

Broodryk (2002:139-145) also argues that Ubuntu or African humanism has a theoretical, physical as well as a mystical origin. The latter is gathered from African traditional wisdom. He refers to the writings of Kgalushi Koka, an African philosopher. According to Koka, Ubuntu dates to the mystic Netchar Maat principles, which were formulated before the Christian Ten Commandments. The holy beliefs of Maat were allegedly laid down in Egypt, more or less 1,500 years before the Ten Commandments were discovered. It is associated with the seven cardinal virtues to human perfectibility, namely: truth, reciprocity, justice, propriety, harmony, balance, and order. These virtues form the same understanding as Ubuntu as the cause of moral formation. The Netchar Maat also contains 42 admonitions, which serve as guidelines for correct moral behaviour, for

example¹⁵, based on the belief that the Ten Commandments only appeared much later as it was deduced from the Maats admonition.

The use of Ubuntu is universal in nearly all parts of the African continent. Therefore, this Ubuntu way of life is incorporated into all features of everyday life all over Africa and its moral conception common among peoples of Southern, West, and East Africa of Bantu origin (Rwelamila, Talukhaba & Ngowi 1999:338). Although the Bantu languages have evolved since the notion was first formulated, the meanings and principles of Ubuntu are the same in all these languages. Examples of the derivations of the term in the Bantu languages are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: The derivations of ‘Ubuntu’ in Bantu languages

Ubuntu Derivations	Bantu Language	Source
Abantu	Uganda	Broodryk (2005: 235)
Botho or Motho	Sesotho	Broodryk (2005: 235)
Bunhu	Xitsonga	Broodryk (2005: 235)
Numunhu or Munhu	Shangaan	Broodryk (2005: 236)
Ubuntu, Umtu or Umuntu	isiZulu and isiXhosa	Broodryk (2005: 236)
Umunthu	Ngoni, Chewa, Nyanja and Bemba (Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe)	Broodryk (2005: 236)
Utu	Swahili (Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda)	Broodryk (2005: 236)
Vhuntu or Muntu	Tshivenda	Broodryk (2005: 236)

Source: Adapted from Broodryk (2005:235-236)

¹⁵ According to Broodryk (2002: 139-145): “I have not committed sin; I have not committed robbery with violence; I have not stolen; I have not slain men or women; I have not stolen food of the Netchar; I have not swindled offerings; I have not stolen from God/Goddess; I have not told lies; I have not carried away food; I have not cursed the Netchar; I have not closed my ears to truth; I have not committed adultery; I have not made anyone cry; I have not felt sorrow without reason; I have not assaulted anyone; I am not deceitful; I have not stolen anyone’s land; I have not been an eavesdropper; I have not falsely accused anyone; I have not been angry without reason; I have not seduced anyone’s wife; I have not polluted myself; I have not terrorized anyone; I have not disobeyed the Law; I have not been exclusively angry; I have not cursed God/Goddess; I have not behaved with violence; I have not caused disruption of peace; I have not acted hastily or without thought; I have not overstepped my boundaries of concern; I have not exaggerated my words when speaking; I have not worked evil; I have not used evil thoughts, words or deeds; I have not polluted the water; I have not spoken angrily or arrogantly; I have not cursed anyone in thought, word or deeds; I have not placed myself on a pedestal; I have not stolen what belongs to God/Goddess; I have not stolen from or disrespected the deceased; I have not taken food from a child; I have not acted with insolence and I have not destroyed property belonging to God/Goddess”. Based on this belief the Ten Commandment only appeared much later as it were deduced from the admonitions of Maat.

The use of the Ubuntu worldview enhances the native background of people of Africa. The Ubuntu worldview upholds solidarity, which is crucial to the existence of people of Africa (Mbigi & Maree 2005:75). Africa is not an uncivilised person, however people living within a community. Perhaps, in an unfriendly setting, it is only through such community of solidarity that isolation, deprivation, hunger, corruption, crime, violence, poverty, and other emergent tests can persist, because of the community's sisterly and brotherly panic, mutual aid, care, sharing and love.

The Nobel Prize winner and former president of the Republic of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, described Ubuntu as the basis for moral formation constituting a universal truth, and a way of life, which reinforces culture (Mandela 2006: xxv). The Ubuntu worldview does not mean that society should not address themselves to a problem, but it does imply that they should look at whether what they are doing will enable or empower the community around them and help it improve. The Ubuntu worldview also implies that if people are treated well, they are likely to perform better. Moreover, the practice of the Ubuntu worldview unlocks the capability of African culture by which people expresses compassion, mutuality, reciprocity, humanity, and maintaining communities, and dignity in the interest of building social cohesion and justices (Poovan et al., 2006:23-25).

Most importantly, love and respect amongst communities plays a significant role in African milieu. African understanding of personhood discards the concept of person as recognised in positions of psychological and physical features. Ubuntu is the foundation of communal cultural life of Africa. It reinforces the common humanity, the responsibility of individuals to each other and interconnectedness (Nussbaum 2003:21-26; Koster 1996:99-118). Ubuntu worldview is a source of moral formation that brings to existence the African people in general and community of humanness and social cohesion. It, therefore, buttresses any group within the African society. Consequently, this Ubuntu worldview can shows a significant part in communities and African environment.

2.2 The Significance of the African worldview of Ubuntu

Ubuntu as the root of moral formation in contemporary Africa has influenced various societies in many ways. The following sections discuss cases that show the profound significance of the Ubuntu philosophy in an African context, including the individual and community development of this African humanism. Also highlighted are Mangaliso's (2001) guiding principles and the implementation of the basic principle of Ubuntu. Further on

attention is given to the competitive and collaborative environment in which Ubuntu strives, as well as the collectivism towards good governance, and also some of the critical challenges of this African humanism.

2.2.1 The community and individual notion of the African worldview

The worldview of Ubuntu signifies the African notion of humanity and links with the community. The latter embodies the morality defining Africans and their social and moral conduct (Mbigi 2005:75). Africans are social beings that are in continuous communion with one another in an environment where a human being is regarded as a human being only through his or her relationships with other human beings (Tutu, in Battle 1997:39-43). Therefore, the survival of a human being is dependent on other person beacon of the community and society. Interestingly, several basic management principles derived from African ethnic or racial communities embody this worldview, including trust, moral spiritualism, and interdependence (Mbigi & Maree 2005:76)

In the African management systemic context, the African Ubuntu worldview signifies humanity, a universal essence of loving in the communal of which the individuals in the community love each another, and there is no desire of vengeance or victimisation. This Ubuntu methodology shows a crucial part in moral formation of achievement of institution or organisation (Mangaliso 2001:32). Furthermore, Ubuntu as the beginning of moral development transcends the narrow confines of the nuclear family to include the extended family network which is omnipresent to many African communities. Ubuntu as a philosophy is an orientation to life that stands in direct contrast to rampant individualism, unilateral decision-making and insensitive competitiveness. Simply put, the Ubuntu teachings are inescapable at all ages, in families, organisations, and communities living in Africa and beyond.

Mangaliso (2001) carefully identified some practical guidelines when implementing Ubuntu. These include:

- Treat others with dignity and respect (this is a central element of Ubuntu and its role in creating the appropriate environment for all that live in it).
- Be willing to negotiate in good faith (taking time to listen when negotiating because listening is essential in the process of acknowledgment – which in turn can then lead to real trust and cooperation).
- Provide opportunities for self-expression (honour achievement, affirm values, etc.).

- Understand the practices and beliefs (understand different belief systems, different cultural perspectives, also be careful not to suppress a specific culture in favour of the dominant culture).
- Honour seniority – especially in leadership choices (experience, age, etc.)
- Promote equity and justice (ensure that recruitment decisions are clear and fair).
- Be flexible and accommodative (acknowledge the organic nature of Ubuntu which itself is a balanced blend of different philosophies, perspectives, and ideologies, etc).

Ubuntu enhances the African worldview of respect and human dignity that is fundamental to be able to transcend ethnic or racial divisions by working together and respecting each other (English 2002:196-197; Poovan et al., 2006:22-25; Tutu 1999:34-35). People who truly practice Ubuntu are always open and make themselves available to others; they are also affirming and do not feel threatened by the ability and good of others. With Ubuntu, one has a proper guarantee that comes with the fundamental acknowledgment that everyone belongs to a greater community. Mostly in an African context, the community frame of reference is what an individual is defined by and associated with. Also, in Africa, the definition of an individual is not individualist but community-based. Anybody who does not identify him- or herself with the community is regarded as an outcast, which is contrary to Western ideologies. Thus, an Africa organisation must run its activities on the principle that the community cares for her people, and that the care of its members is purely supreme.

2.2.2 Collaboration and competitiveness of the African worldview of Ubuntu

African societies can build competitive and cooperation approaches by allowing teamwork based on principle of Ubuntu permeates the organisation (Mbigi & Maree 2005:93). As a people-centred viewpoint, Ubuntu specifies that a person's worth depends on spiritual, social, cultural principles. It requires a life that depends on normative engagement with the community, and a constitutive rendezvous with one another in a normal and moral community, as well as a substantive appreciation of the common good. In this way, for a person to identify as a true African, community and communality are substantive essentials.

Collectivism and communalism are vital to the spirit of the African Ubuntu ideology as a source of moral formation. Equally important are Ubuntu relations, which entail working with others in a team spirit (English 2002:197; Poovan et al., 2006:17). The spirit of solidarity concurrently supports competitiveness and collaboration amongst the team by allowing individuals to contribute their best efforts for the advancement of the whole

community. In a team condition existence, Ubuntu as a shared value system and morality, suggests which team believers are encouraged to strive towards the outlined team ethics and morality, which accordingly enhances their functioning together (Poovan et al., 2006:25). Management systems that tend to focus on the achievements of individual team members, and not the whole community, are likely to miss all the collective and social contexts of African society.

More significantly, within African society, sharing and oneness play a key role in local communities and organisations such as in the Nyanja language where '*Mu umudzi muli mphamvu*' ["unity is strength"]. The community-based approaches also help to build collaborations where the whole is more real than the sum of the individual parts. In the Ubuntu worldview, interactions are realised where the collective are socially, morally, economically, or culturally bound together (Mangaliso 2001:28-32; ed. Prinsloo 2000:161-174).

The spirit of Ubuntu leads to cooperative and collaborative work environments because the community is encouraged to participate, support and share – it requires team membership. Working together in communal groups fosters production; for example, on the farm, when constructing roads, or when fishing or felling trees together, all the while singing traditional songs as part of morale-boosting. Therefore, the community-based Ubuntu attitude enhances productivity and organisational performance (Van den Heuvel, Mangaliso & Van de Bunt 2006:48). Moreover, in the Ubuntu worldview, collaboration through employees and teams who practice this philosophy has a number of competitive welfares for societies. The spirit of Ubuntu gives the African continent an edge and allows it to find a way forward. Within the reshaping processes of foreign ideologies, an organisation on African context must be localised in terms of its schemes to respond to environmental demands and socio-cultural elements to foster the coexistence of people.

2.2.3 Collectivism in the African worldview of Ubuntu

Ubuntu as a traditional etymology of moral formation in African societies tends to be cohesive and productive, working together as one family in their social and cultural environment. The community tradition or collectivism is so strong that Africans generally view success and failure as caused by traditional spirits that control the society. For instance, before accepting any good offers, such as a promotion, an employee may seek traditional invocations before deciding, or can even turn down a promotion altogether for fear of its social consequences. Any failure or achievement is taken as a group obligation that belongs

to the entire community. In East and Central Africa, the family remains, and is likely to remain, a centrepiece of collectivism. Using family metaphors is regarded as one viable option in handling motivation in the workplace (Tambulasi & Kayuni 2012:65). Perhaps if multinational organisations in Africa continue to promote individualist performance schemes, there must be a need to articulate old-style philosophies containing traditional accounts of achievements. The social or cultural agenda of African society is universal, even within the management and among employees who have direct attachments with their society.

2.2.4 Good corporate governance and the Ubuntu worldview

The issue of corporate governance is becoming more pronounced in modern professional appliances. Corporate governance, which is entwined with business ethics, is considered critical in organisational practice, as well as in general business productivity (Rossouw 2005:105). The moral formation of professional ethics and company supremacy are in line with the Ubuntu ideology of regarding all peoples of an organisation as part of the community. It is this direct involvement of and with community adherents that engenders greater solidarity, love, caring and sharing within establishment (organisation). A major governance challenge in current authority issues has been corruption, which reveals the moral depravity and wickedness of the perpetrators (Broodryk 2005; Fraser-Moleketi 2009).

Generally, corruption is caused by a lack of commitment to moral beliefs by the perpetrators, which is in turn due to the weak moral will of an individual towards other people. Corruption is merely seen as a moral issue, where the perpetrators are fundamentally corrupt due to moral ignorance and confusion. Such a moral issue affects human life in a bad way where individuals abuse their official and personal powers (Broodryk 2005:198). Corruption arises in different forms, such as bribery, nepotism, favouritism, and misuse of power, while corruption manifests itself in the relationship between individuals and institutions; as a practice, it is mostly rooted in the operations of market forces (Fraser-Moleketi 2009:239). Unlike Ubuntu teaching, corruption is a pursuit of individual prosperity, as opposed to the common good of society. Corruption erodes the common fabric, undermines community, and disseminates poverty, inequality, climate change, crime, violence, racism, ethnic conflict, and underdevelopment.

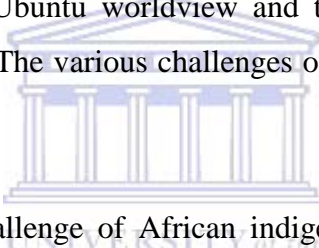
Furthermore, when the awareness of moral rights and wrongs is strong, corruption can easily be rooted out of the society. This is the moral principle behind the community-based Ubuntu philosophy. In order to curb corruption, for instance, the Ubuntu philosophy must be the essence of a value system that underpins the obligation to get rid of corruption (Fraser-

Moleketi 2009:243, 247). There is also a need for strong vigorous democracies, where all segments of society, including the media and organisations of civil society, the private sector, trade unions, traditional leaders, and faith-based organisations (FBOs) have a responsibility to educate and promote the moral values of Ubuntu ideology and anti-corruption crusades.

The above explanations indicate that there is much that the African worldview of Ubuntu and moral formation can contribute towards decent business corporation in Africa and globally. Under the African Ubuntu philosophy, people should be aware that individualism and greediness, and profit achieved by sacrificing other community memberships, breaches the true basics of humanity (Ubuntu). The notion of Ubuntu or humanity as a resource to moral formation teaches community solidarity, love, equality, caring, and sharing amongst the memberships of a community or organisation.

2.3 Critical Challenges of the African Worldview of Ubuntu

As with any other system, the Ubuntu worldview and the African socio-cultural context present some critical challenges. The various challenges of implementing an Ubuntu agenda include:



(i) One major critical challenge of African indigenous knowledge is that it is not written down but mostly transmitted orally from one generation to the next through storytelling (An Afro-centric Alliance 2001). Subsequently, generations learn about Ubuntu philosophy through direct interaction within local communities. Unlike the Western and Eastern ideologies, which are well documented, African philosophy does not have an ancient written tradition, which makes it very difficult for the younger generations to practice the African Ubuntu philosophy fully. However, lately, a range of studies have been conducted to show the order of helping people to understand and appreciate the Ubuntu philosophy (An Afro-centric Alliance 2001; Broodryk 2005; Mangaliso 2001; Mbigi & Maree 2005). Such studies help to improve the documentation of African socio-cultural contexts, enabling future generations to apply these philosophies within an organisational management paradigm.

(ii) The second challenge of the Ubuntu philosophy is inadequate information dissemination and sensitisation. Although the worldview of Ubuntu possesses optimistic qualities, it is not well disseminated to people within African societies. Accordingly, some people do not know anything or know very little about its foundational concepts. This is even

more pronounced in suburbs in urban centres where diverse individuals with different socio-cultural backgrounds, with loose ancient family ties, live together.

The Western and Eastern cultures have documented their philosophies and have spread them into educational systems, but in business schools, for instance, training is still built on Western ideologies, and African theories are not communicated. Therefore, large corporate businesses in Africa are still dominated by philosophies that were formed within and for individualistic cultures that do not link the communal culture of an African society (Lutz 2009:317). Subsequently, most people running an organisation in Africa fail if they practice what they are taught in schools, especially at the tertiary level (Western business theory), and are ill-equipped to practice anything else. Hence, it is high time that all stakeholders get sophisticated in the dissemination of information and sensitisation of people to Ubuntu philosophy. Extra cognisance takes note of the fact that some of the African traditional practices, customs rites, ceremonies and rituals are becoming archaic in a changing contemporary milieu.

(iii) The third challenge is that some African traditions have outlived their usefulness in the current environment, but persist, nonetheless. Practices such as witchcraft are still predominant amongst African societies, and organisations need to acknowledge this. Anybody who aspires to excel above the expectations of the community would look down upon people as a stranger. Corruption, witchcraft and envy, which are rooted in negative personal behaviours, deprive the very same community and her people endowed with the Ubuntu philosophy of their livelihood. In the presence of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, some African traditional practices and rituals should be considered irresponsible and old-fashioned.

These practices are found across Africa in many ethnic or racial groups. These include polygamy, where a man can have several wives. Another out-dated practice is *kulowa fumbi* (levirate) which is still common among the Bantu people. *Kulowa fumbi* is practiced where the brother of the deceased succeeds to the widow. These practices are intended to comfort the widow and assure her that she is still part of the family or community even in the absence of her husband. Regrettably, the custom is practiced without establishing the cause of death of the deceased, which could be due to HIV and AIDS (An Afro-centric Alliance 2001:68-70).

There are other various critical challenges in African traditions including *jando*, the unsafe circumcision practices of young boys; *fisi* is practiced when a family has problems in conceiving a child and another man is formally organised to have sex with the married

woman whose husband cannot impregnate her; and *chidyerano* is another practice where married couples exchange spouses as a symbol of togetherness (Tambulasi & Kayuni 2005:148). In some cases, especially in the rural areas, the above African traditions and practices are continued in good faith, but unwittingly jeopardise the very existence and sustainability of the communities concerned. Fortunately, governments are taking initiatives in sensitising these communities on the despairs that can arise from some of these African practices through radio, print media, and television. However, the African worldview of Ubuntu also faces challenges in its application due to the modernisation or proliferation of new foreign ideologies in multi-cultural African societies.

2.4 The Moral Theory of Ubuntu

The moral theory of Ubuntu focuses on six theoretical interpretations of Ubuntu. These were devised by the American-born philosophy professor, Thaddeus Metz (2007a), in his essay titled ‘Toward an African Moral Theory’ in contemporary Africa. This notion helps with the differentiation of other various descriptions and created a larger picture of how Ubuntu is mainly viewed by scholars as to the source of moral formation. These interpretations of Ubuntu focused on human rights, utilitarianism, communitarianism, and personhood. Metz’s theoretical interpretations are merely divided by probing the degree to which an act, precisely in the community, is right or wrong. The first four interpretations relate morality internally inside the human individual. Metz’s assertion also makes the common separation of Western morality as ‘individualistic’ and African morality as ‘communitarian’ wrong (Metz 2007a:333).

2.4.1 Ubuntu morality and human rights

This section seeks to understand human rights focused on human dignity. Right action is considered as such if it respects a person’s dignity, while wrong action degrades humanity. The basis for this interpretation is that value is inherent in human nature and honoured as a moral value. This theory finds its footing in the legal sphere, and Metz makes use of the statements of Justice Yvonne Mokgoro to explain the order to appeal to Ubuntu in decision-making in law. Therefore, human right links to the inherent dignity of the humanity which Mokgoro correlates with Ubuntu worldview.

According to Metz, this view of human dignity can be traced back to the Kantian view of Ubuntu. It is a classically Western moral theory that may be troublesome in the

context of defining Ubuntu. Metz (2007a:328) asserts that a human's capacity of autonomy does not go along with his/her three moral obligations of African society, namely: reconciliation over retribution, tradition and rituals in civil society, or procreation. Metz (2007a:340) argues that to account for this larger array of obligations in the community, the theory needs to be expanded beyond the moral value of human life. The promotion of life is a prime factor of the African community and African Traditional Religion (ATR). The harmony required by and in the community is necessary for the vital force of life and is therefore encouraged (Metz 2007a:329).

Furthermore, Mokgoro (1997:364-365) simplifies Ubuntu as the maxim of 'a human being is a human being because of other human beings', which implies that one would be challenged by others to achieve self-fulfilment. This African Ubuntu worldview through the everyday life of the people takes place through collective social or moral ideas. She contends that African sayings such as '[m]otho ke motho lo batho ba bangwe', which means "people live through the help of others", and 'a botho bag ago enne botho seshabeng', which can be translated as "let your welfare be the welfare of the nation", places an emphasis on family and the obligations surrounding those families or communities alike. Mokgoro (1997:365) argues that people in a community are willing to join their resources together to help an individual in need. It seems clear that Mokgoro does not have as narrowed an understanding or interpretation of Ubuntu as Metz portrays in his essay. She certainly views Ubuntu more broadly and is not blind to the significance of Ubuntu in the community, even if the Kantian interpretation of Ubuntu in law is not necessarily a good fit in this context.

According to Metz, the second interpretation set forward was that Ubuntu morality is more *utilitarianism* based where the development of the quality of life is the focus. The attainment of harmony or unity in the community is the means to an end of human wellness. However, Metz professes that a *utilitarianism* opinion of Ubuntu has no possibility of controlling acts such as stealing or discrimination, as they can be viewed as necessary for the greater good (Metz 2007a:331). This interpretation bears similarity to the third interpretation, which focuses on *communitarianism*.

2.4.2 Ubuntu morality and communitarianism

According to Metz (2007a:331), the addition of human rights to the utilitarian interpretation gives rise to communitarianism, which is the result of the third interpretation of morality. Metz further claims that the ground of moral rightness or moral formation can only come from caring or sharing relationships and not 'welfarist' wellness alone. Metz quite

controversially opined that true quality of life cannot happen in the context of a community that practices consensus, cooperation, or to whom tradition weighs heavily.

The fourth interpretation purports that self-fulfilment in the community and the positive relationship to others makes an action right, whereas the act is wrong if it takes away from people's moral value as a social being (Metz 2007a:331). He argues that this interpretation focuses on "... firm moral judgments about when, how and why to help others" (Metz 2007a:331). According to Metz, many African philosophers use the aphorism 'a person is a person through other persons' to mean that one should develop one's personhood. According to Augustine Shutte (2001:177), the "... deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human". Shutte also insists that selfishness is not an option, although it could seem to be one when personal fulfilment is the goal. The fulfilment of oneself will benefit the community as one established as a being in a community, where one engages in communal relationships.

The last two interpretations presented by Thaddeus Metz were called *properly communitarian* in his interpretation of Ubuntu. The first of these two relates to the first book published on Ubuntu, which focuses on solidarity, especially in facing the poor and disadvantaged peoples of a community. Metz contends that this understanding is too narrow to constitute a moral theory for Africa, as Ubuntu necessarily should stretch beyond the poor in a community. Ubuntu should be relevant for everyone (Metz 2007a:337). Metz regarded this as one way of promoting shared identity but by no means the only way.

Metz's (2007a:338) final interpretation of Ubuntu is his favourite whereby "An action is right insofar as it produces harmony and reduces discord; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to develop community". Ubuntu can be of use in many spheres of life and for the promotion of different actions and thoughts in human beings. For the sake of the wholeness of Ubuntu, the latter interpretation considers Ubuntu as foundational for the community and the harmony therein, which is the place where Ubuntu as a source of morality has the right to be found in Africa and beyond. The path towards harmony or unity of purpose is contingent on a few factors, such as consensus, reconciliation, community economics, spread wealth, procreation, and inclusion in the community.

Moreover, punishment does not promote shared identity or goodwill. Economically competing against one another to maximise self-interest does not fit with communal goodwill as goods and wealth are shared among all. Upholding traditions and rituals is an important way for people in the community to identify with others; it maintains the sense of shared identity and therefore goodwill. Similarly, procreation "enables one to expand the range of a

common sense of self, to enlarge the scope of a ‘we’” (Metz 2007a:339). There is a significant spirit of Ubuntu linking the principles of these interpretations of moral theory in African culture. There is a relative consensus among the scholars who study Ubuntu that the community is an important part of the philosophy, theology, worldview, or anthropology of Ubuntu. A human can exist to their full ability only in a community.

2.4.3 Ubuntu and personhood

Personhood means the status of being a person; however, it is a basic notion in philosophy that is widely debated. In African philosophical discourse, the notion of personhood also plays an important role, for example, in the discussion between advocates of ethno-philosophy and their critics and in the debates of the various notions of African humanism and African socialism. Presently, personhood is a central category in the broad discourse on the notion of Ubuntu in Africa.

Likewise, the discursive nature of Ubuntu and personhood in African thought first needs to differentiate between communalism and communitarianism, as they coincide with each other. The difference between the two concepts is the degree of politics and organisation. The definition of *communalism* is based on federated communes in a political organisation, which dictates how people live successfully together in sharing and caring in society. It also focuses on the ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ group, where allegiance lies with them rather than the wider community.

Communitarianism, on the other hand, is a theory of social organisation in small self-governing communities and is described as an ideology where the responsibility of the individual regarding the community and the family is emphasised. Based on this, communitarianism is what can define the African community, whereas communalism at best is ascribed to the political leaders in Africa who often purported African socialism when first independent (Ramose 2003:113-127).

The main contention in the debate on personhood is whether the communal focus of African society disparages the autonomy and identity of the person. Both political leaders Kenyatta and Senghor observed and reiterated the inherent communal structure of African life and society. Kenyatta further assures that “... individualism and self-seeking was ruled out” (Gyekye 2003:282). This statement does appear too strict in its understanding of communitarianism. From a communitarian point of view, the person is essentially social or communal, not an isolated individual. The community, therefore, consists of people who are interconnected through common moral values, goals, and interests. Subsequently, “they have

intellectual and ideological, as well as emotional attachments to those goals and moral values and, as long as they cherish them, they are ever ready to pursue and defend them” (Gyekye 2003:284).

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu warned against glorifying African communitarianism. He viewed it as a breeding ground for both conformity and conservatism. Tutu argued that the tradition of communalism in Africa, especially among newly emancipated states particularly from the mid-1900s, is the basis for dictatorship. This form of government has ravaged many African countries over the past 60 years. According to Tutu, this tradition allows powerful members of society to easily take control of the public sphere and exercise their own will instead of that of the people. Tutu claimed that the Western countries have laws to combat difficulties like this, and in this way ensures the will of the people to exercise by the governing forces.

On the other hand, he also criticised the West’s overly individualistic worldview, where the person’s ultimate way of viewing him-/herself comes from within. In Africa, Tutu argued that one knows oneself through others. However, he promoted balancing African communalism with the thought of the human being’s ‘inalienable uniqueness’, as he wanted the Western view to be balanced with the human need to connect (Battle 1997:38, 144). Menkiti (1984) asserts that the community defines a person, but a person must acquire and achieve personhood, but that a person can fail at gaining personhood. Without a process of incorporation, the description of the person does not apply. When a person is incorporated and earns their personhood, they become more and more of a person the older they grow.

Representatives of Ghanaian philosophers Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye argue that a person can be an individual in African communitarianism, or simply, the African community challenges this approach (moderated or restricted communitarianism). The person can also be helpful to others out of moral responsibility, not just out of duty. This makes the African an individual who makes choices about moral responsibility and awareness. This means Africans can make other choices in their own life. Hence, the human is not an obedient robot, but a person with the capabilities of thinking individually for the common good of others (Gyekye 2003:280-282).

One may argue that many African societies do not believe the person is a full human until he or she has undergone the processes of becoming human through birth, naming ceremonies, initiation rites, marriage, and maybe even procreation. In these cases, only after this process is the person fully born and considered a complete person (Mbiti 2008:24). In this case, an African version of Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum* applies. Mbiti (2008:106)

explains how a person is never alone and passes through different stages of incorporation in life, even after the person's demise they are integrated into the extended family of the dead.

Furthermore, Mbiti amuses from the middle road he was on earlier that a person must prove their humanity and personhood throughout their life. This is how a person best benefits the community, even after they die. He postulates that in African traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except through careful cooperation. It is only through the existence of other people that they owe them, including those of past generations and contemporaries. A person is simply part of the whole. The community must consequently make, create, or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group: "... whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group ..." (Mbiti 2008:106).

Okolo argues that the concept of self in Africa is viewed from the outside, as about the other, and not about itself, therefore from the inside. Okolo criticised the African philosophy for ignoring or not adequately including the human values of personal initiative, responsibility, subjectivity, independence, and so on. He also interprets these moral values as the way to determine the human being as the subject and not an object. Ironically, by undermining these aspects of the human, the roots of human freedom and autonomy are being forgotten which gives African ideology a blind spot (Okolo 2003:215). Gyekye proposed a different understanding, that the whole is a function of its parts, as relationships between persons in a community are contingent, voluntary, and optional, made so by the ontological derivativeness of the community.

According to Gyekye (2003), the community equals the context where the possibilities for the individual are acted out. The community is merely the social or cultural space where the person can express their individuality. The function of the community structure is to pass on the moral values and goals of the community to the one who enters – this makes the person a product of the community. Gyekye was aware that this opinion of the community may lead to an extreme understanding of how the person and community function together. To explain that an individual still has the possibility of having their personality and therefore individuality is to acknowledge the many assets of a person. The person is by nature social, but they are also carrying other attributes as part of who they are. Without considering this, Gyekye warned that one might yield to an exaggeration of the communal nature of African society, precisely as Menkiti has done (Gyekye 2003:274). Although Gyekye's argument is very persuasive, he is overly keen in expressing the individuality of the human. This will nonetheless continue with this understanding of personhood in mind.

Augustine Shutte argues that personhood is not a trait that exists at the beginning of a human being's life. He opines that "because I depend on the relationships with others for being the person I am, in the beginning, at the start of my life, I am really not a person. I only become fully human to the extent that I am included in relationships with others. So, I must see my life as a process of becoming a person" (Shutte 2001:24). He also emphasises that the process of becoming a person could result in disintegration or decrease, which means to fail. Shutte further argues that a person is constituted solely by his or her social relationships, beginning with the first relationship between mother and child. Consequently, not only education (from early childhood to lifelong education plays a role), but also community and dialogue have a constitutive function. One may also argue that an understanding of personhood is a creative quality that must be acquired and is only potentially inherent in the child, a quality which must be acquired in the process of educational and cultural or moral formation.

According to Granes (2018:54-55), the broad debate on Ubuntu is the single aspect of personhood which is the inseparable interrelatedness of human beings and his or her community. The Ubuntu worldview has been taken mainly as an abstract of communal harmony and unity, unconcerned with politico-economic issues and their consequences thereof. These approaches resulted in the risk of affirming the economic inequalities, injustice, crime, racial or ethnic tension, poverty, and violence that exist in most of the African countries. Ubuntu ethics cannot neglect the conditions of societal ills, for as long as human beings are dehumanised by their living conditions, they cannot acquire moral formation in full, and subsequently, will be unable to fulfil their social role in their shared community. The Ubuntu perspective to poverty, and the distribution of resources to the common human being, is indeed an important debate, particularly in South Africa.

As Leonhard Praeg (2014) emphasises in his analysis of the Ubuntu discourse in South Africa, there is a gap between the prevailing rhetoric of shared humanity, on the one side, and the neoliberal order institutionalised by the government after the end of the apartheid system, on the other. The focus on a single aspect of this African worldview as a source of moral formation for the dimensions of harmony, forgiveness, and reconciliation has been a concern in South African politics and education during the last twenty years which paved the way for the existing economic inequalities, corruption, crime, and poverty that is witnessed today. He further emphasised that the principal challenge for the discourse on Ubuntu is "how to square the logic of unity with the neoliberal modernity that promotes the relentless pursuit of interests conceived in terms of its individualist a priori, while

criminalizing, delegitimizing or struggling to reduce to mere difference any pursuit of interest articulated, formally, as attempts to honour, recognize and sustain the value of unity” (Praeg 2014:44).

Also, when used to create a comprehensive social critique and not as a tool to suppress critical voices in the name of social harmony or unity, perhaps the notion of Ubuntu offers an approach that might provide substantial solutions to crucial social problems.¹⁶ The underscoring principle of the interconnectedness of all human beings, the relational characteristics of Ubuntu ethics as a source of moral formation as ‘I am because we are’, and the notion of personhood in its social and bodily dimension, demand a project of human emancipation that requires recognition, political freedom, education, and certain material and structural preconditions. In this case, the notion of Ubuntu can serve not only as an ideology for reconciliation and social harmony or unity but also as means to formulate a profound critique of prevailing social conditions that would provide a remedy to unrestrained concepts of individual freedom. The objection of Ubuntu as personhood and the African perspective of personhood in development are discussed next.

2.4.4 The objection of Ubuntu as personhood

Ubuntu champions personhood that is morally loaded as a source of moral formation, where the right kind of personhood is not individualistic, but rather communal. Ubuntu, as a moral African worldview, endorses a kind of personhood that is subsumed by the concern to always put the interest of others ahead of one’s own. Tshivhase (2018:75) states that “Ubuntu seems to me to have underlying anthropology that aims to explicate something of what is entailed in dignified personhood, but it does not, at least in my view, define the nature of a person. In trying to define the nature of personhood, Ubuntu’s scope becomes stretched in such a way that it limits the nature of Ubuntu to moral concern, so that personhood is good as moral worth”. She rejected this view and distinguished between the means to acquiring personhood and the nature of personhood in the article ‘Personhood without Ubuntu’ (Tshivhase 2018:76).

Moreover, Tshivhase’s rejection of Ubuntu as the central feature of personhood is not a rejection of the principle of Ubuntu in totality; ironically the importance of this African worldview principle still aims to promote moral goodness and the moral right of action to

¹⁶ For more details, see L. Praeg, 2014, ‘From ubuntu to Ubuntu: Four Historic a Prioris’, in L. Praeg & S. Magadla (eds.), *Ubuntu: Curating the archive*, pp. 96-120, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottsville; L. Praeg & S. Magadla (eds.), 2014, *Ubuntu: curating the archive*, pp. 1-10.

prevent heinous behaviour that violates the well-being of other people. A society filled with bad people hinders human flourishing, and therefore should be avoided. This means that a person is not simply caused by other people, but rather, a person comes to understand the moral value of oneself and another person and responds to that moral value with the attitude that reflects unpretentiousness and a concern for the continued existence of the other, whose existence reflects one's own reality.

Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013:204) raised a concern that the application of Ubuntu on every social sphere could lead to the bastardisation of Ubuntu. And in order to avoid such bastardisation, one should accept the fact that Ubuntu is a moral theory so that it may become most useful in guiding people's actions and motivating people to always pursue goodness. In this way, it becomes pertinent to argue that Ubuntu tells people what the means to acquire personhood entails, but it cannot define personhood. Although this African worldview goes beyond moral principles when it states that one's personhood is a matter that is wholly determined by other people, and that only in treating other people well and putting their well-being ahead of one's own and consequently contributing to ensuring the general social cohesion of the community, does one attain his or her personhood. Ubuntu can be defined as a moral principle that guides people actions. And this could also mean, on the other hand, that Ubuntu defines who a person is. But defining a person is beyond the scope of Ubuntu, especially when it is understood as a moral guiding principle.

Ubuntu clarifies the moral qualities necessary for becoming a good person (Tshivhase 2018:75). It shows people what the desired moral character should involve are that a person's moral formation does not prevent him/her from ignoring his/her moral obligations and choosing to be immoral instead. It merely indicates that a person is being with the capacity for moral behaviour. Although there is something both admirable and desirable about personhood that is morally directed, personhood is not defined by moral concerns espoused in Ubuntu. In fact, an individual cannot attain full personhood without Ubuntu; it is that personhood lacking in Ubuntu is generally not admirable as it indicates a disregard for others. The prescription for moral formation or conduct is important as it enables individuals to be good persons who can flourish in the presence of others without necessarily violating the rights of others. It is in moulding persons that Ubuntu and, by implication the community, relates to personhood.

2.4.5 Approach to personhood in development

Noteworthy here is Klaasen's (2017a:30-39) article titled, 'The role of personhood in development: An African perspective on development in South Africa'. His approach to the African perspective of personhood in development addresses the gap between the rich and poor that has been widened in post-apartheid South Africa by the rating agency declaring junk status in the country. Klaasen reflects on personhood that is more effective to development, indicating that effective development can only be achieved through less dependence and exploitation, perhaps through "theological markers such as the Trinitarian God, relationship with other and vulnerability" in societies. He further asserts that the role of personhood as a source of moral development in Africa should entail personal responsibility for the development of both the self and others in the community. His contribution to development does not only focus on a person, but also that the person becomes the means and end of development. The personal responsibility towards one's own development includes the complex process through which people come to accept responsibility for addressing their situations.

An African approach to development for the South African context takes seriously the neglect of the poor and the common internal factors as a source of development. This perspective seeks to point out the limited opinion of reality as constructed from outside the person and that the person is dependent on outside forces to deconstruct reality. The reality is constructed from within the person and the connotative force represented by the two-way questions: "Who am I and what must I do?" (Klaasen 2017a:33). 'Who I am' leads one to personal responsibility. 'Who I am' is theologically and philosophically conceptualised in personhood. Personhood or person is a difficult and complex term. The term has many variations and diverse characteristics. One way of giving meaning to the term is to point out the development of the term within the European and the African contexts. In the European context, personhood is generally conceptualised as "a bounded, unique, the more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, centre of awareness, and action organized into a distinctive whole" (Rasmussen 2008:38).

Menkiti (1984:172) claims that the Western concept of 'person' is characterised by a sole attribute of the individual that is normative. The characteristic is "the abstract reason of the atomistic individual, whose greatest goal is individual freedom. In the European thought, a person is anyone with rationality or individual freedom independent of outside forces such as tradition. This is the dominant notion of personhood from the West. The difficulty with

this notion is that it has been applied universally, despite the negative consequences on the developing world and its populations” (Klaasen 2017a:33).

On the other hand, the African concept of a person is embedded within the ontological and epistemic community. An African concept of personhood is marked by the various phenomena that impact the individual. This includes the community, although there are various degrees of community within the concept of the person. The African concept of the person also implies an interactionist dimension; a person is not born with personhood but grows into a person. Perhaps certain processes must be followed in the quest to become a person. “[T]he African emphasized the rituals of incorporation and the overarching necessity of learning the social rules by which the community lives so that what was initially biologically given can come to attain social self-hood, i.e., become a person with the inbuilt excellences implied in the term” (Menkiti 1984:173).

Integral to African personhood is the rites of passage that each individual, or in some cases groups, must go through. These rites of passage are another example of the dynamic nature of African living; Africans are constantly developing and growing through the rites that are performed. At the same time as the community is generally accepted amongst both theologians and philosophers to play a role in personhood, the extent of the perceived role of the community is given diverse degrees amongst both theologians and philosophers. Menkiti, Gyekye, and Tutu, influential African scholars with diverse views of personhood, contribute richly to any discussion about the role of personhood in development. The following summarises each scholar’s African conception of a person: *communitarianism* (Menkiti), *interactionist* (Gyekye), and *interdependence* (Tutu).¹⁷

Even though there is no single conception of African development, there is a concept that runs throughout the different philosophies of personhood. The community plays a significant part in personhood. The model of relationship amongst persons, between persons and other living and non-living beings, and between persons and God, underscores personhood. Speckman, a New Testament scholar, provides a perspective of African development that encapsulates the three approaches to personhood within the African perception. He uses two Xhosa words to explain development in Africa; ‘*Impucuko*’, which translates as “civilisation”, and ‘*inkubela*’, which means “progress”. When taken together it means what is the core of something or the real person. Speckman further explains an African view of development by distinguishing it from a Western perspective. In his explanation, an

¹⁷ Also see J.S. Klaasen, 2017b, ‘Christian anthropology and the National Development Plan: The role of personhood’, *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi*, 51(1), 1-6.

African concept of development refers to the human value and not the material accumulation (Speckman 2007:40-41).

Dion Forster identifies three areas of difference between the African worldview and the Cartesian worldview: (1) there is a complex union between the subjective and objective areas, between God and world between the observer and the observed, and the knower and known. In other words, all reality is relational; (2) the person is an open, engaging, and vulnerable organism within the world; and (3) an African worldview believes in a personal universe (2006:227).

In the concept of personhood and relationship with others, Forster (2006) asserts that to apply Martin Buber's I-Thou dialogical conceptual framework, one will have to acknowledge that neither the I nor the Thou take precedence in the African concept of relationship. "Rather the ontological primacy is focussed on the hyphen, the 'between' of the I-Thou". He also correlates the dialogical relationship with Shutte's symbolic expression of the kind of relationship between the individual and community as the primacy of the communion between individual cells and the whole body as the life of the organism (Forster 2006:252-258).

The dialogical relationship assumes that the development of one group or one person is complicatedly connected with the development of the other group or person. Perhaps development is an interactive process that takes both parties as active participants and not passive recipients. Moreover, development is not about the professional against and the unskilled, but everyone is viewed based on their capacity, whether it is technical skills, human capital, or informal knowledge.

This shows that a person must earn their personhood. The traditions of the community bring the person to the point where one is a human being ready to fulfil or flourish as a complete human being. It is argued that a person is born a human being, and the traditions of the community help to create inter-communal relationships and promote harmony. Fortunately, all actions come back to the Ubuntu principle as a source of moral formation, which will always foster a sense of a shared identity between the people relating to each other in a community. This will in turn lead to a general wish for well-being within the community. Harmony within the community is the general goal of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is in all people, actions, and thoughts, and maintains harmony or unity in the community.

Klaasen's (2022: 13-26) perspective in 'Personhood and inclusive communities: Access to justice for all' highlighted the Christian models and African philosophical models of personhood's correlation with inclusive communities; the multifaceted development

through which society come to assent to obligation of talking their situations and forming relationships of mutual enrichment and reciprocal nourishment. He argued that the concept of personhood does not refer to the development of a distinct personality in each person, perhaps focused on the development of a particular identity that distinguishes an individual human being from others or a particular community from other communities. He further argues that the concept of personhood entails how individuals and communities take responsibility for others within the setting of communities that are undergirded with access to justice for all.

Klaasen draws on the work of the following theologians or scholars to address the connection between personhood and inclusive communities, namely: the Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas, born in 1931, the author of *Being as communion*; Daniel P. Horan, born in 1983, the author of *Catholicity and emerging personhood: A contemporary theological anthropology*; African philosophers, such as Kwame Gyekye (1939-2019) who is the author of *Tradition and modernity: Philosophical reflections on the African experience*; and Ifeanyi Menkiti (1940-2019), the author of *Person and community in African traditional thought*.¹⁸

Klaasen (2022: 22-23) further addressed the different moral formation of personhood and how it relates to community development. Instead of elevating one view of personhood above the other, it is best to fact available markers for inclusive and just communities based on notions of personhood. The following points have been identified:

Firstly, the tension between the individual and community needs to be kept in a creative manner so that when individual develops, the community also grows. A just and peaceful community is as important as just and peaceful individuals because of the interaction between community and individuals. Therefore, “with regard to community, I refer to the formation of the individual self in relationships. The self is never in isolation, but as a social being develops through interaction. The self is neither above the community nor suppressed to subordination or coerced into an identity that is alien to the self. The self becomes in relation to other-selves and chooses the good as the self in relationship with other-selves” (Klaasen 2012:113).

Secondly, inclusive and just communities are the responsibility of each person and for the environment. An Ubuntu ethic of responsibility is intrinsic to what it means to be human.

¹⁸ For further reading, see J.S. Klaasen, 2022, ‘Personhood and inclusive communities: Access to justice for all’, in H.M. Haugen, B.M.T. Kivle, T. Addy, T.B. Kessel, & J.S. Klaasen (eds.), *Developing just and inclusive communities: Challenges for diakonia as Christian social practice and for social work*, pp.13-26, Regnum, Oxford.

Subsequently, despite the differentiation in status within the philosophies of personhood, persons have a relationship with other persons and with non-living beings (Gyekye 1997:52). Therefore, community development must take seriously the life-giving nature of the environment and its resources. However, an inclusive and just community accepts that individuals and communities take responsibility for sustainable development by taking responsibility as a vocation coupled with “being” (De Gruchy, cited in Klaasen 2015:1-9).

Thirdly, personhood presupposes relationships whereby relationships are not marginalising, suppressive or alienating. Perhaps relationships are of a kind that fosters reciprocal growth and mutual enrichment. A relationship does not differentiate in order to alienate or marginalise, but relationships are of a “different but not separate” nature. This means that there is an acknowledgment of differences in skills, physique, gifts, ability, and resources. However, differentiation does not result in separation within personhood (Klaasen: 2022: 24-25).

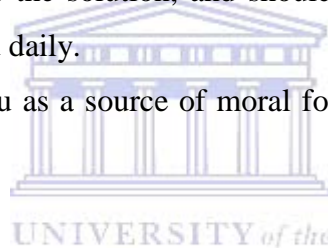
Finally, the power relations within personhood are balanced with the stages of development. There is no one or group of the resources, abilities, or elements of development that should be placed above the other skills or possessions. Therefore, power should be placed within the agency and how persons exercise their various and diverse abilities for inclusive and just communities. The marginalised groups such as those with disabilities, women, children, and historically disadvantaged persons should particularly be included in decision-making processes in order to foster equal social-cohesion and social justice for all toward moral formation.

In the article titled, ‘Personhood and the social inclusion of people with disabilities: A recognition-theoretical approach’, Ikäheimo (2009:77-92) asks whether disabilities can compromise someone’s personhood, or whether persons completely independent of their abilities. However, Ikäheimo claims that there is a reason why talking about the personhood of disabled people is something that may cause worry and unease, and not least among the disabled people themselves. One of the concerns is that once the concept of being a person is separated from that of being human, the conclusion is that disabled people are not persons, or at least not to the same degree that average people are. This, then, opens doors to practical consequences that may be disastrous or at least a basis of great misery to people with disabilities. Even if this worry needs to be taken very seriously, there are certain potential misconceptions related to it that need to be avoided as well. For one thing, as to the psychological concept of personhood, no one’s psychological capacities will get any better simply by not talking about them.

In addition, there is no automatic or inevitable implication from psychological personhood to institutional personhood. It is a matter of political judgement and the decision to which beings' institutional personhood that is paradigmatically in the sense of the right to life and perhaps some other basic rights. It is not evident that the degree of an individual's psychological personhood is the decisive, or at least the only, criterion on which such a judgement should be based. It is called interpersonal personhood, or the interpersonal component of what it is to be a person in a well-developed sense. It is simply a fact that many people with disabilities suffer from a lack of it and this is not something people should try to keep silent about, but something people should try to change.

Since there is so much talk about social exclusion and inclusion today, it would be politically wise to highlight the radical sense in which people can remain socially excluded simply because of a lack of adequate precognitive response by relevant other people in their social environment. It is only when this form of exclusion becomes an explicit part of the public imagination that effective remedies to it can be expected. The inclusion of people with disabilities, and not exclusion, is the solution, and should be borne out of the spirit of the principle of Ubuntu and practiced daily.

The application of Ubuntu as a source of moral formation in modern Africa follows next.



2.5 The Application of Ubuntu as a Source of Moral Formation

Ubuntu as a resource for moral formation has been applied in many ways through continent of Africa and beyond. Ubuntu as a way of life is attributable to Africa, especially SSA. However, its application is now globally. In computer science, the Ubuntu software, a Linux-based application developed in the USA, is open-source software that has been widely distributed. This software is the basis of the sharing tenet of Ubuntu. Evidently, Western culture has not been spared the influence of Ubuntu.

In addition to the Linux example, Ubuntu has also been applied at various levels. The pop star Madonna called her film on Malawi orphans 'I am because we are' a reflection of Ubuntu influence and a source of moral formation (Mugumbate & Nyanguru 2013:87-88). Moreover, Bill Clinton used the term Ubuntu to call for people-centredness in the Labour Party Policy when he addressed the party's conference in 2006. Interestingly, Ubuntu mediation has been introduced by the USA's Department of State, which says it "will be a convener, bringing people together from across regions and sectors to work together on

issues of common interest” (Wichtner-Zoia 2012; Hailey 2008). In addition, the American Episcopal Church had the theme Ubuntu for its 76th Convention.

One should also be aware that, in South Africa today, Ubuntu is one of those protean terms which have been adopted by many institutions plus events in their attempt to capture the spirit of Ubuntu and give them greater credence. For example, the Ubuntu Food Distribution Company or the Ubuntu Training and Management Consultants are most predominant. There are others like the Ubuntu leadership conferences and Ubuntu loans. There is an Ubuntu school of philosophy in Pretoria and an Ubuntu wellness centre in Cape Town, while website of the Ubuntu Records advertises regular “Ubuntu music events” which they run with resident “Ubuntu DJs”. The possibilities for applying the concept of Ubuntu in everyday life are indeed endless. This is proven by a recent technological innovation, more specifically in the field of information technology (Proffitt 2007:9).

As computer technology modernised over time, users were experiencing an increasing need for the use of free software in their daily lives. This need was met in 2004 when a South African developer called Mark Shuttleworth, and A Canonical Software Company created an easy-accessible and user-friendly Linux desktop, Ubuntu. The worldwide used of Ubuntu operating system critically brings the spirit of Ubuntu to the computer world.¹⁹ It places special emphasis on the spirit of togetherness and mutuality. As such, it is said that Ubuntu believes in “shared code, shared efforts, shared principles”. Ubuntu is founded on the concept of humanity towards others based on a universal bond of caring, giving and connecting humankind. These values are incorporated into how the Ubuntu community operates.²⁰

The primarily kind of Ubuntu was called “Warty Warthog”, expressing true Africanness. In striving to stay ahead, it releases versions every six months, by regular updates accessible at no charge. The vision of Ubuntu is to make software which was free of charge (“mahala”) and accessible to everyone on same footings. Ubuntu pledges that it still is and will always continue to be free to use, share and develop as it brings a touch of light to the world of computers.²¹

Other applications of the Ubuntu worldview are discussed next.

¹⁹ Further details visit the website: Canonical Ltd (n.d. - a), ‘About Ubuntu’, *The Ubuntu Story*, viewed 20 June 2020, from <https://www.ubuntu.com/about>.

²⁰ See the following website for more details: Canonical Ltd (n.d. - b), viewed 18 July 2020, from <https://www.canonical.com/conduct>.

²¹ For additional information, see: Canonical Ltd (n.d. - c), *Why use Ubuntu*, viewed 18 July 2020, from <https://www.ubuntu.com/whyuseubuntu>.

2.5.1 Ubuntu and religious concepts

Africa is mostly a religious community. Religion is freely practised across the continent in all its diversity – Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Bahai religion, Judaism, and ATR (Meiring 2000:125). Shutte (2001:195-202) highlights the significance of making the worldview of Ubuntu as the beginning of moral formation central to religious convictions. He argues that Ubuntu as a notion of African humanism as the foundation of any religion will do justice to humanity and ensure an authentic fulfilment of the deepest desires to become better persons.

According to this view, society develops full humanbeing as a community grows in self-affirmation and self-knowledge because of receiving the spiritual power of Ubuntu from others. Yet they, in turn, received their power from a higher, transcendental source, one that is not empowered by another and is a lover without being loved. For that reason, this is then the ultimate source of all power that is the origin and support of people's existence, the ground of their being, their creator. Being present in everyone cuts through any divisive barrier and is experienced when a person empowers others to grow, and when others empower them to grow. This limitless and infinite transcendental power, then the focus of religion with the Ubuntu concept and what can ultimately make Africans true beings in their entire human splendour.

Conradie and Sakuba (2006:59), referring to P. Tempels' Bantu philosophy, repeat this belief. Tempels holds that in African thought a human being is a vital force, influencing and being influenced by other forces. This vital force originates from God and is therefore sacred. Based on this argument, actions of the Ubuntu African worldview are manifestations of that vital force that is intrinsic to human nature and moral formation.

A significant model that takes the Ubuntu religious approach to heart is the Ubuntu theology of Desmond Tutu. He combined the moral values of the Christian faith with that of the Ubuntu philosophy, and as a result, Christianity was 'Africanised' (Eklund 2008:29). This method also proved to be very useful in the TRC process in South Africa where people from different cultures came face to face. Christianity has often, and still is in many cases perceived as "the imposed Western religion" that merged with Africa and the continent's soil as a product of colonialism.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu theology significantly contributed to overcoming justified hostility towards the Christian faith as he combined it with African traditions, showing how it can be applied to the indigenous cultures. He stated that "I have gifts that you do not have, so, consequently, I am unique – you have gifts that I do not have,

so you are unique. God has made us so that we will need each other. We are made for a delicate network of interdependence” (Tutu, cited in Battle 1997:35)

It is so perfect that Ubuntu philosophy, as a source of moral formation in religion, is crucial for intercultural dialogue, especially in a multi-racial, tribalism, ethnicity crisis, and multi-religious community where hatred and divisiveness prevail. Current literature shows that Ubuntu is consistent with a pluralistic attitude (Taringa 2007:195), for instance, Louw (2002:13) maintains that in terms of religion, the African worldview of Ubuntu inspires people to expose themselves to others and to recognise the difference in their humanity to inform and enrich their own.

2.5.2 Ubuntu and environmental preservation

Apparently, social responsibility is one of the many facets of Ubuntu as a notion of African humanism and resource for moral formation in Africa today. Nature conservation thereby has a distinct place in the system of the contemporary African environment. In the African Ubuntu worldview, humans and nature are inseparable. Accordingly, nature should be dealt with in such a manner that it becomes and always remains a warm and friendly setting for humanity (ed. Prinsloo 2000:42 & 43). It is thus clear that humans and the environment are interdependent for their mutual continued existence.

Ramose (2009:309) elaborates on this subject. He states that the fundamental principle of wholeness not only applies to human relations but also to the bond between humans and their physical nature, which the Ubuntu concept envisions. Caring for one another implies caring for the environment as well. If such care is not exercised, the interdependence between human beings and physical nature is undermined. In the African view of Ubuntu, the concept of harmony is comprehensive in the sense that it envisages balance in terms of the totality of relations maintained between human beings, as well as between human beings and the physical environment.

Africa today has been confronted with several ecological challenges. These include, among others, pollution in its different forms, wastelands reaching full capacity, a shortage of water supply, and the extinction of indigenous fauna and flora. In remaining true to the spirit of Ubuntu, citizens can all play their role in preserving the world for future generations through, for example, recycling, buying eco-friendly products, but more importantly, to learn and teaching the importance of nature conservation.

The spirit of Ubuntu in nature conservation is also operating on a broader level. The Ubuntu Institute is an organisation conducting business in Africa. Its non-profit division

comprises respective programmes focused on the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which includes *environmental sustainability*.²² The Ubuntu Institute's Environmental Sustainability Programme endeavours to mobilise traditional and community leaders in education, awareness, and sustainability programmes utilising indigenous methods in Africa. Activities include the coordination capacity building of community leaders, education and awareness, advocacy, and research. This programme, therefore, supports the effective development of environmental management and protection systems.²³

2.5.3 Ubuntu and education

Seemingly, education is regarded as the key to development in all areas of society, whether human capital, modernisation, social reproduction, environmental conservation, religion, or even politics (Harber & Serf 2004:6-7). Venter (2004:155) argues that the educational system in Africa, which is often marked by Western curricula, labels, and methods, needs more concrete African philosophy, which holds more relevance and meaning to its African students. An African philosophy of education should, among other things, address the imposition of Western values on African culture; explore African traditional thought and its impact on educational issues; actively attempt to restore the true worth of the principles of African thinking; overcome the notion that Africans are inferior by starting to formulate a new history of themselves; explore the basis of African moral thinking; and critically reflect on education issues arising in contemporary Africa.

In the African worldview of Ubuntu, learning is seen as a lifelong process, where education starts (in the family) from early childhood, throughout primary, secondary and tertiary levels, continuing for the rest of a person's life (Shutte 2001:109-126). Incorporating the concept of Ubuntu into formal as well as informal education assists in moral formation and the embracing of essential values within individuals, ultimately enabling them to become better human beings. Broodryk (2006:25-26) provides examples of practical applications of Ubuntu in the educational system.

According to Broodryk (2006), Ubuntu is being taught in a variety of schools as part of the subject 'Life Orientation'. Its distinct values are captured into the framework of South

²² For a detailed explanation, see: The Ubuntu Institute (n.d. - a), Home page, viewed 19 February 2020, from <https://www.ubuntuinstitute.com>.

²³ See the following website for more details: The Ubuntu Institute (n.d. - b), *Environmental sustainability*, viewed 19 February 2020, from <https://www.ubuntuinstitute.com/index.php/programmes/environment>.

African education. In addition, it forms part of the curricula of many tertiary institutions in several academic fields. In addition to that, there is a series of television programmes, e.g. Heartlines (aired since 2006), that display real-life situations which illustrate the practical implementation of Ubuntu, reminding Africans about the importance of honouring their core moral values. First National Bank of South Africa, in a constructive nation-building endeavour, donated millions of “values wristbands” to the public and the Mamelodi Sundown soccer jersey with the *Ubuntu-Botho* inscription, showing their support for educating people on Ubuntu moral values. What is more, the 9th Educational Management Association International Conference on Ubuntu held in 2006 proposed the teaching of Ubuntu as part of the formal education system in many African countries.

On the other hand, in order to address the inequalities that Africans have endured under colonialism, and which they are still experiencing in contemporary Africa due to affirmative action and unfair employment equity, people will have to make use of the opportunities that education, science, and technology are providing to people. Thus, before this can be implemented on a level playing field, people must find ways of coping with the dilemma of past inequalities, social injustices because African philosophy grew as a natural and wholesome philosophy, but was also born from positions of oppression and exclusion, e.g., from a good education and access to science.

Ironically, people must be careful not to be too optimistic because science and technology can easily become dominating forces, as can be confirmed by simply observing people’s everyday dependence on social media and computers. These “modern powers” can give them total mobility, but of a kind in which they do not even see or meet other people personally anymore, or which provide automation and gadgets which are reducing human involvement. Moreover, before people can proceed in this techno and cyber era, people would have to come up with good philosophical solutions (Ubuntu spirit) because questions may arise whether science can solve these philosophical problems. The answer from cyber technocrats will probably be that people will have to wait and see what artificial intelligence or virtual reality technology will eventually deliver.

Moreover, there is a need to develop young people who can apply critical thinking philosophically, not just in a rural community but also in an urban setting in dealing with modern science disciplines to find lost meaning and dignity. Shutte, who operates more from the character side of virtue and moral formation, notes that what is important is that a person’s basic duty is to know him-/herself by having community with others. This comes out strongly in how he applies it in education and work, which will manifest itself in science

and technology. Education in South Africa has lost its close link to her common humanity because it started downplaying the sacred moral values of life and co-humanity. It will be difficult to build a strong philosophy of education on a weak foundation of values. Shutte (2001:220) identified this problem: “But there is no question but that the power of science and technology has created a one-sided over-valuation of the aspects of the world they can control and the products they can provide”.

Unfortunately, these emphases fall short in the area of moral education because they are in danger of becoming closed-minded and enforcing principles through alarm and indoctrination. This form of education is not humane enough to develop virtue and character, and this is where Shutte’s ethic of Ubuntu in education can provide valuable support and supplementation: “Education must remove the rift between the social claim and the individual claim within man himself. It must therefore develop both the sense of freedom and the sense of responsibility, human rights and human obligations, the courage to take risks and exert authority for the general welfare and the respect for the humanity of each person” (Shutte 2001:126).

Nonetheless, mixing moral education into other disciplines of education like the sciences can be of great benefit in the fight against moral degradation. The degradation is currently exacerbated through South Africa becoming a secular state, with no plan in sight to introduce, for example, philosophy and moral education into the curriculum. The youths do have a desire for moral insight and human knowledge, and this can be made possible by the current dissertation in and around the place of the humanities in the curriculum. African philosophy of education is well represented in the central differences between African and Western philosophy, of which the main disparity is that the former is very communitarian and the latter very individualistic. The main problem for a South African philosophy of education is politics because the ruling government is apathetic or uninterested towards robust moral discourse and, for that purpose, needs a humane philosophical framework for science and technology to thrive.

2.5.4 Ubuntu and moral renewal

The spirit of Ubuntu as a resource of moral formation has made individuals the building blocks of society. The conduct of the community at large is thus a reflection of the moral values, moral renewal, and beliefs of individuals. If correct moral behaviour is encouraged and lived out on the individual level, it will also be visible in all areas of society. Jones (1996:1) reiterates this notion: “Society practices the art of living together through accepted

patterns of social behaviour and belief, in a multi-cultural society it is important to bridge schisms and impregnate the social structure with love for a strong leadership and cooperation at every level is needed". As a result, there is a particular concern of integrating Ubuntu moral values into people's daily and professional conduct (Broodryk 2006:97). There are various declarations and movements which foster this ideology and attempt to make it realistic and reliable. Examples of these are mentioned below.

The *Ubuntu Love Your Neighbour in Diversity* declaration was established in 1995. It came about as a result of a conference initiated by the Institute of World Concerns (Burger 1996b: vi). This statement is directed at all the people of South Africa, with a particular focus on the family, church, and school. It comprises useful suggestions for the advancement and promotion of moral values and attitudes, with the goal of achieving peace and development (Burger 1996a:115-127).

The *Ubuntu Code of Conduct* is based on the moral values of Ubuntu as a notion of African humanism and applies to persons in positions of responsibility. It states that all individuals in positions of responsibility, such as elected representatives, government officials, and those with authority in political, economic, and civil organisations, have a duty to serve nations with integrity. This declaration strongly stresses the importance of honesty, incorruptibility, good faith, impartiality, openness, accountability, justice, respect, generosity, and effective leadership (Broodryk 2002:147-149).

The *Ubuntu Pledge* is a follow-up of the *Code of Conduct*. It contains religious-ethical statements which all their members of different faiths – Christianity, Islam, TAR, Bahai faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism – are expected to adhere to: be good and do well; live honestly and positively; be considerate and kind; care for sisters and brothers within the human family; respect other people's rights to their beliefs and cultures; care for and improve the environment; promote peace, harmony, and nonviolence; and promote the welfare of society (Broodryk 2002:149-152).

The delegates who signed the above two statements gathered on 18 March 2002 to discuss its practical implementation, which resulted in the establishment of the Moral Regeneration Movement which aims to revive the spirit of Ubuntu as a source of moral formation (Broodryk 2002:152). As a goal, it wants all education authorities to subscribe to the following Ubuntu principles: to respect human dignity; promote freedom, the law, and democracy; improve material well-being and economic justice; enhance family and community values; uphold loyalty, honesty, and integrity; ensure harmony in culture, beliefs, and conscience; show respect and concern for others, and strive for justice, fairness, and

peaceful co-existence (Broodryk 2006:98). Ubuntu morality encompasses the adage: ‘it takes a village to raise a child’.

2.5.5 Ubuntu & arts and media

Ubuntu as a basis of moral formation has been applied in arts and media spaces. Impey and Nussbaum (1996) suggest that the arts and media also strongly reflect the culture of Ubuntu as a source of moral formation in Africa. “I feel the other, I dance the other, therefore I exist” (Senghor, 1996, as cited in Impey & Nussbaum 1996) provides the clarity helpful to Westerners in connecting Ubuntu with these aspects of the African way of life. Impey and Nussbaum (1996:64) maintain that music and dance function as tools for reconciliation, educational resources, enhancers of social cohesion, moral agents, forms of marketing, vehicles for team building, strategies for stress management, and resources to improve productivity.

Moreover, if the arts serve as tools for such extensive social productive and restructuring purposes, they must communicate the underlying belief, virtue and value systems that the people follow as everyday practices. Accordingly, they also reflect a worldview and how it influences all the communication patterns that a cultural group finds acceptable and admirable in society. According to Blankenberg (1999:42), the Ubuntu principle plays a huge role in media and arts in African societies. The moral value propagates radically assisted transition in South Africa through decolonisation, great soul-searching, and fundamental questions that attacked formations about the role of the media as related to the identity of the people of the country.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the African worldview of Ubuntu as the centre of moral formation and considered its developments and application in contemporary Africa. A background of the African worldview of Ubuntu and how it can be linked with performance measurement theories for organisational success was provided. One of the profound lessons on Ubuntu is that it integrates African organisations with local communities. The chapter also revealed moral theory and the organisations’ ability to collaborate through communalism and collectivism that arise from the Ubuntu principles as the basis for moral formation, based on the African Ubuntu worldview and moral theory attached to this African philosophy.

The chapter further analysed some critical challenges impinging upon the applications of the Ubuntu worldview by way of objection of Ubuntu as personhood and various approaches to personhood in development. It highlighted various practical applications of the Ubuntu principle to education, moral renewal, religion, art and media, and environmental preservation. In general, within the African Ubuntu worldview, the importance of the moral value of human beings and the community is pivotal. The practices of Ubuntu concerning humanity, care, conviviality, sharing, teamwork spirit, compassion, *buen vivir* (good living), dignity, consensus decision-making systems, and respect for the environment are all positive elements that could contribute to the improvement of corporate performance in African societies. The literature indicates that there is now a global shift in management thinking which is taking cognisance of the Ubuntu worldview. This supports the need of the Ubuntu spirit.

The following chapter unpacks Shutte's understanding of Ubuntu.



CHAPTER 3:

AUGUSTINE SHUTTE'S PHILOSOPHY OF UBUNTU AND MORAL FORMATION

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a comprehensive discussion on the African worldview of Ubuntu as the root of moral formation in contemporary Africa. This was done by reviewing several definitions of Ubuntu, the origin of the concept, and its development in Africa as a source of moral formation. An overview was given of the application of Ubuntu in life for good cooperative governance, and collaborative and competitive African communities. Further attention was given to the African worldview of Ubuntu, the significance of this philosophy in practice, some of the critical challenges of the concept of the Ubuntu worldview, and the overall moral theory of the Ubuntu worldview for the success of African societies.

The chapter further distinguished between the notions of community and the individual in the African worldview and collectivism. It unpacked the various moral theories of Ubuntu including human rights, communitarianism, personhood, and its approaches to development and personhood, as well as objections to Ubuntu. Given the African Ubuntu worldview as an origin of moral formation, the chapter concluded by highlighting the various ways the notion of Ubuntu has been applied in modern Africa such as in education, moral renewal, politics, arts and media, the religious context, and environmental preservation.

The current chapter now explores Augustine Shutte's philosophy of Ubuntu and moral formation. It highlights the life and literary work of this South African scholar and his metaphysical perspective on Ubuntu as the cause of moral formation. It explains Shutte's understanding of the Ubuntu worldview in different spheres of contemporary South (Africa) including South African apartheid (politics), African ethics (morality), and science. Furthermore, this chapter evaluates the views of Shutte's approaches to an African Ubuntu philosophy as the foundation of moral formation in the South African context with the following: work, solidarity and creativity, the TRC process, political governance, the HIV and AIDS epidemic, business management, health care, gender relation, and nation-building.

It is now fitting to begin with a brief description of the life of Augustine Shutte.

3.2 The Life of Augustine Shutte

It was before Augustine Shutte's death in Cape Town in the early morning of Monday the 23rd of May 2016 from cancer, which gradually spread through his body (he was aged 77), that he wrote an "autobiographical account" of a selection of his theology documents that situates his writings within his public involvement in church and society (Giddy 2016:227). The account also documents a pattern of development in his understanding of the Christian faith that arises out of this involvement. As such, the narrative constitutes a theological reflection on God's self-communication in Jesus in the context of doctrinal formulations and traditional church practices that call for rethinking. The influence of Karl Rahner is apparent throughout his theological growth. His narrative also acknowledges his two formative teachers at Stellenbosch University and UCT, both in South Africa, as his theology as a whole can be seen as an exercise in secularisation (Johan Degenaar) through a truly personal and existential appropriation of his Christian heritage (Martin Versfeld). The two teachers as his role models facilitated his potential theological growth (Giddy 2016:227).

Moreover, the collection of Augustine Shutte's theological papers and edited selection, commonly titled "The Christian God" has to this day not yet been published. According to Giddy (2016:227), the life and development of his Christian theology will forever continue as the source of potential inspiration to scholars and theologians seeking knowledge. Augustine Shutte is most known through his books *Philosophy for Africa* (1993a); *Ubuntu: An ethic for a new South Africa* (2001); *The mystery of humanity: A new conceptual framework for Christian faith* (1993b); and the *Quest for humanity in science and religion* (2006). Shutte, together with John de Gruchy and George Ellis, was the principal of a Templeton Foundation research project titled: 'Religion and Science in an African Context: An Experiment in worldview Formation' (Shutte 2006: viii).

It is very interesting to note at this juncture how Shutte's life profile as a futuristic visionary was able to articulate how the African traditional understanding of humanity, expressed through the term "Ubuntu", and as a useful corrective to the materialism and dualism that has characterised modern Western philosophical thinking, perhaps the positive intersubjective transactions enabling personal growth and community (Shutte 1993a: v). He foresaw how unpacking religious faith in a non-mythological way suited the contemporary scientific thought world of today. It has without a doubt been the best way to see how to follow his development towards critical thinking in making sense of his Christian faith, a journey recounted in this narrative until today. The central question that occupies his

theological account, which at the same time justifies it more than the historical interest, is what exactly Christian identity consists of. An inner belief (the faith of any Christian will undergo an inner development over time) must have an outer expression, but the latter will never be entire without ambivalence. This question inevitably arises from the consideration of Augustine's public involvements with Christian theology in Southern African, and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) in particular (Giddy 2016:227).

Additionally, Augustine Shutte was first ordained in the Anglican Church, then the RCC, and he was a member of the Dominican Order of Friars Preachers, also called the Order of Preachers. Moreover, he was associated with the Catholic reform movement called We Are All Church South Africa. This movement is affiliated with the international movement critical of the way authority is presently exercised in the RCC, and, of the reluctance of church authorities to carry forward the reforms articulated at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Besides following his Christian conscience over legality, he also lent his active support to the Roman Catholic Women Priest movement until his death. He was married twice, first to Stephanie Gerard, with whom he had three children – Jonathan, Thomas, and Anna, and then to Acilia Schoeman. At various points in his theological and spiritual life he was Chair of the Catholic Theology Society of South Africa and the UCT Philosophy Society.

Shutte's philosophy was broadly Aristotelian and Thomistic but transposed into a modern key of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, as was delivered in his doctorate degree entitled, 'Spirituality and Intersubjectivity', in which the influence of Karl Rahner and John Macmurray was highly protuberant. To a large extent most of his writings were engaged in dealing with the dominant materialist and reductionist trend in philosophy in the English-speaking world, to offer a non-materialist but non-dualist alternative (Giddy 2016: 228).

The most significant attribute throughout the lifespan of Augustine Shutte was his public roles, which include that of the priest of the Dominican Order, seminary lecturer, advisor to the Theological Commission of the South African Catholic Bishops, observer on the Anglican Theological Commission, a founding member of the Catholic University of St Augustine College of South Africa, convener of numerous theological groups and pastoral discussions, including for many years being the director of the Kolbe School of Theology in Cape Town. This series of involvements has been understood as providing an existential grounding for his writings and evokes the Christian identity. The selfless service Shutte rendered to humanity (Ubuntu) has been and still is relevant in his writings as a resource for moral formation in contemporary Africa and globally.

3.3 Shutte's Metaphysical Perspective of Ubuntu and Moral Formation

Shutte's approach to African Philosophy (Ubuntu) for moral formation is important in the sense that he was "a South African brought up and educated in a European philosophical tradition, using concepts and methods of this tradition", and the centre of his work was the concept of humanity embodied in the traditional African Zulu language maxim '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' ("a person is a person through persons") (Shutte 1993a: v). This brings to the fore the understanding of the moral formation of Ubuntu (which Shutte also correlated with the English equivalent of humanity), his profound interest was the philosophies of character, attitude, behaviour, or moral way of life. Shutte made it clear in his work that South Africans will only enjoy real integration when different traditions of thought and feeling are integrated into every sphere, for example, science, education, business, work, political governance, religion, TRC, moral renewal, environmental preservation, culture, etc.

Shutte focuses largely on the *metaphysical* background of *Ubuntu* and virtue ethics, an ideology, which Makumba (2007:28) would favour since he submits that: "[P]hilosophy possesses a metaphysical character, even when philosophy takes on the question of God; it remains within its scope". Moral value alone is not enough to attain the Ubuntu spirit; therefore, society needs *virtue* (a way of living) – a virtue which can be manifested in Ubuntu as a moral concept through which community can restore moral order. Virtue ethics gives birth to forgiveness, reconciliation, and reparation, and it prepares a habitat and climate conducive to a good ethos for community to accommodate or emulate.

Virtue ethics is one of the classical Greek philosophies written by Alasdair MacIntyre (After Virtue 1984), in which Christian writers also recognised the importance of community and the role of virtue for moral formation. Take, for instance, Wright recalling Paul's encouragement or exultation to every Christian "put on the new self" (Colossians 3:10) and to be clothed with the life of Christ (Galatians 3:27) (NIV) – this identifies the importance of moral virtue. This will develop towards a communal moral virtue (also correlated with the principle of Ubuntu) of mutual kindness, truth-telling, forgiveness, acceptance across traditional barriers of race, gender, culture, and class.

Wright (2010:145) argues, "[T]o put on these virtues is a matter of consciously deciding, again and again, to do certain things in certain ways, to create patterns of memory and imagination deep within the psyche, so that moral living becomes habitual". In a similar approach, Stanley Hauerwas, who wrote extensively on the role of community, argues that moral decision-making cannot be separated from the character, convictions, and worldviews

of the moral agent. It is about ethics in the community of faith where people learn to be God's disciples and to maintain moral standards (Hauerwas 1991:28).

Similarly, Neville Richardson (1994:89), a South African theologian, also emphasised the role of community and affirmed that character and community go hand in hand. He maintained that it is the character of people as developed through communities that influence ethical decision-making rather than abstract ethical theories of right and wrong (Richardson 1994:91). This echoes the African perspective of the formative nature of the community and that it is through others (Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*) that people discover their humanity (Ubuntu).

Additionally, South African scholar John Klaasen (2013:182-183) concurs with the views of other theologians including Beyers Naudé, Augustine Shutte (the focus of this chapter), and John De Gruchy who drew attention to South African Ubuntu ethics and the relationship with moral formation in the contemporary African state. To substantiate his claim, he further argues about the impact of Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu theology and the use of communities and democracy as a social means of moral formation for humanity to thrive. It is believed that the Ubuntu principle of inclusivity in a community setting is commonly bound to race, gender, status, and non-human community, and is void of discrimination and social injustices which the Ubuntu spirit encouraged.

3.3.1 Shutte's literacy works and Ubuntu worldview

Shutte is mostly known through his two renowned works *Philosophy for Africa* (1993a) and *Ubuntu: An ethic for a new South Africa* (2001). Reading and studying Shutte's works for the researcher was an insightful journey, as well as influenced his critical engagement with the African Ubuntu worldview as a source of moral formation in present-day Africa.

Shutte has a deep interest in the understanding of humanity's relation and engagement with science and religion. It was during this study that the researcher found even more valuable edited literary works including *The mystery of humanity: A new conceptual framework for Christian faith* (1993b) and *The quest for humanity in science and religion: The South African experience* (2006). These books and numerous other articles are informative as the significant concepts discussed remain knowledge-driven for the future unborn populace. The way Shutte engaged with the text in African ideology and practice in contrast to other scholars will be reviewed and assessed in Chapter 4 (Kwame Gyekye) and Chapter 5 (John Mbiti), respectively.

Shutte is without any reservation that a person, who believes in the maintenance and participation of good character for integrity, will make it possible for people to develop and share together during this secular and scientific age people find themselves in. An important aspect is what he mentioned as the objective of his first book:

The kernel of this book, then, is my attempt to outline a philosophical conception of humanity that incorporates and systematizes the African insights I think that is important. I use the particular European philosophical tradition in which I have been training for this purpose. It is the tradition in which Aristotle and Aquinas are the classical figures, but in recent times it has incorporated into itself elements of existentialism and phenomenology ... (Shutte 1993b:9).

His concept of Ubuntu (humanness) correlates with the current moral ethics that present-day society should cultivate to form a united community as he envisaged.

Furthermore, Shutte realised the need for metaphysical influence in both politics and religion of South Africa, hence the need for these philosophers to be dynamic and systematic cut across Africa and globally. It is in doing so that Shutte demonstrated comparisons between African thought and European philosophy. For instance, how people empower one another through positive relations and self-determination to trust and to depend on one another as a community. People should realise who they are and what they are by the way they relate to one another.

One interesting submission is by Richard Bell (2002), who deliberated Shutte's method in his book, *Understanding African philosophy: A cross-cultural approach to classical and contemporary issues*, voiced: "... an example of critical philosophy in the analytic, conceptual analysis tradition turned to specific existential conditions and priorities in Africa is found in Augustine Shutte's book *Philosophy for Africa*" (1993a). Shutte, like other white South African theologians and philosophers, grappled with the significance of this discipline for the lived state of apartheid South Africa at the time. He is also very aware of the focus of "postcolonial" African philosophy, and "the present struggle in South Africa is partly a struggle between Africa and Europe" and the degree to which South Africa has been colonised. In support of the context of the "new" South Africa, Shutte's investigative journalism focused on the Ubuntu philosophy on the and how it should be applied in every facet of life (Bell 2002: 27). This application can be seen in his most outstanding 1993a and 2001 books, where he passionately offered an analysis of the application of Ubuntu ethics to

issues of education, work (solidarity and creativity), religion, sex, and family life, politics, gender relations, and health care.

Also, Shutte's analysis looked at the more *traditional worldview* of the African philosophy (Ubuntu) as a source of moral formation. The correlation of this African worldview to situations of the sages, national ideologies, ethnicity (culture), and the hermeneutic narrative of African philosophy is paramount. This is pertinent in understanding the moral value of European philosophy in offering Africa counterparts without the two condemning one another. Shutte makes people conscious of the ironic moral values of Ubuntu in African Philosophy that will and can contribute to European Philosophy. For this reason, others opposed to the concept of Afrocentrism, but Shutte maintained an interest in discovering the understandings of persons undertaking philosophy archaeologically in Africa. In a similar motion, distant Belgian missionary Placide Tempels conducted preliminary work on African Philosophy.

Also noteworthy are Peter O. Bodunrin's historical summary, for example, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, and Kwasi Wiredu's first and second-order philosophy, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Paulin J. Hountondji's viewpoints. The last order of philosophy by Henry Odera Oruka highlights five tendencies in African philosophy, which Shutte applied in context with other philosophical tendencies in core moral values, for instance, in what way character is moulded and developed by the community. The submissions of many of these great thinkers or philosophers being taught in European philosophy, nonetheless, are critically engaging towards African philosophy African (Shutte 1993a:15).

In addition, Shutte compares and contrasts these African perspectives, conceptions, and approaches, and appreciates critically to modernise other scholars' interests and thereby augment self-development. The acknowledgement of these African thinkers or scholars tapped with the help of the wisdom of God, the natural environments, the elders (alive and passed on), and the sciences in relation to the Ubuntu principle are a source of moral formation. Shutte's works, magnanimous like other noteworthy African Philosophers, will always show the possibility of accomplishments of many of the anticipated notions within the African community and beyond. Philosophy unquestionably does have that capability, as Shutte (1993a:5) specified that "there is a job for philosophy here, a job for which its tools of conceptual analysis and rational criticism are necessary". Similarly, Shutte continuously expressed concerning the white African notion of persons in the community of Africa, that "persons are defined not by this or that natural property or set of properties but by the relationships between them and others".

Consequently, for example, Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984), likewise believed that “in the African view it is the community that defines the person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will or memory”. Perhaps in European philosophy of whatsoever thought, the self is always envisioned as somewhat “inside” a person, or at least as a thought container of powers and mental properties. Subsequently, African philosophy is understood as “outside, subsisting in relationship to what is other, the natural and social environment” (Shutte 1993a:47). These literary works show Shutte’s commitment to building Ubuntu African philosophy and application in the new South Africa which profusely informed the moral value our societies continue to practice and enjoy.

3.3.2 Shutte and apartheid

In the era of colonialism and apartheid, South Africa as most of the population and their moral values were greatly challenged. The African philosophy (Ubuntu) therefore aimed at restoring the moral value of humanism and human dignity. The spirit of Ubuntu was seen as uncovering the devaluing of human life through apartheid and the undignified status of colonialism. The Ubuntu African worldview was employed to show that apartheid system and colonialism was dehumanising, and therefore needed to be abandoned to move the nation(s) forward (Matolino & Kwindigwi 2013:198).

Post-apartheid South Africa has adopted the Ubuntu discourse as the foundation for moral formation and transformation in all spheres of life. Subsequently 1994 there has been a drive towards the revival of moral values and virtues that were lost or demeaned during colonialism and apartheid era (Matolino & Kwindigwi 2013:199). The researcher therefore believes in the transformed interest and gratitude of different communities and societies across cultural identity and moral values in all facets of humanity – these Ubuntu practices are embraced as a resource for moral formation. The best interest of this quest, description or affirmation of Ubuntu as an African worldview has received a lot of attention and prominence in the continent and globally.

In the same way, an interesting perspective is that of African philosopher Mabogo P. More (2004), in his influence in *Philosophy in South Africa under an Apartheid*, where he indicated Shutte’s approach and understanding of an African philosophy, in a South African, precisely Shutte’s interrogations concerning whether African philosophy is believable after apartheid. This may as well as direct people to the question of whether the Ubuntu and African philosophy are possible in post-apartheid South Africa. Also, seeing at where people are now, Shutte knew very well that Ubuntu, unity, harmony, and dignity existed before

apartheid, and that it is possible to allow it to become an ethic for the new South Africa towards moral formation. Therefore, Shutte freely states without an iota of doubt that Ubuntu is the precise adverse of apartheid, by asserting that “at the center of *Ubuntu* is the idea that *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, persons depend on persons to be persons. This is our hidden secret” (Shutte 2001:3).

Therefore, acknowledgment is also given to Shutte in his moral value and effort to protect the development “Philosophy in the African Context”, and while he could not continue the development, he continued to get his initially important book, *Philosophy for Africa*, out in 1993a. The idea of his non-Eurocentric way perhaps assisted in establishing fundamentals for the development of a spontaneous African philosophy with some of its virtues and oral values. Bringing ethics and African philosophy back into the prospectus is not going to occur instantaneously. Nevertheless, it will need the critical involvement of many theologians, scholars, laypersons, and organisations. The background of this futuristic forethought and mystic of Shutte is also observed in the book, *African Renaissance: The new struggle*, edited by Malegapuru William Makgoba, with a prologue by Thabo Mbeki. Post-colonialism and post-apartheid are commonly similar with the continuance of the past era. As South Africa continues to borrow, collect financial aid from overseas, and experience inequality, corruption, injustice, unemployment, hunger, pollution, rape, human trafficking, climate change, religious conflict, murder, poverty, gender-based violence (GBV), crime, racial tension, unfairness in all sectors of humanity, it is yet to be free of colonialism.

Although been a Christian, Shutte has inscribed openly on the logical meaning of life and humanity in its basic forms, as demonstrated in his writings that depicted that “the need, and the deep, often-hidden desire, to develop as a person is nevertheless part of our human nature – according to the Christian view at any rate – and can’t be destroyed. So, it persists, in each of us, in a greater or lesser state of frustration” (Shutte 1993a:56). On the other hand, Thaddeus Metz has also written on an unfathomable philosophical perspective, that Shutte realises the fact that an African (Ubuntu) philosophy now authenticates an African moral principle. This very statement is the basis of the researcher’s argument, that an African philosophy (Ubuntu) already contained an essential moral theory that can be explored or applied in the context of Western or European moral principles. It is also a catalyst for moral formation in everyday lifestyles.

Furthermore, the African development is even more treasured to the fact that there is not a valedictory between the community and individual as people use to see in the African structure, therefore, “a community is a unity of a uniquely personal kind” (Shutte 2001:27).

This development also allows the completely human community to be seen as one of the comprehensive entities, which is the humanity. To be anthropocentric in seeing humanity also seems to be intolerable in this development, because it leaves no room for self-centredness and selfishness.

Shutte (2001:25) argues that “a person who is generous and hospitable, who welcomes strangers to her house and table and cares for the needy ... builds an identity that is enduring, that will not disintegrate – even in death – but continue[s] to be a centre of life for all”. This behaviour of understanding and compassion by ignoring ethnic or tribal and racial tension on whatever grounds will create prosperity, harmony, and bind people together in the community. The life people live is so valuable, and far too many lives were destroyed and damaged when separation (racism, tribalism, and ethnicity) was made law. Nonetheless, to live rightly, people must abide by the legislations and moral norms that guide the entity or community, which Ubuntu as a source of moral formation decrees.

3.3.3 Shutte and African ethics (morality)

Though Shutte concentrates on African ethics (morality) and its ability to be more global by using additional mechanisms with much truth to address present moral formation, especially in South (Africa), this concept was made very clear in his second philosophical book, *Ubuntu: An ethic for a new South Africa* (2001). Shutte foresees an ‘African Vision’ in his philosophical or metaphysical investigation, which is a vision that can be brought into action by people’s working together on a philosophical level. This means that people of European and African lineage tapped into the central ethical or moral ideology on an advanced level that is just and peaceful.

As a prominent scholar and theologian, Shutte’s approach to religion is very significant. He contributed to the good ethic in community and alluded to religion “with Ubuntu” when he deliberated ‘The God of Ubuntu’, saying that, “thus in a religion with Ubuntu the unlimited transcendent power that is the ground of my being is present in all I am or do, in my life as a whole and each particular part of it” (Shutte 2001:204). Religion, whether African or Western, brings people together in a way where God wants them as one – one voice, one body, and one spirit – in agreement. Fascinatingly, this concept of Ubuntu in God, faith, and religion or science is illogical to what a theorist like Thaddeus Metz was implying when he said that this Ubuntu focuses too much on others. The ‘focus on others’ is critical for a harmonious society, especially to have a good ethic for the new South Africa.

The Ubuntu principle (solidarity, respect, giving, love, compassion, justice, freedom, human dignity, brotherliness, sisterhood, egalitarianism, etc.) as a resource of moral formation will always advocate for doing good to others, spending less on the self and more on others. Therefore, simply put, ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts’, and Shutte (2001:226) aptly sums it up when he says that “if Ubuntu means seeking and finding oneself in others, no matter how different and alien they may appear, then surely no-one, no group or culture, has anything to fear from the practice of this ethic”. The Ubuntu philosophy as a source of morality will always be a way of life for people (culture).

Moreover, it is thought-provoking to distinguish that when people work collectively in the spirit and body that is with the notion of *seriti* (life force)²⁴, means that incorporating the diverse personalities and surroundings helps lessened trouble to battle challenges of people’s sense of humankind. Shutte anticipated his life development and pursued it by unifying the interrelating of services to understand the ‘person’ and that discipline of ‘Ethics’ or ‘morality’ is the best way to precisely and judiciously relates. He categorically put it this way, “as we shall see, living in the spirit of Ubuntu is not just a conventional obligation. It is my very growth as a person that is at stake. It is a matter of life and death” (Shutte 2001:23-24). Likewise, such attitude should be described in a way that is not just an obligation, or a duty, or a rule, but a sanction and privilege, which allows people to make good decisions for the greater common good of all. In this sense, Ubuntu and ethics stand separate from mere ‘morality’, which is about law and obligation, perhaps Ubuntu in principle remains a source of moral formation if applied daily in current Africa.

3.3.4 Shutte and the sciences

More significantly, having been a champion of theology and philosophy, Shutte had a very deep interest in the sciences with the contemporary start of the science and religion discourse in American and Europe. Shutte made a South African contribution with his 2005 paper titled ‘The Possibility of Religion in a Scientific and Secular Culture’, which was published in the South African Journal of Philosophy. Almost two decades earlier, he also wrote ‘A New Argument for the Existence of God’²⁵, in which he reinforced his argument that God exists because people fail to be autonomous for individual growth. And people need one another with God as a necessary tool for their day-to-day actions and practices. The Ubuntu worldview of science is continually changing and, overall, always in the direction of greater

²⁴ The ‘Seriti’, “Gabriel Setiloane, an African Theologian and expresses the ideology very well when he writes. The force that is thus exuded (or radiated) is called seriti” (Shutte 2001: 21).

²⁵ A. Shutte, 1987, ‘A new argument for the existence of God’, *Modern Theology*, 3, 157–177.

all-inclusiveness and truthfulness. The essentials of religion, contrastingly, do not change. Even the doctrinal creations of religious faith change only slowly and slightly, if at all. Moreover, following these attempts, Shutte and his fellow academics completed three years of *collaborative research*²⁶, which was produced in the book, *The quest for humanity in science and religion*, which Shutte edited and printed in 2006. This project was the first of its kind in South Africa, and with Shutte at the forefront it turned out to be a promising and successful venture.

Similarly, the very first important statement Shutte (ed. 2006: xiii) made in the outline of the book is the following: “In exploring the relationship between science and religion it is important not to lose touch with oneself as the originating source of both. Both science and religion are the product, of humanity”. This is very critical because people have been exposed to religion and science daily, in all circles of life. Some of these spheres of indolence mentioned by Shutte which Ubuntu promotes, namely education, religion, work, sex, family, gender relations, politics, and the sciences, is where much moral or ethical contemplation is desirable. Nevertheless, the development of a ‘code of ethics statements’ and ‘bioethics’ in research developments was prominent amongst contemporaries Africa (ed. Shutte 2006:30). It is part of people’s lifestyles, and many have professions in it and make a living out of it, which can bring various dilemmas and moral questions to the fore. In addition, at the same time it reminds people of the Ubuntu spirit of belief – to live together in harmony for the advancement of the community.

Again, it is of paramount importance to note that people must communicate and relate these technologies and sciences in community with others. In his investigation, Shutte defined the contemporary period as technologically advanced in two leading civilisations, namely: the rationalist and the empiricist. His words unambiguously “for empiricist thought human beings are an inextricable part of a material universe studied by science” (ed. Shutte 2006:48). This clearly describes a more Western system, which is dualistic. The “rationalist on the other hand provides what seem strong arguments for a human freedom of self-determination that is equally radical and complete” (ed. Shutte 2006:48). Furthermore, in his explanation he uses Kant’s notion of dualism as an example. He subsequently discourses the inconsistency of dualism as not being an illogicality, but an irony, “a paradox that expresses a most important truth about humanity, and which also reveals the most comprehensive and

²⁶ Most significantly in 2001 the University of Cape Town secured the sponsorship of the Templeton Foundation in order to research the relationship between science and religion in the South African context.

intimate way in which we can experience the presence and activity of a transcendent God in a truly secular world” (ed. Shutte 2006:48).

To sum it up, he claims that “the non-dualistic approach of African thought is an advantage here, and there are signs that these religions can adapt more easily to a secular world than those that have grown up in contact with and in opposition to it” (ed. Shutte 2006:61). The people have a large religious community in South Africa and the largest minority group is the followers of ATRs. For many, thinking along the lines of Shutte, there is the hopefulness that the encouragement of this kind of incorporated spirituality or religiosity will stumble over to the other secular and the religious life. The South African government is in total support of this secularist state as enshrined in the nation’s Constitution.

3.4 The Contribution of Shutte’s Ubuntu to Issues Related to South Africa

Shutte has contributed tremendously to Ubuntu ethics and to various issues or spheres related to the application of the concept for moral formation, including discourse on the TRC, political governance, HIV and AIDS epidemic, Covid-19, technology, work (solidarity and creativity), business management, nation-building, gender relations, and health care, etc. These spheres are discussed in more detail below.

3.4.1 Truth and reconciliation process

There are various spheres or applications of African Ubuntu philosophy as the foundation for moral formation in (South) Africa. The very important factor that significantly contributed to the peaceful transition process of South Africa during post-apartheid was the establishment of the South African TRC in July 1995 by the country’s new parliament passing a law authorising the formation of the Commission. The latter, chaired by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, was chosen in December 1995, became a beacon of light around the world for its attempt to generate political reconciliation and peace (Nabudere 2005:7). This court-like body was given the huge task of uncovering the truth about the crimes committed during the apartheid era. A series of discussions were conducted, and inquiries believed where victims and perpetrators of gross inhuman acts gave their testimonies. The perpetrators could thereby apply for pardon from prosecution (Gibson 2004:1). In most instances, these were painful and distressing experiences.

Moreover, Shutte (2009:38) contended that the TRC went beyond the mere legal understanding of the law, crime, and punishment in the logic that it applied voluntary mutual

storytelling as a means of obtaining the truth, which meaningfully contributed to the peaceful transition. Similarly, with the purpose of establishing fact and guaranteeing reconciliation in the move to democracy, forgiveness was the centre of courtesy in the process. Broodryk (2002:16) therefore maintains that the real miracle was not so much a non-violent political revolt, but the survival of the Ubuntu spirit on an enormous scale. The remarkable expressions of forgiveness as an aspect of the Ubuntu principle during the TRC hearings were very much an exceptional episode in human history. This African philosophy (Ubuntu) was the water that extinguished the fire that justified violent behaviour and anger.

One of the TRC reporters, Antjie Krog (2005), fully approves of this discourse. She is of the view that the smooth running of the Commission, as well as its achievement of various objectives, is a direct result of the point that those involved in the process were firmly deep-rooted in the Ubuntu principle or worldview. According to this African moral formation, forgiveness is equal to and means reconciliation. Krog relates the expression “interconnectedness-towards-wholeness” to the notion of forgiveness (or reconciliation), which necessitates that forgiveness ultimately points to complete personhood. The uncultured human rights violations committed by the perpetrators strips the victims of their humanity. Nevertheless, when they receive forgiveness, they become complete again, while, on the other hand, their victims’ humanity is also restored when forgiveness is established.

One could therefore argue that an example furnished by Krog will jettison more light on this discourse. She refers to a report made by one of the mothers of the Gugulethu Seven (seven young men ambushed and killed by security police in 1986): “This thing called reconciliation ... if I am understanding it correctly ... if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed Christopher Piet, if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back ... then I agree, then I support it all”. The Ubuntu spirit was practically at work when the perpetrators forgave the offender under one roof (reconciliation).

Furthermore, Volume 1 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report (1998) states that the Commission had a constitutional obligation that called for respect for dignity and human life, as well as for a revival of the Ubuntu principle to establish restorative justice. The notion of restorative justice incorporates four healing aims in the sense that it seeks to redefine crime as wrongs, contraventions, or injuries done to another person. The objective was to repair by restoring human dignity to victims and offenders, their families, as well as the larger community; encourage offenders, victims, and the public to be directly involved in settling conflict and support the system objectives that guaranteed

offender participation and accountability of both victims and offenders; and making good by putting right what is wrong. In terms of the TRC process, restorative justice accordingly challenged South Africans to build on the Ubuntu worldview of humanity or humanness. It is consequently very apparent that Ubuntu played an outstanding role in encouraging restorative justice, not only to the victims of crimes, but also to the offenders, and the whole of South Africa (TRC Report 1998:125-131; Gade 2013:10-13). The Spirit of Ubuntu is always at work in every facet of humankind.

3.4.2 HIV and AIDS epidemic

South Africa and Africa today is faced with numerous social problems, including unemployment, poverty, crime, lack of health care, unequal wealth distribution, pollution, corruption, religious conflict, murder, rape, soil erosion, ethnic conflict, crime, climate change, racism, hunger, tuberculosis, domestic violence, malnutrition, homelessness, etc. Perhaps one major challenge in the nation today is the predominance of HIV and AIDS. According to a study conducted by the South African department of health, 26% of women are likely to be infected with HIV in 2017, compared to around 15% of men respectively.²⁷

Furthermore, South Africa accounts for a third of all new HIV infections in Southern Africa, and in 2018, there are 240,000 new HIV infections, and 71,000 South Africa died from AIDS-related infections. South Africa has the world's biggest antiretroviral treatment (ART) project. This was largely financed from the country's domestic resources in 2017, and the country was investing more than 1.54 billion dollars annually to run its HIV project. The success of South Africa's ART project is apparent in the increase in the national life expectancy from 56 years in 2010 to 63 years in 2018, respectively.²⁸

Similarly, South Africa is making good improvement to the joint United Nations project on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) 90-90-90 aims, particularly regarding testing and viral suppression. Perhaps, in 2018, 90% of populace infected with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) were aware of their status, of which 68% are on therapy and those diagnosed and undergoing therapy are about 87% viral suppression. This compares to 62% of the populace infected with HIV in South Africa on treatment and 54% viral suppression. However, the predominance of

²⁷ Be in the Know, (n.d.), *At a glance: HIV in South Africa*, viewed 30 May 2020, from <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/sub-saharan-africa/south-africa>.

²⁸ Avert, (n.d.), HIV and AIDS Statistics for South Africa, viewed 30 May 2020, from <https://www.avert.org/safricastates.html>. See also, UNAIDS: South Africa 2020 HIV/AIDS country factsheets (n.d.), viewed 20 June 2021, from <https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/southafrica>.

HIV appears to have stabilised, and may even be declining somewhat, which is believed to be largely due to safer sexual practices.²⁹

Considering the above statistics, the concept of Ubuntu is making its mark in conquering this dreaded disease (HIV and AIDS) both globally and locally. One of the ways South Africa is conquering (HIV) infections is that every two years, people from all over the world gather for the International Conference on HIV and AIDS where matters relating to this disease are deliberated. The meeting was held in the spirit of Ubuntu, which Mulaudzi (2007:108) expressed as follows: “Based on the emphasis ... on solidarity and cohesiveness as the key to combating the HIV and AIDS pandemic, I would regard *Ubuntu* to be a driving force behind the gathering of the global AIDS community in biannual meetings to share and discuss issues related to the pandemic”.

It has been argued that the stabilisation of HIV infections is a direct consequence of widespread awareness programmes which demand that people live more conscientiously. The motivation for this African ideology of humanness is motivated by the non-profit association called ‘Ubuntu Now’. It seeks to improve human interconnectivity by reducing ferocity through rape prevention programmes, supporting the healing of rape victims, and upholding gender equality³⁰. Over the years, Ubuntu Now joined with Sonke Gender Justice to sponsor social awareness surrounding HIV and AIDS. They also introduced a new partner, ‘Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Program’, and together formed a dynamic cooperation, which actively works to increase awareness on both the national and community level (DeLisle 2010).

Ubuntu, as a source of moral formation, can also assist individuals on an interpersonal and personal level to positively deal with this challenge. Humanness is the foremost moral value employed on the interpersonal level. The submission of Broodryk also speaks volumes as having respect for the human rights and lives of others would prompt an individual infected with HIV to live responsibly and perhaps not knowingly spread the disease to another person (2005: 33). I strongly believe that the Ubuntu worldview allows those affected by HIV and AIDS to accept their conditions and live responsibly. The Serenity Prayer is most relevant:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

²⁹ UNAIDS: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (n.d.), viewed 30 May 2020, from <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/08/unaids-joint--united-nations-programme-on-hiv/aids/>.

³⁰ Ubuntu Now (n.d.), viewed 29 May 2020, from <https://www.ubuntunow.org>.

*the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

It is interesting to note that those infected with HIV do not contemplate over their condition, but rather choose to live life to the full (Broodryk 2002:162). The infected person will continue to live a fulfilled life if practical guidelines surrounding the condition are always maintained in the spirit of Ubuntu.

3.4.3 Work: solidarity and creativity

In the sphere of work, individual creativity, solidarity of cooperation, and common ownership must go hand in hand as the Ubuntu ethos entails. There must be as little separation as possible between working life and family life. It is also noteworthy to mention that often migrant labour of all kinds is contrary to the spirit of Ubuntu; therefore, solidarity and creativity remain a priority in maintaining the moral value of every work ethic. Shutte (2001:160-161) argued that all work brings people together; it is consequently a natural space for the community to develop, and that is why it is such an important part of life both in a family, organisation, or corporate governance.

On a similar note, according to Shutte (1993a:124-128) in his book *Philosophy for Africa*, the spirit of Ubuntu solidarity necessitates cooperation between workers in the work process, common ownership of the means of production, communication between workers of different kinds, a connection between training for work and general education, and a connection between work life and family life. Solidarity is a criterion of personal growth about other persons in the sphere of work ethics and morality. On the other hand, Shutte (1993a:129-130) further claimed that creativity is one's relation to the impersonal aspect of work – the techniques, training, technology, material and products, and productivity. It connotes the human value of productive activity such as freedom and entertainment as the notion of working together in pleasure to achieve positive output. The concept of Ubuntu as a source of moral formation continued to dominate humanity in the workplace as a vision for a good society in the current South Africa.

It is in the spirit of Ubuntu and the solidarity of working together that South Africa was able, as the rest of the world, to face the out-break of the Covid-19 epidemic. The South African Government, by the directive of President Cyril Ramaphosa, flagged off a campaign called solidarity fund chaired by Gloria Serobe in the quest towards assisting South Africans cushions effects of the pandemic. Certainly not, in the history of this democratic nation

(South Africa), has the country been challenged by such a terrible condition; however, it is a condition that people will be able to overcome if they work together. Across the nation, many organisations presented helps, with the solidarity funding as a vehicle to facilitate the donation project. The Solidarity Fund project was aimed at, firstly, averting the spread of the disease by subsidiary processes to ‘flatten the curve’ and lesser the infection rates of the disease. Secondly, detecting and understanding the magnitude of the disease. Thirdly, caring for those in the medical care and hospital; and finally, supporting those whose lives have been interrupted by the epidemic.³¹ The Solidarity Fund was independently administered and works with other initiatives towards achievement of these objectives. Interestingly, through these funds, organisations and individuals able to funds the struggles by secured, tax-deduction donations. The Fund operates with the highest principles of communal authority and through a self-governing panel. All activities were testified transparently.

3.4.4 Business management

Ubuntu as an African worldview and resource for moral formation has a great deal to offer in business if considered. Adopting the Ubuntu worldview as an organisation’s management philosophy holds abundant advantage for the business to thrive. The primary characteristic of such a management practice is that it questions the traditional autocratic methodology. Broodryk (2005:24) articulates that in the latter, bosses assume that workers are lazy, and they find their work unfriendly and believe that they will never go the extra mile. They are also under the notion that workers do not take responsibility, they are not capable of thinking for themselves, and they cannot use their creativity. Management therefore has to do everything for them. Moreover, top-down management stylishness is practiced, and an open and healthy employer-employee relationship is normally absent. Such an attitude also has adverse effects on production.

Ubuntu management as a source of moral formation, on the other hand, stands in contrast to the above-mentioned philosophy. Broodryk (2005:32) references several exceptional potentials of the Ubuntu practice. He states that this philosophy is based on humanness. The practice is informal, and directors are central to and part of the work team. The Ubuntu spirit of togetherness, family-hood, warmth, openness, transparency, friendliness, solidarity, mutual respect, equality, and dignity is the order of the day.

³¹ The GivenGain Foundation (n.d.), *The Fund Raiser Project South Africa*, viewed 28 May 2020, from <https://www.givengain.com/cc/solidarity-fund-covid19/>. The donation towards the campaign fund was in solidarity to the fight against the coronavirus or Covid-19 pandemic.

Moreover, active listening is a norm, par excellence, benchmark, and decision-making occurs through an agreement where all staff members participate in the process. In such an environment, collaboration and cooperation substitutes individual competition. Mbigi (1997:5) underlines the advantages of an Ubuntu African worldview in management practices as follows: it facilitates the healing process by repairing polarised performance relationships; it creates a culture where differences are tolerated based on acceptance, respect, and dignity; it assists the business to concentrate on the social determinants of productivity; it brings the African heritage into the business which helps to incorporate culturally marginalised employees; and it supports the development of a concept of business cooperation which is necessary for a socially and racially divided society.

It is very interesting to note that many South African business organisations can guarantee the success of adopting the Ubuntu philosophical methodology, which focuses on participatory management. Prinsloo (2000:46-48), using the 'Eastern Highlands Tea Estates in Mpumalanga', provides an example. The difficulties that needed immediate attention included labour issues, violent strikes, industrial relations, the company's financial position, and low employee morale. Lovemore Mbigi, an advocate of the Ubuntu practices management, got committed to overcome these discouraging issues. He implemented various policies, among others, deliberations where all employees could air their feelings and opinions and make suggestions on how to resolve the company's difficulties. This was done in an essentially African way whereby those involved in the deliberations could react by singing, dancing, and chanting slogans.

In essence, Mbigi changed the management approach from one of confrontation to cooperation. To achieve this, he made room for the culture of the workers to play a vital role in the management of the company. This allowed the workers to go back to their African heritage and employ it to face and solve the challenges at work. As a result, not only did employee morale dramatically improve, but so did productivity. By changing the way that the company operated before to a cooperative and compassionate atmosphere, the financial situation of the company, as well as the employees' attitude, significantly improved, labour and industrial relations issues were resolved harmoniously, and violent strikes reduced to a bare minimum.

Shutte (2001: xiii) added that the leading models of corporate and decision-making structures tend to prevent people with an African background from being as productive and creative as they could be today. They are also subject to increasing criticism from European social scientists too. It could well be because they see a business enterprise as an extended

family. It is in the same manner as that which has proved so prosperous in a country like Japan, which would have been fruitful in developing a more all-inclusive corporative environment. This means that all the employees would feel at home and able to establish an identity for themselves as a member of the firm or company.

3.4.5 Political governance

Jones (1996:2) maintains that the government's primary objectives must be to ensure equity, egalitarianism, fairness, and justice for all. Political freedom should tie in with economic well-being. Furthermore, political leaders must attend to discourse relating to peaceful relations and understand the necessity of the continuance of peace structures. Additionally, they should regard integrity and propriety in financial discourse as of utmost importance. According to Mbigi (1997:28), South African political leaders can study a great deal from the lessons of traditional African politics, which finds expression through the worldview of Ubuntu. This model employs agreement rather than majority-vote in decisions and policymaking. Therefore, grassroots bottom-up involvement and communication are practiced. Besides that, it stresses the importance of freedom of expression, political accommodation, compromise, democracy, tolerance, and broad consultation.

On the other hand, "since the downfall of Apartheid in South Africa, Ubuntu is often mentioned in the political context to bring about a stronger sense of unity" (Manda 2009:2016). Broodryk (2006:25) states that it forms an integral part of the mission and vision of the South African Public Service, referred to as the *Batho Pele* principles. Furthermore, all welfare rules are based on Ubuntu's values. This African ethical concept also plays a distinctive role in various government departments like the Department of Education and the Department of Social Development. Moreover, it forms the national value base of this country's Constitution.

The goal of the South African Constitution is to heal past divisions; establish a society founded on democratic values, fundamental human rights, and social justice; and improve the quality of life of all citizens. The courts are responsible for enforcing the latter and are increasingly given momentum to apply Ubuntu through their judgements (Tshoose 2009:12). Nussbaum (2003:3) offers an exemplification in this regard. She holds that a decision of the Constitutional Court reflected the values of Ubuntu when it passed legislation making it illegal for health insurance companies to prohibit any person from obtaining health insurance, irrespective of whether that person might have a pre-existing health condition.

With the 1994 democratic elections, South Africa experienced a relatively peaceful political transition from the former apartheid rule to democracy. One significant element, which aided in this regard, is the “Madiba factor” (Mbigi 1997:24). The former State President, Nelson Mandela, adopted an exceptional political leadership technique, which modelled the way for his followers. According to Broodryk (2005:47), Mandela’s view of leadership was deeply influenced by observing how ethnic meetings in his early childhood were conducted, whereby everyone, including the chief, warrior, subject, sangoma, landowner, shopkeeper, farmer, or labourer who wanted to speak, did so. The methodology he employed was consequently a reflection of what he learned as a child from Ubuntu leadership practices. Moreover, throughout his period of governance, he followed democratic policies where all South Africans were allowed to participate and make known their opinions, regardless of cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, or social differences. In addition to that, it particularly emphasised the value of human dignity and freedom. Nussbaum (2009:104) claims that “Mandela is an icon embodying a profound capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness. He has demonstrated to the people of the world how their common humanity can be recognized, fought for, and then lived out”.

Some reflections from Nitha Ramnath’s³² 2020 article titled ‘Xenophobia chips away at the African notion of Ubuntu’ published in the Mail and Guardian newspaper is insightful here. Reflecting on the recurrent wave of xenophobic violence in South African since 2008 with foreigners often accused of taking jobs in the country, she stressed that:

These wise words and the concept of Ubuntu of Africans, however, stand in stark contrast to the bout of xenophobic attacks and violence seen in South Africa in recent years ... The assumption that these migrants have come to ‘take the jobs’ of South Africans has subjected many African nationals to xenophobic attacks, resulting in the deaths of 12 people in 2019. Thousands of migrants, mainly from Somalia, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, found themselves displaced and their shops looted and vandalized. Xenophobia is a threat to the idea of the African Renaissance — the ideals of harmony and diversity are in danger. It seems that South Africa soon forgot about its own struggles and attempts to overcome the injustices of the past and its many projects of social cohesion and inclusive nation-building, all premised on the idea of Ubuntu (Ramnath 2020: n.p.).

³² Nitha Ramnath is Deputy Director of Communication and Marketing at the University of the Free State. She writes in her personal capacity.

The South African government responded to these repeated outbreaks by launching a *national action plan*³³ to combat xenophobia, discrimination and racism, in order to caution the prevalent human right mistreatments rising from xenophobia, crime, intolerance, GBV and discrimination. Whether this action plan has been successful in curbing the ongoing violence on foreigners that takes place annually is a million-dollar question. The action plan, still, has obvious gaps and has failed to address the lack of accountability for xenophobic crimes. There has been practically no verdicts of the perpetrators of such violence as most of them have gotten away with crime thereby setting the stage for similar attacks in the near future.

South Africa has taught the world many lessons about forgiveness and reconciliation. Similarly, as violent, anti-immigrant rhetoric sweeps through Europe, the USA, and many other parts of the world, conceivably, this is another opportunity for the country to teach the world about hatred emerges and how it can be stopped.³⁴ The citizens need to be reminded of the principle of Ubuntu, such as the attitude of tolerance and benevolence towards foreigners or strangers before xenophobia, and living in harmony with their neighbours.

3.4.6 Health care

In the sphere of community health care ethics, there have been several studies that explore the role and influence of Ubuntu on how medical professionals engage with individual patients and local communities. Edwards, Makunga, Ngcobo and Dhlomo (2004) explored possible ways in which Ubuntu could be used to help promote a culturally appropriate methodology to mental health advancement and moral living. Beuster and Schwar (2005) emphasised the importance of culturally congruent health care in the community and the need to use culturally appropriate methodologies when evaluating the health needs of communities in general. Cultural-congruent care in the South African framework must incorporate the spirit of Ubuntu, particularly the elements of Ubuntu that encourage greater sensitivity of the needs and wants of others in the community. Ubuntu ethics promotes personal growth and

³³ The plan is based on the collective conviction of South Africans that, given that the societal ills of unfair discrimination and inequality are human-made, she has the means to completely eradicate these ills from state. The plan has been developed through a comprehensive consultation process involving government, the Chapter Nine Institutions and Civil Society, and is informed by general principles of universality, interdependence and indivisibility of human rights, participation and inclusion, progressive realisation, accountability, equality and non-discrimination.

³⁴ Also see M.L. Koenane, 2018, 'Ubuntu and philoxenia: Ubuntu and Christian worldviews as responses to xenophobia', *HTS Teologiese Studies/HTS Theological Studies*, 74(1), 1-8.

community development in the sphere of health care. The notion of health is central to human life in terms of human development and flourishing.

An ethic of Ubuntu makes health care professionals different from other professional bodies like the police, teachers, and ministers of religion because of their concern for the bodily and personal aspect of human life as these either facilitate or impede personal growth and community development. The ethics of Ubuntu shows itself through care as an essentially interpersonal transaction and the way by which healthcare is directed to the patient. It is very difficult to maintain Ubuntu in a huge Omni-competent hospital (central institutions, mostly psychiatric and geriatric) due to cultural pluralism. Although in the traditional healer's household, the patient is incorporated into the life and activity of the *igpira's* (the traditional healer's) in the beginning, and is thereby treated as a member of the family with the privilege and responsibilities inherent in such a position. The value and importance of work is stressed as 'no-one may be idle', therefore there is constant interaction between the patients and trainees making the whole atmosphere warm and friendly with much talking and joking (Shutte 2001:140-149).

The morality of the Ubuntu spirit is intrinsically related to human happiness and fulfilment which health tops it all. Health care should be allocated according to health care needs in the community, irrespective of factors such as race, religion, age, consciousness, provider-whim, ability to which one has responsibilities, and those upon whom others crucially rely (Shutte 2001:151-152). The community as a family can play an active role in the health care system by unavoidable responsibility, and in the regulation and distribution of health care. Also, through the expression of Ubuntu, government empowers the individual to control certain finances and administer a health care system that is equitably accessible for all. Health care is important for humanity to exist, and therefore must be given high priority in society.

There are huge disparities of wealth in South Africa today, and the crucial issue in health care is the equitable distribution of resources. Unless the different approaches to therapy and care of the African and European traditions can be seen as complementary and reconciled in a common health care, justice has no place or hope of being done. If, however, health and health care are not understood morally through the Ubuntu principle in a truly human way, as service of the whole person in every person, then the justice of the system will do no one any good.

Shutte acknowledges that health is a central requisite that allows individuals and communities to develop and flourish, and a precondition for acquiring personhood.

Subsequently, health must be central to an Ubuntu ethic as resource of moral formation, for the abilities, both physical, psychological and intellectual, are what makes one to live a complete human life, and health including the bodily, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of one's being (Shutte 2001:128). Therefore, Shutte recognises that an individual's health status depends to a certain degree "on where and how we live, the work we do and the food we eat" (2001:129); that people's health status depends on our living conditions, which are determined (not alone but to a high degree) by material (that is social-economic) conditions.

However, Shutte (2001:150) argues that Ubuntu ethics call for "equitable access for all member[s] of society, and a basic provision of health care that is adequate for normal need". He further pointed out that a workable government has the duty to ensure that there is sufficient professional health care to meet the people's reasonable need and the duty to create living conditions that will keep people as healthy as possible by, for example, securing a supply of clean water, safe sanitation, good diet, and proper housing (Shutte 2001:140-141). In the distribution of the means to ensure quality health care and access to health care systems, Ubuntu morality can be a fair guiding principle.

3.4.7 Nation-building

In the African worldview of Ubuntu, its moral values are not only relevant to the immediate family or community but relate to all, including outsiders. Ubuntu as the basis for moral formation can be shown to outsiders through several moral values such as openness, warmth, peace, tolerance, empathy, helpfulness, kindness, love, friendliness, sharing, compassion, generosity, respect, cohesion, solidarity, etc., and is resolutely deep-rooted in the acknowledgement of common humanity. Munyaka and Motlhabi (2009:75-76) reflected on the attitudes of Africans towards outsiders in preceding eras. According to these authors, such attitudes were categorised by benevolence and tolerance. The hosts made the outsiders feel welcome, and the latter was allowed to move freely and with ease through the community. The reference to the outsiders was made using the African terms *iidwendwe* (meaning foreigners, visitors, guests, or aliens) and *abahambi* (meaning sojourners). These words are meant to say, "You are welcome, we will help you and respect you". If the outsider was treated with friendliness and openness, he or she would be a good advertisement for the host community, and on arriving home, would speak positively about them and the good treatment that had been received.

Furthermore, through the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in mid-June to mid-July of that year, the African continent, more specifically South Africans, demonstrated that

they were keeping the same Ubuntu spirit or blaze alive, and in doing so, has become a global hero exemplary. South Africa had the privilege of hosting this almighty occasion, and it believed that the success thereof was largely due to the welcoming hospitality shown to the rest of the world. By receiving their dues, South Africans were worldwide commended for their efforts. An article, which appeared on the news website, Huffington Post, is living proof of this gratefulness of the Ubuntu spirit. Written by Shari Cohen (2010: n.p.), an American writer and international developmental worker in the public health sector, the article states that:

To say that I have been blown away at the hospitality South Africa has shown the rest of the world would be an understatement ... To me, *Ubuntu* is the acceptance of others as parts of the total of each of us. And that is exactly what I have experienced ... There is nary a South African citizen that I've met ... that hasn't gone out of their way to ... make me feel like I am home ... South Africans are drinking deeply from the cup of humanity that has been brought to their doorstep ... [D]uring this once-in-a-lifetime experience ... I've learned the moral value of *Ubuntu*... I just hope I have learned enough to bring back a little piece of *Ubuntu* to my homeland, where perhaps with a little caring and a little water, it will take root as naturally as it does here, in the cradle of civilization ... I think America has much to learn from Africa in general, in terms of living as a larger village; and as human beings who are all interconnected with each other, each of us affecting our brothers and sisters.

This shows how the spirit of Ubuntu can enable a community to display their true human self to outsiders, and in doing so, stimulate them on to the same. Moreover, as the proverb says, “practice makes perfect”. Therefore, the more the moral values of Ubuntu are practically lived out, the more it builds up the community and the members who do so. In the view of Broodryk (2006:3), it helps them to acquire vital life skills, which are necessary for overcoming obstacles and ultimately living a prosperous and happier life. This is particularly helpful in formerly divided societies, like the (South) Africa.

Although disunity and division are still prevalent in this country, the practical living of Ubuntu during the hosting of the World Cup gave South Africans a new sense of “social cohesion”. In an article written during this period, Zayd Minty (2010:6), Cape Town creative coordinator, shares his experience of the day of the opening game:

South Africa is undergoing a nation-changing experience with the hosting of the 2010 soccer World Cup. Patriotism was on full display – there are flags everywhere ... city streets were filled with a sea of people in the colours of the national team ... Crowds ... all colours, shades, ages, and sizes – blowing vuvuzelas at each other, laughing together. When Bafana Bafana scored the first goal for South Africa, the room I was in rose as one, screamed, and danced in victory. I imagine it was the same everywhere in the country ... Not since South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 have we experienced anything quite like this.

The practical living of the Ubuntu principle during the World Cup in South Africa inspired a new sense of solidarity amongst citizens – one that was reminiscently and intensely felt whenever they saw heard a vuvuzela; ‘yellow and green’; and whenever people, be it friends or foreigners, came together in celebration of their common humanity. This situation is urgently needed by other countries where true unity and reconciliation is absent. In a South African context, it needs to be practiced by all multi-cultural “rainbow nation” whose scars are still visible, and wounds inflicted by its shattering past are yet to heal.

This section carefully assessed nation-building as part of the sphere of Ubuntu and proved the enormous moral value of the worldview, especially for the people of South Africa. It has been seen how Ubuntu as a source of moral formation can be applied in everyday life, and just how it contributes to working for the good of this nation and its citizens. Yet, this is merely a glimpse of what this African worldview (Ubuntu spirit) has to offer.

Most significantly, South African scholar Ernst Conradie (2006:26-27) calls for the retrieval of the spirit of Ubuntu to address the sense of deep-rooted moral crisis in (South) Africa. He discussed that the vision of Ubuntu is expressed in at least three vital beliefs, namely: (1) the notion that a human is human through other human beings. This means that one's basic sense of identity is formed through one's belonging to a bigger community; (2) the idea of respecting the human dignity of others. This is based on one's sense of identity and dignity is determined by how others are treated; and (3) the call for solidarity within human communities. This means that those members of a local community who are experiencing difficult personal circumstances, plus those who have specific material needs, should be assisted by the others in the community. The Ubuntu spirit expressed in this form can help society to thrive.

3.4.8 Gender relation

The notion of African humanism or humanness, or more precisely Ubuntu, has a relationship to gender relation of personhood in African thought. The advocator's Ubuntu ethics of communitarianism such as Chikanda (1990), Makhudu (1993), Bujo (1998), Shutte (2001), Broodryk (2002), Ramose (2003, 2015), Murove (2004), and others, are founded in the traditional African worldview based on a core principle that "affirms one's humanity through recognition of an 'other' in his or her uniqueness and difference" (Eze 2010:190–191).

Metz (2007a:323), mentioning the significant characteristics of Ubuntu, states, "This maxim has descriptive senses to the effect that one's identity as a human being causally and even metaphysically depends on a community. It also has prescriptive senses to the effect that one ... morally should support the community in certain ways". In other words, the Ubuntu ethics of communitarianism endorses the understanding of a person as essentially relational and normative. The important aspect of this concept of Ubuntu or humanness is inarguably presented as gender-neutral that means it is equally incorporated by all people of the community, irrespective of their gender, in a network of mutual moral obligations related with the Ubuntu principle of solidarity, respect, empathy, loyalty, cooperation, consensual democracy and collective responsibility.

Also, the normative wherewithal of this gender-equality focus is the fact that many indigenous African languages, and specifically Bantu languages of SSA that have terms like Ubuntu, are said to be gender-related, which purportedly gives strength to the proclamation of gender-equality being entrenched in language and echoed in traditional African modes of cultures and thought. One could argue against the notion that there is neither homogeneousness nor agreement on the nature of personhood among African philosophers. Gyekye (1997), for example, submits a difference between radical and moderate communitarians and argues for a metaphysical, or what Ramose (2005) calls a 'derivative' or 'individualistic' notion of African personhood. In this discourse, reflecting on Gyekye's point, perhaps Ramose (2015:68) confidently opposes that such "concept of the person appears to be the exception to the rule that for African traditional thought a person is primarily a [environing] wholeness".

In a similar discourse, Matolino (2009:169) offers a very persuasive argument against the supposed differences between radical and modern communitarianism ethics, demonstrating that moderate communitarianism "takes moral worth seriously in describing the status of personhood to individuals". Nonetheless, endorsing the moderate communitarianism concept of the person remains normative. It must be acknowledged that,

although the gendered nature of personhood does not necessarily carry a negative meaning, it becomes problematical if taken in combination with the notion of the relational nature of personhood. In this case, the actual position of a person's relatedness and his/her place in a community necessarily depends on the underlying values and norms of the said community and its social and political structure. Women's capacity to create more labour-power through reproduction placed central importance on fertility and control of fertility, and ensured that formal feminine ideals reinforced the women's place in a male dominated society (Mager 1999; Shapera 1966). The control and appropriation of the productive and reproductive capacity of women were defining characteristics of these societies, and fundamentally entailed women's subordination to men.

The respect to persons was also gendered, and men, especially elders and husbands, were expected to be given a bigger "chunk of respect" (Ntuli 2000:33). As a result, the notion of African gender equality (in the sense of complementarity) seems to be a myth if it is founded on the theoretical understanding of a person as relational, and the actual relations are the ones that constitute a person in both metaphysical and normative senses. Perhaps, if a society is marked by clear gender inequality, then even though all persons are related it does not follow that all relationships are equal. Nevertheless, because some relationships are established by unequal power distribution, relatedness can be and seems to be ranked. Additionally, any attempts to affirm egalitarianism through a refusal of the essentially gendered nature of relational person's works against itself as it tends to conceal the actual injustice and inequality, and therefore stands in the way of a positive reconstruction of gender relationships in Africa and beyond.

One could further have argued that because of the assertion that gender-neutrality is often employed as a way of justifying the equality of the sexes (at least in a form of complementarity), thus engendering a moral formation of equal respect for persons, the incompatibility of the two assertions that personhood is related and that it is gender-neutral has negative implications for the assertions of gender equality or equity. However, it is important to assert that the African notion of personhood as engendering the moral formation of equal respect for persons (which is the logical consequence of the alleged gender-neutrality of personhood) is incompatible with the assertion that personhood is essentially gendered or relational.

This was recognised from the assertion that personhood is gendered, that is if their non-concrete essence of personhood forms the core of all persons and makes them persons equally, it follows that in a society that is based on gender inequality and a hierarchy, persons

are status-endowed: some are more ‘persons’ than others and are entitled to more respect. Consequently, on the view that personhood is gendered the different degrees of respect accorded to persons will often be a function of the gender category to which they belong. This may raise serious concerns about the possible solutions to the challenges of gender injustice and GBV in Africa today.

Oyowe’s (2013:221) article on ‘Personhood and social power in African thought’ maintains that the plausible theory of personhood should be able to explain why people intuitively believe that all persons are morally equal. This instinct is one to be uncontroversial, in the sense that despite the obvious differences among individuals it seems true that moral formation can affirm basic equality among persons. One could argue that the moral formation of personhood depends on facts about the philosophy of seniority and epistemic access, and the specifics of ritual incorporation and socialisation processes, which always referred to as gendered and social standing cannot sufficiently clarify what it is about persons that makes them equal morally since it takes these basic social differences among individuals to be constitutive of personhood. Each era holds diverse views about gender.

In a similar vein, according to Oyowe and Yurkivska (2014) in the article, ‘Can a communitarian model of African personhood be both relational and gender-neutral?’, personhood is not a non-concrete characteristic (like moral sense, rationality, or self-consciousness), but a characteristic of a corporate entity with a position and status within the background of social relations. Furthermore, “[O]ne’s personhood is neither comprehensible without reference to the system of relations, set of duties and obligations, nor does one have self-awareness without also recognizing at once one’s social roles and statuses as belonging to oneself” (2014:91). It is therefore equally incomprehensible without an ability to judge one’s conduct in terms of social norms and moral values and potentials of the community of people. To agree with this notion means that a person and his/her identity are socially built as they are necessarily gendered.

As Shutte noted, if human persons depend on others for their development existence, and fulfilment of their humanity, then personhood necessarily has gender relationships. Shutte (1993a:144) maintained that “here gender expresses the fact that otherness – and so difference – is a feature of the very human nature of human (which is to say bodily) persons. The fullness of human nature is not realized in any single human individual but only in the male and female couple”. Shutte’s assertion could be defined as moderate because, according to him, gender relations constitute only a part of what persons are, which would allow other

components to be absolute of it. Perhaps there are reasons to believe that the overall gendered nature of African personhood is essentially relational.

Musana (2018:27-28) claims that generally the African perspective can easily be lost when discussing gender in terms of roles and responsibilities based on social concepts which established on physiological and biological distinction with the consequent categories of 'man' and 'woman' having qualities that define their relations. In this case, much of the African view of society is male-controlled, whereby men are looked at as the main actors in matters of governance and administration. However, underneath this 'obvious' view is the fact that women are crucial factors of men's decisions since they (women) are frequently asked. Also, women in most cases are regarded as the holders of the secrets of life since they give birth and nurture people. They are therefore trusted with some of the most significant aspects of society where they act as custodians and transmitters of culture. In addition, men are considered the godparents of society. They are the holders of 'hard power' often exhibited in the duties and responsibilities as defined according to cultural norms. They are considered the 'owners' of most of the materials or properties. These they hold through the family, clan, and community as trustees; a responsibility they are anticipated to never betray since betrayal may carry a curse feared for its negative effect across generations.

Interesting to understand at this point is that those exercising 'muscle power' men are anticipated to be the defenders of the community in that structure, in that when duty calls, they are anticipated to display the capacity to handle and accomplish difficult tasks. Overall, it is an insult for a man to be called a 'feminine' since femininity implies 'easiness' and 'softness' in life, features that they (women) are anticipated to have to qualify to be women. Most traditional African societies differentiate and assign roles according to gender. Nevertheless, this does not pointer to social stratification, but rather, specialisation and complementarity, not necessarily in exclusive terms. This 'shared responsibility' (complementarity) leads to social stability. Refraining from crossing the lines of roles assigned to a particular gender is what ensures community cohesion and the avoidance of conflict arising from gender relations.

One may also argue that to establish moral judgement, gender relations must recognise the equality and complementarity of men and women in every scope of life. The work at home should be recognised as of equal importance to work outside it and should be given equal financial recompense. Ideally, it should not be necessary to support a simple but comfortable lifestyle for both parents to work outside the home when children are small. A person is the ultimate product of society, and in this process the family has an irreplaceable

role to play (Shutte 2001:69). One of the many facets of Ubuntu is the social responsibility of humanity or humanness. Nature and freedom are not opposed but inextricably linked to human nature. In the Ubuntu worldview, humans and nature are inseparable. Accordingly, nature should be dealt with in such a manner that it becomes and always remains a warm and friendly setting for humanity (Prinsloo 2000:42-43).

It is thus clear that human relation and interdependence for their shared continued existence fosters community development. For the inbuilt natural goal of any all-inclusive community and fulfilment of personal relations in every sphere of life to emerge, the effectiveness of gender equality or equity should be maintained. Gender difference is the necessary condition to produce persons and their development as persons. It is the root of human society and must be reflected in every sphere as the necessary condition of its humanity and the possibility of personal growth and community of its members. This will therefore assist the equality and complementarity of the different genders in every sphere of life to be realised (Shutte 2001:83).

Additionally, the equality and complementarity of genders could be evident in the family more than anywhere else; through relations to political arrangements; ways of working; the type of research people do in science; the sort of products people concentrate on; technology; and the kind of education people possess. In practice, this means that men and women have an equally important and complementary role in every sphere of social life. This will also be true of the family. The equal presence and activity within the home and family of both men and women will have far-reaching effects on the personal and sexual relationship between husband and wife and the personal development of children. The inequality of husband and wife will disappear, and this will change their sexual relationship to one between two people of equal power and allow true complementarity to flourish. The philosophy of the 'absent' father and the 'omnipresent' mother will also disappear to the benefit of the balanced growth of the child (Shutte 2001:84). Equal gender participation will exist in most professions such as the army and police, government, law education, healthcare, and so on. It is true to say that the devaluing and disempowering of the female is the greatest threat to all humanity in contemporary society. Overcoming this is consequently one of the most important goals of ethics.

It is important to state that Ubuntu is one of the central pillars of ethics and gender relations. In the African Ubuntu cultural paradigm, the concept of harmony is comprehensive in the sense that it envisages balance in terms of the totality of gender relations maintained between human beings and community dwellers. In as much as Ubuntu is expressed in

generosity, dignity, *buen vivir* (good living), humaneness, conviviality, and mutuality towards other people, it is also about treating people as a member of our clan, as one of us, deserving as much respect and care as our mother or cousin. Ubuntu principles offer fresh and potent ways to advance gender development practices in Africa, by drawing on indigenous ways of understanding the interconnectedness of people and by contemplating a person who is a member of the community, not merely an inanimate object.

In 2020, the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and GBV created a worldwide crisis. Families were forced to stay together at home. As a result, fathers and mothers had more time for their children, wards, and household. Homes starved of bonds were healed, mothers could listen more to their children's complaints, and fathers were more engaged in the upkeep of house chores and family relations. However, some families that were not used to living together experienced strain during the initial stage of lockdown but later adjusted and were able to pull through. Some jobs that are gender-sensitive were unable to thrive under these circumstances since people, irrespective of gender, were compelled to work from home. Yet many managed to cope and perform. Although a few gender-driven occupation outputs could not pull through in some areas due to constant distractions, such as children's noise, eating constantly, and spouse interruptions, among others. It takes a disciplined mind to manage and balance this sudden or new normal way of life sprung on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, the latter somehow fostered the Ubuntu spirit in families as highlighted above. More so in the work sector, the spirit of Ubuntu was not side-lined; workers, regardless of gender relations, articulated and performed their duties even during the various lockdown levels. There was more to the feeling of goodwill as people passionately checked on one another, especially those who fell ill. Colleagues were ready to assist without grudges or complaining peradventure any of the workers were sick. In addition, regardless of gender relations, people drew closer to God/their gods. Prayers and homages were said to God or the Supreme Being and the ancestral spirit for protection, provision, and life sustenance. Unexpectedly, Covid-19 helped to build and promote Ubuntu at home and in the religious sector.

Also, gender difference is a prerequisite to produce persons and their development as a person. Gender difference is however the root of human society and must be reflected in every sphere as the necessary condition of its humanity, and of the possibility of personal growth and community for its members. This will mean that the equality and complementarity of the different genders must be realised in every sphere of human life.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the prominent South African scholar Augustine Shutte's approach to Ubuntu as an etymology for moral formation in South Africa. The life, metaphysical approach to Ubuntu and moral formation, literary works, legacy, and contribution of this South African thinker to the African philosophy of Ubuntu was explored and analysed in this chapter. The different spheres of application of the Ubuntu worldview as understood by Shutte, particularly in African ethics (morality), apartheid (politics), and science as a source of moral formation in current Africa, was also discussed. Subsequently, the critical analysis of Shutte's contribution to an ethic of a new South Africa related issues and other scholars' understanding of the Ubuntu principle as the source of moral formation in South Africa; for example, during the TRC, political governance, HIV and AIDS epidemic, work (solidarity and creativity), business management, gender relations, health care, and nation-building. These themes were all explored.

Shutte believes that Ubuntu has something to offer in current Africa and that is why he is very uncritical of the notion of this African worldview. The Ubuntu principle or spirit is still and has been underway, and the nucleus is forming. It has at the same time attracted the interest of various organisations, corporations, and communities. In addition, such an initiative is a strong hope for the future. The researcher holds the view that different approaches Shutte applied in the context of ethics in the new South Africa reinforce the application of the Ubuntu principle in our daily life and practices as the potential source of moral formation in present-day Africa.

Having comprehensively unpacked Augustine Shutte's perspective of Ubuntu in this chapter, attention now shifts to Kwame Gyekye's philosophical approach to Ubuntu in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4:

KWAME GYEKYE'S PHILOSOPHY OF UBUNTU AS A SOURCE OF MORAL FORMATION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described Augustine Shutte's perspective on Ubuntu as the root of moral formation in present-day Africa. The themes discussed included the life, literary works, metaphysical approach to Ubuntu and moral formation, legacy, and contribution of this South African thinker to the African philosophy of Ubuntu. The chapter also presented different spheres of application of the Ubuntu worldview as espoused by Shutte in African ethics (morality), apartheid (politics), and science as the centre of moral formation in modern Africa and beyond. Moreover, attention was given to Shutte's contribution to an ethic for the new South Africa with Ubuntu as the foundation of moral formation. This was done by looking at the examples of the TRC, health care, political governance, HIV and AIDS epidemic, work (solidarity and creativity), business management, gender relations, and nation-building.

The present chapter provides an overview of Kwame Gyekye's philosophical approach to Ubuntu as the cause of moral formation. The chapter describes the life and work of this Ghanaian scholar and his conceptual contribution to the Ubuntu worldview. It further explain Gyekye's understanding of the Ubuntu worldview and other themes in the scope of contemporary Africa including African ethics or morality, the notion of person, the notion of personhood, and the notion of individualism in African moral theory. The chapter further evaluates Gyekye's approach to African philosophy (Ubuntu), and discusses the concept of the common good and community; African communitarianism; Gyekye's criticism; as well as view of rights and duties.

4.2 Kwame Gyekye: A Brief Description of His Life and Work

Professor Emeritus Kwame Gyekye (1939–2019) was a Ghanaian philosopher and significant personality in the development of contemporary African philosophy. During his academic career he held the positions of Professor of philosophy at the University of Ghana, and a

stopover lecturer of philosophy at the Pennsylvania University and African American studies at University of Temple. He was educated at Mfantsipim School. He studied first at the University of Ghana as an undergraduate, and then went to University of Harvard where he obtained his Ph.D. with a thesis on Greek and philosophy of Arabic. He began teaching at the University of Ghana in 1969 and held various administrative positions throughout his career, retiring in 2009. In 2018, he was acknowledged for his efforts in inspiring the global status of African philosophy with an Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah Genius Award. He received a Fellowship award from the Smithsonian Institution's Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and is a lifetime Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences. Gyekye was a significant figure in present-day African philosophy, known for his writing in Akan philosophy, African ethics (he wrote the "African Ethics" entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy), and African political philosophy.

Alasdair MacIntyre of Duke University commended Kwame Gyekye's book titled *Tradition and modernity: Philosophical reflections on the African experience* (1997: n.p.), quoted from the back cover praise of the book that "Gyekye makes wonderful illuminating contributions to the theoretical debate, while also having acute remarks to make their practical implications. Moreover, this book contains a penetrating discussion of African culture. It is a genuinely exciting achievement". In this book, Gyekye examined the postcolonial African experience from a viewpoint receptive to aspects of both traditional African cultures and a Western political paradigm and moral theory³⁵. Other various writings and contributions to African philosophy include the following:

- 1975: 'Philosophical relevance of Akan proverbs'. *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy*, 4(2). 45–53
- 1977: 'Akan language and the materialism thesis: a short essay on the relations between philosophy and language'. *Studies in Language, International Journal sponsored by the Foundation "Foundations of Language"*, 1(1), 237–244
- 1978: 'Akan concept of a person'. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 18(3), 277–287
- 1987: *An essay on African philosophical thought: The Akan conceptual scheme* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge) and 1995: revised edition (Temple University Press: Philadelphia)

³⁵ For more detailed reading, see University of Ghana, 2020, *Kwame Gyekye*, University of Ghana Alumni Relations Office, viewed 12 February 2020, from <https://ar.ug.edu.gh/kwame-gyekye>; and K. Gyekye, 1997, *Tradition and modernity: Philosophical reflections on the African experience* (back page of book).

In the book *An essay on African philosophical thought: The Akan conceptual scheme* (1987), Gyekye's main principle of a distinctly African philosophy rejects the notion that an African philosophy consists simply of the work of Africans writing on philosophy. He argues that the critical analyses of specific traditional African modes of interpretation are necessary to develop a distinctively African philosophy. Other books or writings include:

- 1988: *The unexamined life: Philosophy and the African experience*, Ghana Universities Press, Accra, Ghana
- 1991: 'Man as a moral subject: the perspective of an African philosophical anthropology', in J. van Nispens & D. Tiemersma (eds.), *The quest for man: The topicality of philosophical anthropology*, VanGorcum, Assen/Maastricht, Netherlands
- 1992: 'Person and Community in Akan Thought', in K. Wiredu & K. Gyekye (eds.), *Person and community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies I*, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington D.C.
- 1996. *African cultural values: an introduction*, Sankofa Publishing Accra, Ghana
- 2004. *Beyond Cultures: Perceiving a Common Humanity: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies, III* (Vol. 9), CRVP
- 2014. *Philosophy culture and vision: African perspectives: Selected essays*, Sub-Saharan Publishers, Accra, Ghana
- 2017. *We the people and the politics of inclusion*, Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, Accra, Ghana.

Other sources include:

- Agada, A., 2017, 'The apparent conflict of transcendentalism and immanentism in Kwame Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu's interpretation of the Akan concept of God', *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions*, 6(1), 23-38.
- Kalumba, K.M., 2020, 'A Defense of Kwame Gyekye's Moderate Communitarianism', *Philosophical Papers*, 49(1), 137-158.
- Neequaye, G.K., 2020, 'Ethical Thought of Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye II', in N. Wariboko & T. Falola (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of African Social Ethics* (pp. 423-435), Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

4.3 The Notion of African Ethics or Morality

The notion of African moral philosophy can be traced through a quest for the word ‘ethics’ in a few African languages. The basic moral formation and understanding of ethics or morality is highly contested. It is important to highlight that a considerable amount of SSA languages do not have a straight equivalent for the English words ‘ethics’ or ‘morality’. Below are some thought-provoking studies conducted by native people of several African language that encapsulate statements about a person’s ethics or morality as expressed in those languages. Included are two of the noticeable languages in Ghana, Akan (Gyekye’s native language) and Ewe, which is a different context to the Ubuntu principle but retains the same meaning, for example:³⁶

- a. When a speaker of the Akan language wants to say, “He has no morals”, or “He is immoral”, or “He is unethical”, “His conduct is unethical”, he/she would almost invariably say, “He has no *character*” (*Onni suban*).
- b. The statement, “He has no morals”, or “He is unethical”, is expressed by a speaker of the Ewe language as, *nonomo mele si o* (which means “He has no character”).
- c. In the Igbo language of Eastern Nigeria, the word *agwa*, meaning “character”, is used in such a statement as “he has no morals” (*onwe ghi ezi agwa*).
- d. In the Yoruba language and thought of Western Nigeria, the word *iwa* means both character and morality (it also means “being” or “nature”).
- e. In Shona of Zimbabwe, this language was spoken by a substantial majority of the people; the word *tsika* means “ethics” or “morality”. But when they want to say of a person that “He has no morals”, or “He is unethical”, they would often use the word *hunhu* which directly means “character”. Thus, *Haana hunhu* means “He has no character”, “He is not moral”, “and he is unethical”.
- f. In South Sotho, a language spoken widely in Lesotho and southern Zimbabwe (Matebeleland), there are no words that are the direct equivalents of ‘ethics’ or ‘morality’. Moreover, references to the moral or ethical life or behaviour are made using words that mean behaviour or character. Thus, moral statements such as “he has no morals” or “his actions are unethical” will be expressed by words such as *maemo* – which means character or behaviour: thus, *maemo a mabe* means “he has a bad

³⁶ For further details, see K. Gyekye, 2011, ‘African Ethics’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, viewed 19 January 2021, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/african-ethics>.

character”, “his behaviour (action) is unethical”. When a person behaves (or acts) in morally right ways, they would say “he has a good character”, using the words *lokileng* or *boitswaro*, both of which mean “good character” or “good behaviour” (Gyekye 2011 n.p.).

Consequently, the investigations into the moral languages of many African peoples or cultures specify that these word or expression means “character” used to refer ‘ethics’ or ‘morality’. The dissertations or declarations to moral formation incline about discourse ‘character’. Also, in “Islamic moral philosophy”, the word used for ‘ethics’, namely, *akhlaq*, means character. The implication here is that ‘ethics’ or ‘morality’ is conceived in position of character. It is remarkable to note that Greek term *ethike*, translated to English term ‘ethics’ means “character” (*ethos*). Whatever populace called ‘ethics’, Aristotle called “the study (or, science) of character”, *he ethike*. For the Greeks, as for Africans and the Arabs, the character of the person amount to utmost people’s belief systems and moral life (Gyekye 2011 n.p.).

4.4 Gyekye’s Conceptualisation of Ubuntu and Moral Formation

Gyekye (1992) in ‘Person and community’ challenges the opinion that in African beliefs, community confers personhood on the individual, and hence the individual’s identity is merely a replica of the community. He recognises this understanding with African philosophers John Mbiti (1970a), Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984), Augustine Shutte (1993a), as well as political socialist figures like Léopold Senghor of Senegal, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. The concept of a person will be discussed next.

4.4.1 Gyekye and the notion of a person

Gyekye’s understanding of a person comprises three different elements, namely: (1) the *okra* (the soul), (2) *sunsum* (spirit), and the (3) *nipadua* (body). The *okra* aspect is assumed to be given by God (*Onyame*) and supports the vocation of humankind (Wiredu 1983:120; Gyekye 1995:85). Subsequently, God is conceived of as good, and human purpose as what comes from God is good for humanity (Gyekye 1995:116). It is the carrier of life; consequently, Kwasi Wiredu and Gyekye both emphasise that the absence of *okra* in the human being leads to death, and the presence thereof is a human being’s assurance of life (Wiredu 1983:120; Gyekye 1995:86). The *okra*, which is assumed to be eternal, is also capable of reincarnating (Gyekye 1995:98).

The *sunsum* is assumed to be the basis of one's character and, like the *okra*, is assumed to come from God. The *nipadua* is the significant constituent of the person and is unpreserved after death, as Gyekye's understanding of the three elements of a person has not been accepted by all Akan philosophers. Other philosophers among the demonstrators of Kwame Gyekye's understanding are Kwasi Wiredu and Safro Kwame. They reject Gyekye's stance that the *okra* and *sunsum* are physical (Majeed 2017:28).

Agreeing with these philosophers, the two elements are relatively pseudo-physical (Wiredu 1983:120). This means that the elements have near physical properties and cannot, therefore, be purely spiritual as understood by Gyekye. Hitherto, Gyekye's position is acknowledged by Majeed (2017:25-28). Therefore, the notion of a person is what it is for one to be a person, or what it takes to be a person is possessed by all human beings. Thus far, as one is "born of a human seed, one is anticipated to possess all" (Menkiti 1984:172). Furthermore, to be described as a person in this sense is just satisfactory to be a human being. In the Akan language, a person or human being is referred to as *odasani* or *onipa*.

Gyekye argues that the person is conceived as an exceptional individual as in the maxim which states: an "antelope's soul is one, duiker's another", such that everyone is self-complete, and the reality of the person cannot be copied and later to that of the community. He further maintains that the individual is acknowledged by the people that live in a community and are ontologically complete, as the aphorism says: "When a person descends from heaven, he or she descends into human society". Therefore, a person's abilities are not sufficient for survival, so that community is necessary for the survival of the individual, as articulated in the proverb: "A person is not a palm tree that he or she should be self-sufficient" (Gyekye 1997:39).

It is erroneous to hold that African philosophy refutes the individual, but instead, the individual is an integrally valued child of God, complicatedly juxtaposed into a network of human relationships. He cites a Ghanaian artist who wrote that "we are linked together like a chain; we are linked in life, we are linked in death; persons who share a common blood relation never break away from one another" (Gyekye 1997:40). This is the moral formation of a person as perceived in the African philosophy of Ubuntu.

4.4.2 The notion of personhood in Gyekye's philosophy

The notion of personhood, according to Gyekye, is understood in moral expressions in Akan philosophy, in that someone is considered as a "person if she has a disposition which is seen by the community as largely moral or ethical" (Gyekye 1992:110). Therefore, such a person

is believed to be a base of goodness to the community by means of the person's relations or interactions with other members of the community and his or her general choice of actions in life. The reason for sharing Gyekye's assessment is because a person is not expected to be morally perfect as human beings are imperfect (Majeed 2017:29).

In the same view as the Akan language,³⁷ it is often said “*nfomso bata nipa ho*” (“the human being is disposed to a fault”). This does not mean in the Akan philosophy that the human's capacity to act immorally is solely ascribed to a lack of knowledge or bad judgement. This does not mean at all, as supported by Socrates, that a person only does what he or she knows to be moral. What seems to be the case is that intermittently fortuitous aspects (*akwanhyia*), moral or ethical temptations and problems at trying times (*nshwε*), and impotence of the will are thought to persuade even the most upright people's acts immorally. These reasons, nevertheless, do not change the general view about such humans as someone whose identity is determined by the propensity to act morally (rightly). This individual is virtually a ‘good person’ (*nipa pa*) (Majeed 2017:29).

Personhood as the notion of moral formation to a large extent juxtaposes the individual within the community. Therefore, the one defined as a ‘person does not act with total disregard for the well-being of the community’. Subsequently, at the human level, moral formation is not something that an individual alone can bring about without other humans. In a similar vein, social relationships are critical to the question of moral formation. This means that, to a larger degree, and in support of Gyekye, personhood is achieved based on how one relates to members of one's community. Klaasen (2017a:29-38) related this approach to the role of personhood; in development in the African context, he expressed the concept of personhood and personal responsibility for more effective development as the “African notion of a person embedded with the ontological and epistemic community and marked by various phenomena that impact the individual and community”. He identifies three influential theologians/thinkers that proffer distinguished features of personhood within the African spectrum, namely: Ifeanyi Menkiti – with his concept of person development termed ‘communitarianism’; Kwame Gyekye – with his concept of person development termed ‘interactionist’; and Archbishop Desmond Tutu – with his concept of person development termed ‘interdependence’. The community significantly influences personhood as there is no single understanding of African development; however, perhaps there is a theme that permeates the different notions of personhood. Furthermore, personhood in development is

³⁷ Also see, C. Barnes, 2016, ‘The social nature of individual self-identity: Akan and narrative conceptions of personhood’, *Comparative Philosophy*, 7(1), 1-19.

viewed from the perspective of the type of relationships the self has with God, with others, and with the rest of the creation.

Klaasen (2019:1-4) proposes that personhood as the root of personal responsibility forms the point of convergence for perceived opposites such as being and doing, individual and community, and receiver and giver. The importance of themes such as reciprocity, perichoresis, creation and vocation as found in relational theology form the basis of the contribution of theology to community development.

Behrens (2013:105), on the other hand, opines that “there is an African conception of personhood that is not only distinct from Western notions but is also foundational and characteristic of African philosophical thought”. This concept is distinct from what one usually finds in the Western parts of the world. It is therefore anticipated that Metz’s assessment of the literature in African ethics indicates that “this is probably the dominant interpretation of African ethics” (2007a:331). Furthermore, African scholars (Gyekye 1992:102; Gyekye 1997:49; Mbigi 2005:75; Wiredu 2008:336) emphasise that the supreme approach to communitarianism is through the concept of personhood. Moreover, prominent scholars of African ethics hold that ideology that personhood necessitates moral formation or ethical theory (Van Niekerk 2007; 2013; Molefe 2017a).

For instance, Shutte (2001:30) contends that “the moral life is seen as a process of personal growth ... Our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human. And this means entering more and more deeply into the community with others. So, although the goal is personal fulfilment, selfishness is excluded”. The basic goal of morality is for an instrument to be fully human, which is understood in terms of personal development. Furthermore, a personal fulfilment approach to moral formation proposes the perfection of an instrument as the proper objectives of morality (Van Niekerk 2007).

On the other hand, in the expression of personhood, one is anticipated to go beyond just being an animal by developing moral characters inspired by moral virtue (Molefe 2013). Or, in the distinguished arguments of Menkiti (1984:172-173), “[F]or personhood is something which has to be achieved, and is not given simply because one is born of human seed” or “As far as African societies are concerned, personhood is something at which individuals could fail, at which they could be competent or ineffective, better or worse ... [so the goal is to convert] what was initially biologically given ... to attain social self-hood, that is, become a person with all the inbuilt excellences implied by the term”. Menkiti further notes the moral formation of personhood by stating that:

The various societies found in traditional Africa routinely accept this fact that personhood is the sort of thing which has to be attained, and is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one's stations. It is the carrying out of these obligations that transforms one from the it-status of early childhood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the person-status of later years, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense—an ethical maturity without which personhood is conceived as eluding one (1984:176).

Furthermore, the term *person* is used ethically to refer to a human being that is characterised by moral excellence or moral virtue (Wiredu 2009; Behrens 2013; Molefe 2020). This notion of personhood consequently represents a moral identity or even status that a moral tool accomplishes as his or her character demonstrates moral virtues, becoming a genuinely human life. If personhood refers to what the representative accomplishes, then this ethical or moral term is blatantly individualistic; the objective is achieving something in the individual, his or her humanity, or some facet of it (Metz 2007a:330-331). The individualistic feature of this moral term occurs to African thinkers, but they do not emphasise it largely because they are engrossed by a misunderstanding of communitarianism (Gyekye 1997; Masolo 2004). Although in this assessment, scholars do not notice the individualist concept of this ethical term of personhood.

It may be argued that one is expected to perfect his/her own humanity in a way that he/she is not anticipated to do for another. The objective of morality is not the community itself, but the individual. Entering the community is a means to achieve the objective of the self, which is accomplishment. It is for this reason that Jason van Niekerk thinks that this ethical term solidifies African ethics or morality to be “autocentric” insofar as it is about the self (auto), centring all efforts to perfect itself by engaging with others positively in relationships (2007; 2013). One can partially understand this concept by the characteristics of the ethical term of personhood *qua* self-fulfilment of moral theory by philosophising about it.

4.5 The Notion of Individualism in African Moral Theory

The concept of “individualism” refers to those moral theories that eventually necessitate moral formation to some properties essential in an individual like well-being, soul, and rights.

The most influential moral philosophers in African ideology are Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye. Fascinatingly, these thinkers supported humanism (Molefe 2017b:49). *Humanism* is a meta-ethical concept about the principle of human properties and moral possessions (Wiredu 1992; Gyekye 1995). To validate humanism, Wiredu (1992:194) prays the Akan aphorism: “*onipa na ohia*”, which he reads as: “all human value derives from human interests”. In another place, he opines that “the first axiom of all Akan axiological thinking is that man or woman is the measure of all value” (1996:65). To clearly understand, Wiredu’s moral theory is practically individualistic. And to support humanism as a meta-ethical theory and to postulate human interests or wellness as the basic moral standard resolves the question that Wiredu’s moral theory is broadly individualistic in principle.

In a similar tone, Gyekye’s moral theory is humanistic, which suggests that he understands morality as a human property since he rules out God in some sense from morality (Gyekye 2011). Gyekye (2004:41) explicitly mentioned that “all other values are reducible ultimately to the value of well-being ... all things are valuable insofar as they enhance ... well-being ... as a master value”. Therefore, Gyekye, like Wiredu, based his moral theory on the individualistic property of well-being which he called ‘the master value’. It is extraordinary to see two influential moral thinkers who support a humanistic meta-ethics that locates morality in some human property. Also, Akan morality, as represented by these two significant African philosophers, is also individualistic, as it understands morality as human belonging and well-being.

Additionally, it is supposed that individualism will only importantly be a distinguishing factor of humanistic meta-ethics, but the case will be different for African moral scholars who support a religiously founded moral formation. Nevertheless, even prominent philosophers and theologians who take a religious orientation to African ethics equally appear to endorse individuality. Examples of prominent theologians in the African tradition include Augustine Shutte, Godfrey Onah, Laurenti Magesa, and Benezet Bujo, among others. All of them understood morality as some fundamental vivacity and belonging of life. Magesa (1997:81) maintains that the sole purpose of ethics is to “enhance the life force of the human person and the society” or “the sole purpose of existence ... is to seek life” (p. 52). Bujo (2001:88) opined that “the main goal of African ethics is life itself ... The life which issues from God becomes a task for all human beings ...”

Similarly, the discourse of philosophical doctrine is reverberated with Placide Tempels’ research of African metaphysics, which is understood from the possessions of life. Tempels (1959: 30, 32) argues that Bantu people’s “... purpose is to acquire life, strength or

vital force ... Each being has been endowed by God with a certain force, capable of strengthening the vital energy of the strongest being of all creation: man ...” (Shutte 2001:13). It is the individuals’ relation to this individualistic belonging of life that becomes the principal centre of morality. Gyekye’s conceptualisation of philosophy takes a normative edge insofar as it requires people to encourage individual well-being, but these three religious thinkers may be understood to be supporting a personal fulfilment approach to Ubuntu ethics, which requires a means to develop or preserve their life by manner of achieving their charismas (Bujo 2001:88; Shutte 2001:14).

There are secular and religious approaches to ethics or morality that tend to take individualism as a symbol of moral formation in an African tradition. For this reason Metz (2007a:333) indicates that Western moral understandings are perceived as “individualistic” and African ones as “communitarian”. Conceivably, it could be strange to argue that the most common hypothetical understandings of Ubuntu ideology implies that for African moral formation individualism is considered as an edge within which to articulate morality. Moreover, diverse understandings of the morality of Ubuntu include the ideology that moral values originally recline not in the individual, perhaps in relations between individuals. The difference here is similar to that between essentialism and individualism in the environmental ethics. One could therefore morally argue that by valuing something about animals as they are in confinement (issue of a life, capability for desire), on the other hand, or as being adherents of certain groups (ecosystems, species), on the other. Likewise, one could as well morally evaluate something about people as they are in themselves, or as being part of, or at least proficient of certain relations.

Metz’s assertion is a result of people being less careful of moral theorisation and consequently disposed to characterise communitarianism in less than perspicuous terms and as less reasonable (Masolo 2004:493). Even the *prima facie* proof raises a critical question of these theories of communitarian as profoundly individualistic. The resolution of these theories is to describe pertinent and persistent questions, perhaps to reveal the individualism that characterises African moral thought. Another theologian, Godfrey Onah, opined that:

At the center of traditional African morality is human life. Africans have a sacred reverence for life ... To protect and nurture their lives, all human beings are inserted within a given community ... The promotion of life is therefore, the determinant principle of African traditional morality and this promotion is guaranteed only in the

community. Living harmoniously within a community is therefore a moral obligation ordained by God for the promotion of life (Cited in Metz 2007a:329).

Onah further submits that to secure, nurture, or promote the human community is often critical by taking life as the elementary moral good (individualism). The objective of ethics and moral formation is to promote life, but that objective can only be well-defined or assured by the community. Henceforth, relationships in ethical or moral approaches are believed to be the greatest means to achieve the moral goals or virtues entailed by individualism. One can only understand the moral good or virtue by relationships or interaction with others as the essential characteristic of promoting individual morality. It is this element of relationships as instrumentally good that is critical in accounting for the communitarian position of African ethics or morality.

4.6. Kwame Gyekye and African Communitarianism

The importance of community in the moral formation of a person in African thinking is highly diverse, to the extent that some philosophers attempt to approach the concept from a non-communitarian perspective. They eventually address the role of the community in the creation of the individual. The archaeological background could possibly be discovered in Placide Tempels whose belief is basically communitarian. He sees the individual as chiefly in ontological relationships with his/her community. “The living ‘muntu’ is in a relation of being to being with God, with his clan brethren, with his family and with his descendants. He is in a similar ontological relationship with his patrimony, His land with all that it contains or produces, with all that grows or lives on it” (Tempels 1959:66).

This was an exciting form of communitarianism that was supported by Mbiti, but not by Gyekye’s moderate communitarianism. The ontological relations with other things and beings involve moral achievement and moral worthiness as the process of moral formation. For one to be looked at as a person, one ought to display certain fulfilment or moral worth. “The word ‘muntu’ inherently includes the notion of plenitude or excellence. And thus, the Baluba will say of ‘ke muntu po’, ‘this is not a muntu’, of a man who behaves unworthily’ (Tempels 1959:67).

Respectively, Tempels claims that the Bantu cannot see the individual as a lonely being. The Bantu is not even enough to portray the individual as a social being. However, the individual is perceived as a vibrant force involved in friendly correlation with other forces. “He knows himself to be a vital force, even now influencing some forces and being

predisposed by others; Human beings are more apart from the ontological pyramid of the communication of forces and have no existence in the moral formation of the Bantu philosophy” (Tempels 1959:69). Therefore, Tempels’ moral formation of the person undoubtedly exhibits that personhood is something that is solely established by one’s relationships with his/her community, and these relationships should demonstrate some form of moral excellence and moral worth.

John Mbiti, on the other hand, took Tempels’ verdict further with his assessment of the inseparability of the individual from the community. Didier Kaphagawani in a rather contemptuous description of Mbiti’s efforts notes: “[A]s is well known, Mbiti excelled as one of Tempels’s chief disciples. Like Tempels, Mbiti too was greatly driven by the zeal to divulge another way in which he believed African modes of thought to be characteristically distinct from Western counterparts” (Kaphagawani 2000:72).

As for Mbiti, the vividness of the African view lay in its interpretation that the individual’s identity and existence are intertwined with the existence and reality of the community. Mbiti thinks that the individual cannot stand-alone and exist outside of his/her community. He lectures that the individual owes his/her way of life to his/her community, comprising past and present generations. The individual is inseparable from his/her community and is part of the whole. The community must therefore make or produce the individual, for an individual depends on the communal assembly.

Therefore, the physical birth is not enough as the child must go through rituals of amalgamation so that he/she becomes completely integrated into the entire society (Mbiti 1970a:141). It is through this process that an individual comes to be conscious of “his duties, his being, his responsibilities and privileges towards other people” (Mbiti 1970a:141). These ‘other people’ are fellow members of his/her community with whom he/she shares the same fate. Fantastically, whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only express: “I am because we are and since we are, therefore, I am”. This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of humanity (Ubuntu) (Mbiti 1970a:141). Consequently, the notion of an individual’s moral identity arises from this concept, firstly, as the individual’s existence is certain to the reality of his/her community; secondly, the individual is produced by the community, and his/her successful integration into that community depends on the rituals of integration being performed on his/her throughout life and beyond; and thirdly, the individual and the community’s providence are interwoven.

Gyekye in his account of *moderate* communitarianism criticises Mbiti and Menkiti's form of communitarianism as *radical and philosophically indefensible*. He accused them of overemphasising the importance and value of community in the knowledge of personhood in Africa. Gyekye is of the view that full personhood is only accomplished when one is older and has been a member of society for a long time. Gyekye asserts that the expressions 'full person' and 'more of a person' are inexplicable and disjointed (1997:39). Gyekye repeats that Menkiti does not identify those distinctions that enable the older person to be more of a person than the younger person. Gyekye contends that if it is correct that personhood is contingent on age and the fulfilment of moral righteousness, then it promotes the problematic notion that Menkiti proposed. Consequently, the trouble is in seeing elderly people as essentially moral, or as necessarily having the character and ability to practice moral virtues pleasingly. Aimed at elderly people, many are known to be stingy, heartless, and immoral, and their lives do not replicate any moral merit. In terms of the moral formation of personhood, such elderly people may not qualify as persons (Gyekye 1997:49).

Gyekye found Mbiti and Menkiti's account of communitarianism problematic, particularly because it does not distinguish individual *freedom*. According to Matolino (2008:77), Gyekye asserts that even though an individual is a social being, he/she also has other things in mind comprising qualities such as rationality, virtue, and the ability to make individual decisions. He maintains that if these qualities play any substantial title role in an individual's life, like making important decisions and goal setting, then it cannot be said that an individual is absolutely well-defined by the social assemblies. He acknowledges that many people's goals are set by the community; perhaps it is still possible for individuals to make their own decisions and choices on what goals to follow and what to quit or abandon. In this regard, Gyekye (1997:55-56) contends that:

In the light of the autonomous or near-autonomous character of its activities, the communitarian identity cannot be held as a fettered identity, responding robotically to the ways and demands of the communal structure. That structure is never to be conceived as reducing a person to intellectual or rational inactivity, servility, and docility. Even though the communitarian self is not detached from its communal features and the individual is fully embedded or implicated in the life of her community, the self nevertheless, by or by exploiting, what I have referred to as its 'mental feature' can from time to time take a distanced view of its communal values and practices and reassess or revise them.

Gyekye's argument appears to be substantial because individual freedom is essential for decision making for the moral development of the community as well as the person at large. More significantly, Bell (2002:64) agrees with Gyekye when he argues that to withstand the moral value of the significant community does not automatically refute an individual of his/her own distinctiveness, his/her potential creative role in a community, nor does it liberate him/her of personal obligation for their activities toward the whole community. It is also clear that as cross-cultural dynamics thrive, new moral values replace older ones, therefore the African notion of the community must be revised considering present realisms. Through this perspective, Bell (2002:65) recommends that the community still has a well-thought-of cosmos in the knowledge of the individual in Africa; it must provide accommodations to the real forces of cross-cultural issues brought by acculturation and globalisation in the modern order in Africa.

Bujo (1998:97) supports that the *ethical or moral responsibility* and *freedom* of the individual within the community cannot be articulated more vehemently. Again, the mutual relationship between the individual and the community must be emphasised. In terms of the notion of interaction philosophy, an individual is not able to live outside the community, and then the same community must be keen to encourage and support the concern of the individual. The tribe (community) therefore must do everything to support each one to have abundant life.

Ironically, Gyekye's reduction of Mbiti and Menkiti's account of communitarianism is questionable; he acknowledged the endorsement of Menkiti's version centred on moral formation as pleasing to the communitarian interpretation of the individual. He fits his politeness to the interpretation of the individual that exists among the Akan people. Matolino (2008:77) highlights that Gyekye emphasises that the Akan philosophical interpretation of the individual, which is communalistic, would categorise someone who chooses an isolated lifestyle as a non-person. An individual who displays a morally inexcusable way of life is also registered as a non-person. He utters that for the communitarian; personhood is constructed through moral formation and is not just passed onto the individual.

Matolino (2008:77) claims that for Gyekye, the moral formation of personhood is given real countenance by the Akan people, particularly when put to rest a deceased person. The sorrow revealed in bereavement of the deceased individual depends on his/her moral behaviour. If a person displayed a moral lifestyle, then he/she is properly grieved despite their status. This simply shows that in the traditional African culture one's moral standard is determined by one's relationship with the whole with community.

Gyekye in his account of *moderate communitarianism* understands the individual as a central *communal being*, completely rooted in a framework of *social relationships*. Basically, for him, a community symbolises particular networks and the social setting categorised by the cultural way of life. Basically, sharing as an overall way of life involves the acknowledgement and reality of common obligations, roles, moral values, and meanings or understandings of life (Gyekye 1997:43). Senghor (1964:28) also asserts that Negro-African culture is collectivist, or more exactly, communal, because it is a communion of souls rather than a collection of individuals. This simply means that the individual is pragmatic, understood, and perceived as part and parcel of the community.

Furthermore, Gyekye's communitarianism understands the community as realism and not as an ordinary connotation of individuals. A community in the framework of communitarianism is understood as an assembly of individuals related by inter-relational connections, which are not essentially living, who consider themselves chiefly as adherents of an assembly, and who share common moral values, interests, and goals (1997:43). Gyekye maintains that the inter-relational connections that exist among individuals need not be living for a community to be formed. Remarkably, this dissimilarity divorces Gyekye from Menkiti and Mbiti. Accordingly, Gyekye contends for a notion of a person that is different from Mbiti and Menkiti. In addition, from his understanding of the cultural traditions and Akan language (Gyekye 1997:40), Gyekye further asserts that certain adages exist in his language which clearly shows that it is accurate to recognise and regard the individual as a unit that exists on his/her own who is responsible for whatever happens to him/her in his/her own life. These are some of the maxims cited by Gyekye from his Akan language that show the individuality of each member of the African community:

- Life is as you make it yourself.
- It is by an individual effort that people can struggle for their heads.
- Life is war.
- The person who helps you to carry your load does not develop a hump.
- One does not fan the hot food that another may eat.
- Nobody cracks palm kernels with his or her teeth for another.
- The lizard does not eat pepper for the frog to sweat, and
- The clan is like a cluster of trees which when seen from afar appears huddled together but would be seen to stand individually when closely approached (Gyekye 1997:40-41).

These maxims specify that individual effort is acknowledged in the African system of things, and to consider the community as the solitary guide of the individual wholly distorts the thoughtfulness of a person. Okolo suggested the same conviction as Gyekye when he says that the position of the person as an individual unit is acknowledged in African philosophy (Ubuntu); and the resilient person has somewhere a twofold position, that is, the exclusive and non-duplicable, and the other 'one as a being in relation to others'. One of the purest ways the African institutes this philosophy of identity, discreteness, and uniqueness is through the name. African names are not just ordinary brands of dissimilarity to be distinguished (2003:215). Interestingly, what Okolo proclaims at this point is that names in Africa echo superior significances about a particular individual. A name in Africa, for instance, can direct the misfortunes or fortunes of the family or can describe the conditions that frame the birth of that person.

In various writings about the Igbo people of Nigeria, Ezekwonna (2005) claims that people can self-confidently dialogue about personal names and behaviour as ways of identifying individual identity in the African-Igbo philosophy of existence. It is noteworthy to mention that Igbo names have meaning, and each name is very personal. A name like 'Chukwuma' (God knows) remains vague to a person and does not stop to exist in the community. According to Ezekwonna (2005:75), a name is the first mark of individual identity in African communities, and it is infrequent to dialogue with someone without a name that has meaning among Africans. Bujo adds that there is dissimilarity between the names given to a child in traditional African culture and in the Western sense where names are communicated from father to son. This means that every child has his/her name which is given according to their conditions at birth. The name given to a person describes him/her, and distinguishes them as a historical creature in the community (Bujo 2001:147).

The principle of Gyekye's communitarianism lies in the notion of a *community of mutuality*. Gyekye (1997:42) upholds that a community, whether it is a communal-cultural community or a multi-cultural community, is agreed as a group of persons interrelated by relational connections who, among others, share moral values, interests, and common goals. Therefore, such a community Gyekye calls a 'community of mutuality'. The individual members of the kind of community are understood as fundamentally communal beings and never as lonely individuals.

Gyekye also opined that the participation of an inclusive way of life is a significant feature of a cultural community that differentiates it from an ordinary association of individuals who are held together and continued contractually (1997:42). This necessitates

that if an individual takes a common way of life they will be recognised as one community with a mutual way of life. Gyekye (1997:144) maintains that since there are various legitimate fundamentals of culture apart from language, it should be possible for people to partake in any aspect of a culture without a communal language. Similarly, the question of the common good, notwithstanding of communal language, cannot be disconnected from the notion of the community because as a member of the community, the individual would need to have security, shelter, food, goodwill, and self-respect.

Gyekye suggests the *principle of reciprocity* in his account of moderate communitarianism. He asserts that the communitarian political and moral philosophy adjudicates the community as a vital human good; promotes a life lived in unity and fosters collaboration with others; encourages a life of communal reflection and interdependence; a life in which one dividend is the destiny of the individual's potential. As for Gyekye (1997:76), this kind of life, that is the life of communal reflection, interdependence and support, is achievable and satisfying. Koenane (2014:181) concurs when he argues that the idea of lack was therefore taken care of because wealth was considered in relation to the ability of people to check that their neighbours were healthy and possessed cattle. Koenane (2014:183) postulates that the Africa communitarian viewpoint was predominantly a perspective of well-being, and being kind to others and allowing them to partake in one's prosperity was never an issue in rural African communities. From this one can see that in some communitarian societies members could fully rely and depend on each other for the betterment of their lives and that of the whole society.

Also, for Gyekye (1997:76), the notion of mutuality that is based on relational influences could be interconnected: “[M]embers of the community are expected to show concern for the well-being of one another, to do what they can to advance the common good and generally to participate in the community life”. By this concept, Gyekye buttresses the understanding that in a communitarian society individuals are anticipated to live together and support each other in times of need, by doing so the community will be recognised as one.

An additional characteristic that is significant to Gyekye's moderate communitarianism, and that discriminates him from Menkiti, is the *idea of rights*. For Gyekye, individuals should be permitted to practice their rights in a secluded environment. Gyekye (1997:65) submits that “individual rights to expression that are strictly private may not be disallowed, unless is overpowering proof that such expressions can, or do, affect innocent members of the society”.

Furthermore, Gyekye reasons that if the individual that should practice their rights in the isolated terrain, then it means he/she is recognising that the welfare and firmness of the society takes primacy and should not be bothered by *individual rights*. The feature of *responsibility* as a principle of morality buttresses Gyekye's communitarianism. In his determination to show the significance of responsibility as communicated in his philosophy of communitarian principles, he inscribes that "by responsibility, I mean a caring attitude or conduct that one feels one ought to adopt concerning the well-being of another person or other persons" (Gyekye 1997:66). This compassionate approach Gyekye discussed signifies the personal nature and charisma that allows one to reflect on the wellbeing of other individuals of the community as very important, and hence endeavours to practice it in the spirit of Ubuntu.

Gyekye further in of the community, but not to the detriment of individual rights (1997:66). Nevertheless, Gyekye reiterates that people's individual rights should not be surrendered where the individual is believed to be answerable to the community. Gyekye upholds that communitarian ethics admits the significance of individual rights but that it does not do so to the disadvantage of responsibilities that the individual assembly has or should have towards the community or other people of the community.

Agreeing to Mwimbobi (2003:79), Gyekye maintains that community life establishes the foundation for duties and moral responsibility. This demands that individuals are guaranteed to act and interrelate in a morally satisfactory manner. The people of the community demonstrate a high level of moral thoughtfulness and approachability to the needs and welfare of other people. There is a clear relationship between the ethics of responsibility and other moral values supporting communitarian ethics.

Moreover, Gyekye's moral or ethical values of the Ubuntu principles, for example, interdependence, conviviality, cooperation solidarity, *buen vivir* (good living), reciprocity, social well-being, and compassion must be reckoned among the Ubuntu principles of the individual vis-à-vis the community and its people. Altogether, these observations inspire the responsibility of the individual regarding the community and its people, as well as a status of equality concerning rights in communitarian and moral formation (1997:66).

In summary, Gyekye's *radical communitarianism*, as advocated by Mbiti and Menkiti, is mistaken in respect of the fact that it fails to appreciate the individual in its unrestricted emphasis on the community. The failure to recognise the individual, as viewed by Gyekye, is philosophically indefensible. He argues that his account is appropriate because it will recognise and sustain individual rights as opposed to Mbiti and Menkiti's accounts of

communitarianism which rides roughshod over individual rights. Gyekye singles out Menkiti's moral achievement and ritual of social relationships as a requirement for acquiring personhood, and for constructive criticism. He argues that the moral requirement is exaggerated by all sorts of incoherencies and misunderstandings while the social relationship prerequisite fails to shed any light on the controversy.

4.7 The Concept of the Common Good and Community

The concept of the 'common good', according to Gyekye, basically means a good that is common to individual human beings, and which is infused within community. Gyekye (1997:45) states that the "common good means a good that can be said to be common, universally, shared by all human individuals, a good by the possession of what is essential for the ordinary or basic functioning of the individual in a human society". By assessing the definition, it could be said that the common good ought to be shared by the individual members of the community and nobody should be omitted from sharing in the common good for any reason.

The common good is considered as an establishment of basic possessions that people of the community need and endeavour to accomplish. It is a set of possessions that are important for the survival of all people. Gyekye (1997:46) maintains that: "It should be understood that by the goods of all the members one is referring only to what can be regarded as the basic or essential goods to which every individual should have access. There is no human being who does not desire dignity, peace, freedom respect, security, and satisfaction". One could argue that adherents of the community desire to have rights to the elementary possessions of life. It is essential for every human being to be accepted and respected, and not unfairly victimised for any reason. All adherents of the community should value and given an equal opportunity. They are required to accept one another as individuals with a need to be respected with moral worth. Gyekye (1997:46) argues that the tenacious quest and promotion of Ubuntu principle as social justice, compassion, equality, conviviality, *buen vivir* (good living), solidarity, warmth, sympathy, reconciliation, happiness, freedom, forgiveness, respect, and love of person makes sense because there is a belief in the common good. He recommends that the pursuit of social justice is intended to bring about certain basic possessions that every individual needs.

The straightforward or dynamic possessions that adherents need to function as human beings form part of the commonly shared values. Gyekye's philosophy of the moderate

communitarianism suggests the existence and recognition of such basic possessions. It is this ideology that buttresses the actions and opinions of people who live together in an organised human society. Gyekye (1997:46) maintains that: "... if there is a human society if human beings can live together in some form of politically organized setting despite their individuality – despite, that is, their conceptions of the good life, individual ways of doing things, and so on – then the existence of a common good must be held as the underlying presupposition". It requires, therefore, that adherents of the multi-ethnic or racial community should appreciate one another as individuals with moral achievement of the basic possessions.

Gyekye (1997:42) described the collective-cultural community, whether it is multi-ethnic or non-racial community, as "a group of persons linked by interpersonal bonds" who, among others, share common moral values, goals and interests. Gyekye calls such a community a community of mutuality. The individual adherents of this kind of community are seen as integral communal beings, and never as isolated individuals. Gyekye also opined that the notion of the common good, irrespective of a shared language, cannot be separated from the notion of "the community", because as an adherent of the community, the individual applies the principle of Ubuntu that "would need to have food, shelter, security, goodwill, friendship, and self-respect" (1997:44). The person needs these elementary desires regardless of the language he/she speaks or the faith he/she confesses.

Finally, Gyekye's philosophy of common good refers to a set of possessions that are commonly shared moral values among individuals. This means that people of the community should be given equivalent opportunity to achieve the common good. The people of the community are optimistic and resolute towards a set of basic principles upheld by Ubuntu, such as peace, justice, security, unity, freedom, respect, and harmony. People should not be denied the opportunity to realise these principles based on inconsequential factors, such as racism, religion, ethnicity and language of the assembly. The rights of members of the community not to be victimised against will be discussed next.

4.8 Gyekye's Criticism, Rights, and Duties

The criticality of community in the moral formation of a person in African thinking is beyond contest. However, in some cases where philosophers attempt to communicate that notion from a non-communitarian perspective, they ultimately address the role of the community in the development of the individual. Gyekye's criticism is centred on the remark made by

Menkiti where he overemphasises the responsibility of the community in his description of a person. Gyekye's (1992:108) opinion is that the understanding of the metaphysical explanations and post-independence leaders by Ifeanyi Menkiti on personhood amounts to *radical communitarianism*. It is thought-provoking to annotate that Gyekye is under the impression that the significant notion of Menkiti's scrutiny is a philosophical one. The philosophical concept under contemplation is the notion that a community takes precedence over an individual. Gyekye's assertion is that such a model of personhood is *radical* and may be subject to either *moderate* or *radical socio-political consequences* (1992:103). Gyekye (1992:104) summarises that Menkiti "succumbed to the temptation of employing a notion of a person that has implications of a radical political philosophy".

The notion of personhood as understood in terms of a community taking precedence over an individual is said to aggregate this fundamental socio-political position that radical communitarianism "... is a view that gives an exaggerated conception of the community, wherein the community is construed as always prior to the individual and this conception of the community fails to recognize the individuality of the individual and the rights that naturally belong to a human person insofar as a person is essentially autonomous" (Gyekye 1992:108). Gyekye's apprehension, contrary to Menkiti, is evident in his preceding pledge to the significance of rights to any vigorous political entity. Gyekye's point is that Menkiti's communitarianism must be discarded since it fails to recognise the prevalence of rights.

This high regard for rights informs Gyekye's suggested clarification of moderate communitarianism. He clarifies this by saying that "the restricted communitarianism offers a more appropriate and adequate account of the self ... in that, it addresses the dual features of the self: as a communal being and as an autonomous, self-determining ..." Thus, for Gyekye, the radical concern of Menkiti's point is the failure to recognise the independent landscape of a human being that forms human dignity, resulting in a lack of acknowledgment of the rights that certainly belong to individuals (Molefe 2018:221).

The morality of duties offers a worldwide moral vision that embraces all humanity. Commonly, African philosophers seize the opportunity of the others besieged by people's duties in terms of the notion of the common good. However, the 'common good' of African thinkers does not dialogue in terms of accumulating welfare as characterised by utilitarianism and then discuss possessions that are necessary for an ordinary or even a prosperous life for an ordinary or even a prosperous life for each human being (Gyekye 2004:92). African thinkers usually do not take seriously the notion of supererogation, in that there are no duties that are beyond the call of duty. If moral formation is about promoting the welfare of all,

people have a duty to do so as well (Gyekye 2004:92). The researcher believes that people cannot sacrifice one for the sake of the greater good of others since this moral formation is not accumulating. It is motivated on safeguarding the welfare of everyone.

It is this normative power usually associated with rights that does not have a place in *African moral thought*. The duty is for one to realise that true humanity takes a fundamental place in African moral thought, and that this onus is essentially connected to the promotion of the welfare of other human beings. Perhaps, if rights would take a fundamental place in African thought, this would portend the very likelihood of individuals accomplishing a position of personhood that entirely depends on them ordering the social goal of safeguarding the welfare of all people. The rights are focused on duties owing to the subject, the right-holder. Although the very opportunity and prospect of reaching personhood is fundamentally juxtaposed with others – regarding duties to shelter the welfare of all. The social goalmouth of safeguarding the welfare of all takes precedence in this moral theory because it is at the heart of realising a life becoming a human being, or personhood (Molefe 2018:228-229).

It is for this very reason of the fundamental recognition of rights being duties that are self-oriented and brother-oriented, that Gyekye's effort to marry the idea of community and individuality in his *moderate communitarianism*³⁸ failed woefully (Oyowe 2014:330). Gyekye's moderate communitarianism failed because of the conflicting moral value of ways employed by a system of rights and one of the duties to safeguard dignity and life. It is for this reason that rights would eventually be sacrificed when they recognised duties in order to safeguard and uphold the welfare of all people. To sum up, the fact that people share a common humanity (Ubuntu), and the concept of basic commonalities among human beings is the moral context where basic needs are shared, is for the welfare of all people (Tutu 1999). The morality of duties inspires people to discharge their duties in a context wherein people are caught up with others in relationships with humanity.

4.9 Conclusion

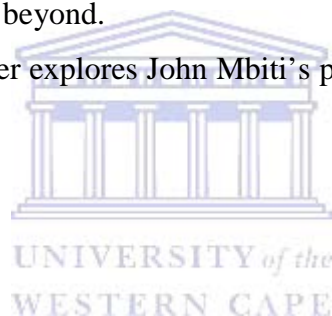
This chapter highlighted the conceptual scholarly approach of Kwame Gyekye to Ubuntu as a resource for moral formation in present-day Africa. The brief life and work of the Ghanaian thinker was explored, and his contribution to the African philosophy of Ubuntu was discussed. Furthermore, different applications of the Ubuntu worldview were analysed, such

³⁸Also see K.M. Kalumba, 2020, 'A defense of Kwame Gyekye's Moderate Communitarianism', *Philosophical Papers*, 49(1), 137-158.

as Gyekye's philosophical thoughts on African ethics or morality, the notion of the person, the notion of personhood, and the notion of individualism in African moral theory. Attention was also given to the conceptual view of Gyekye's moderate communitarianism, although Shutte is closer to Gyekye than Mbiti with his radical communitarianism, and other scholars of this discipline's understanding of African communitarianism as the potential basis for moral formation in modern Africa. The chapter concluded with an assessment of Gyekye's criticisms, rights, and duties.

Gyekye's concept of Ubuntu has something to offer and that is why he is very uncritical about the notion of this African worldview mostly in Akan philosophy and the moderate version of communitarianism in terms of an ethics of responsibility, the principle of reciprocity, community mutuality, and individual rights. The development of Ubuntu remains ongoing and a work in progress and as such, resourcefulness is a strong hope for the future. The contributions of Gyekye's approach applied in the context of the common good and community continues to expose the Ubuntu principle in our society as the possible cause of moral development in Africa and beyond.

Next, the following chapter explores John Mbiti's philosophy of Ubuntu as the centre for moral formation.



CHAPTER 5:

JOHN SAMUEL MBITI'S PHILOSOPHY OF UBUNTU AS A SOURCE OF MORAL FORMATION

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed Kwame Gyekye's perspective of Ubuntu as the potential foundation of moral formation in present-day Africa. In addition to examining the life and work of this Ghanaian thinker, his contribution to the African philosophy of Ubuntu was briefly discussed. Different applications of the Ubuntu worldview were also investigated, such as Gyekye's philosophical thoughts on African ethics or morality, the notion of person, the notion of personhood, and the notion of individualism in African moral theory. Moreover, the conceptual view of Gyekye's moderate communitarianism was also given attention, although Shutte was found to be closer to Gyekye than Mbiti's radical communitarianism. Furthermore, other scholars' understanding of African communitarianism as a resource of moral formation in modern Africa was also considered. The chapter concluded by scrutinising Gyekye's criticisms, rights, and duties, as well as notion of the common good and community.

Attention now shifts in the current chapter to John Mbiti's philosophy of Ubuntu as the heart of moral formation. In addition to providing a description of his life as well as literary and academic works, the chapter also highlights his findings of ATR. The chapter thus examines Mbiti's understanding of the Ubuntu worldview and that of other philosophers on different aspects of contemporary Africa including ATR, whereby the anthropological landscape of ATR as the foundation for moral formation and African vision of the Ubuntu worldview are discussed. Mbiti's normative approach to African philosophy (Ubuntu) and his contribution to African communitarianism in terms of the notions of morality, African selfhood, and Ubuntu theory of moral formation, as well as Ubuntu philosophy of moral diversity in modern Africa, are described.

5.2 John Mbiti's Life and Work

John Samuel Mbiti (1931–2019) was a Kenyan-born Christian philosopher and writer. He was an ordained Anglican priest and is recognised as the father of modern African theology. Mbiti was born 30 November 1931 in Mulago, Kitui County, and grew up in Ukambani, which is halfway between Nairobi and Mombasa in Kenya. One of six children, he was the child of two farmers, Samuel Mutuvi Ngaangi and Valesi Mbandi Kiimba. Being raised in a strong Christian home encouraged his educational journey through the African Inland Church; he also attended the Alliance High School in Nairobi. As a young student, he studied English, sociology, and geography at the University College of Makerere, Uganda, before gaining a scholarship to study abroad in the USA, where he undertook a degree in theology (Rhode Island). He later pursued a doctorate at Cambridge University in the UK. His focus was on New Testament eschatology and its bearing on African religion and philosophy. At Cambridge he met Verena Siegenthaler, from Switzerland, whom he married, and together they had four children, and later five grandchildren. For many years he lived in Burgdorf in Switzerland; he was also an ordained priest in the Anglican Church in 1963 (Engdahl 2021: 17).

Within a few years, he wrote a series of books dealing with African religion and its relationship to the Christian religion. He was a professor at the University of Nairobi, University of Hamburg, and from 1974 to 1980 he also served as Director of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute of the WCC, near Geneva. He was, until a few years ago, in regular contact with Bossey. The years in Burgdorf were characterised by two elements: upholding a chair in theology at the University of Bern and doing parish work in the local church. Over the years he wrote numerous articles, typically on the Christian church and African religion.³⁹ All the years he maintained a lively contact with Africa and his homeland Kenya. What is no less than remarkable is that he, at an advanced age, just like that, translated the Greek New Testament into his own native *Kiikamba* language. Mbiti, who died on 5 October 2019, seemed to have regarded himself as an ordinary man of church and academia, but this was an understatement. On the one hand, he tirelessly stood up for the Christian church all his life. On the other hand, he equally and tirelessly stood up for the invaluable heritage of

³⁹ At the publication of a Festschrift in his honour in 1993, it was estimated that apart from his books he had published nearly 400 journal articles (Ogbu U. Kalu, 1993, 'Preface', in *Religious Plurality in Africa. Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*, Berlin, New York, Mouton de Gruyter, p. xvi).

Africa, be it African religion or certain self-understandings, the concept of time or corporate lifestyles. The discourse continues⁴⁰ (Engdahl 2021:17).

Mbiti's seminal book, *African religions and philosophy* (1969), was the first work to contest the Christian notion that the traditional African religious philosophies were "demonic and Christian". Also, his commiserate interpretation of traditional religions was based on massive fieldwork. Mbiti's understanding of these religions was from resolutely Christian viewpoint, and this feature of his work was occasionally harshly criticised (English 2006:53-56; Kalumba 2005:11). Mbiti's investigation benefits comprised theology in Africa and Asia and ecumenism. He also cooperated on a book of African stories, proverbs, riddles, myths, and legends composed from across the continent. Until his death in 2019 he was an emeritus professor at the University of Bern where he also lectured until 2005, as well as a retired parish minister where he served the town of Burgdorf in Switzerland from 1980 to 1996 (Akyeampong & Gates 2012).

5.2.1 Mbiti's academic work

Mbiti, however, returned to Makerere University, where he teaches ATR from 1964 to 1974, and note his first book, *African religions and philosophy* (1969). His main emphasis was to contest the commonly believed notion that ATRs are deep-rooted in 'demonic anti-Christian values' and to argue that they justify the same admiration as other main religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism. He founded his assertion on his assessment that in the Bible, God is the creator of all things, therefore significances that God has revealed himself to all things.

Mbiti had slight information of ATR, as he was ignorant of former lectures about its basis due to the deep-rooted oral traditions of such religions. He conducted further investigation to teach his class. He gathered information from over 300 African peoples or tribes yet engaging in the field study. Additionally, inquired by his students for gathering of his study boosted him to collect his lectures notes into his first book printed in 1969. Interestingly, following his career at Makerere, he held visiting professorships at universities throughout the world where he sustained publication of books on philosophy, theology, and African oral traditions (Vähäkangas 2016:309).

Furthermore, between 1974 and 1980 Mbiti was the head of the WCC Bossey Ecumenical Institute. He carried successions of significant talks that fixated on intercultural theology. His main objective was to marry Asian, African, and other theologians for

⁴⁰See Jacob K. Olupona, 1993, 'A biographical sketch', in *Religious Plurality in Africa*, pp. 1-9.

ecumenical encounters, dialogue, and discourse. The first talks in June 1976 concentrated on African and Asian contributions to contemporary theology. Approximately 80 contributors from around the world attended the conference. His second more famous talks, 'Confessing Christ in Different Cultures' was carried in Bossey in July 1977. More than 100 participants from 35 diverse nations joined the conference. There were deliberations on how an individual could reach from a contextual to a universal confession of Christ, and, also highlighted was how confession can find interpretation in worship and liturgy. A third of the talks majored on "Indigenous Theology and the Universal Church". He received many impressive merits and honorary doctorates and, as the Anglican Church of Southern Africa honoured Mbiti with the Archbishop's Award for Peace and Justice in the festivity of his life and works at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, in November 2016 (Vähäkangas 2016:309).

5.2.2 Mbiti's findings on ATR

In his writing, Mbiti scrutinised the roots of ATR by learning oral traditions. The Igbo religion of the eastern part of Nigeria, for instance, is one of the ATRs that Mbiti studied; their tradition is deep-rooted philosophy. Having been communicated orally by powers that be, this tradition was transferred from ages to ages through the similar oral practice. And the tradition rotates round exceedingly ontological ways, asserts admirers of the Igbo religion to quest their being and life. However, inside the old life, the folks submerge them in sacred involvement, which people trust starts afore people are instinctive and lasts after passed on. The Igbo religious life is linked to the forefathers and to persons not hitherto born, making a mystic range. The Igbo religion completely symbolises all features of a traditional world religion, such as "beliefs, sacred myths, oral qualities, strong appeal to the hearts of its followers, a high degree of ritualization, and possession of numerous participatory parsonages such as officiating elders, kings, priests and diviners". The Igbo religion varies from non-traditional proselytising religions because it does not have elders who carry out minister's work and folks who do not preach their religion to others. They strongly trust in a supreme being who is supposed to be the supervisor of the world and all its occupants (Okeke, Ibenwa & Okeke 2017:215).

Mbiti likewise found that once a person passed on, his or her *chi* or soul wanders around until the mortal is given a rightful funeral. This waiting period is called the "transitional period of the deceased". Christianity reached the Igboland in 1857, summoning anxiety within the Igbo that if they converted Christians their god would bring calamity. Some too refused to convert to Christianity because of the conviction that Christian

proselytisers were there to terminate the Igbo religion. Christians criticised the traditional songs, dance and music of the Igbo religion believed it immoral. This set the stage for religious clash between the Igbo and the Christians, which might have led to the implication that ATRs were deep-rooted in anti-Christian philosophies. The elders simply protect their traditions. One of Mbiti's utmost quotations in his book *African religions and philosophy* was: "Wherever the African is, there is religion" (Okeke et al., 2017:215).

Mbiti was also challenged with critics' from the Ugandan writer Okot p'Bitek for moulding his opinions in knowledgeable expressions that had been well-known by the Westerners. Most significantly, his chief critic was that African cosmogenesis eventually supports Christian opinions of God as omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. Also, p'Bitek (1979) inscribed in his book *African religions in Western scholarship* that the ATRs are afar the identification of ordinary Africans in the scenery. Mbiti purportedly avoids response to the critic, agreeing to Derek Peterson, a professor of history and African studies at the University of Michigan (p'Bitek 2011:12).

5.2.3 Mbiti's literary works

Mbiti's literary works include the following:

- 1996: *Akamba Stories*, Oxford University Press, Oxford Library of African Literature. This work consists of around 80 different stories of various types deep-rooted in Kamba tales. Edited and translated in the English language, only two remain in *Kiikamba*. They explore the *Kiikamba* language, Kamba life and society, as well as the broad nature of the stories and the backgrounds within which they are expressed. To the communal booklovers, they may understand nothing more than an assembly of lovely African folk tales.

- 1996b: *Poems of nature and faith*, Poets of Africa, East African Publishing House.

A collection of poems from African poets:

- 1990: *African religions and philosophy*, African Writers Series, Heinemann (originally published in 1969a).

Mbiti's first book takes an analytical communication of the conviction that ATRs were deep-rooted in anti-Christian principles. He reviewed the book to include the part of women in religion.

- 1970b: *Concepts of God in Africa*, SPCK, London.

African folks are not faithfully ignorant; this book proposes a lot of an ethical knowledge of traditional religious ideology collected from over 270 diverse people or tribes. It contains a logical study of virtually all the material that could be establish in writing and other sources

on African likeness about God. This likeness is predisposed, logically, by historical, geographical, moral, cultural, and social-political issues.

- 1971: *New Testament eschatology in an African background*, Oxford University Press.

This special book is a reading of the New Testament eschatology in an African background: a study of the encounter between New Testament theology and African traditional concepts.

- 1973: *Love and marriage in Africa*, Longman, London.
- 1975a: *Introduction to African religion*, African Writers Series, Heinemann.

This book investigates a collection of African sayings to show the ethical or moral and religious practices passed down through spoken custom.

- 1975b: *The prayers of African religion*, SPCK, London.

This book takes a comprehensive look at the connection between African American Christianity, chants and prayers, meditation rituals, and the divine power.

- 1987b: *Bible and theology in African Christianity*, Oxford University Press.
- 1997: *African proverbs*, UNISA Press, Pretoria.
- 2014: *The Kikamba Bible – Utianiyo Mweu Wa Mwiyai Yesu Kilisto* (the New Testament of the Lord Jesus Christ), Kenya Literature Bureau.

5.3 Mbiti's Normative Perspective of the Ubuntu Philosophy

Mbiti wrote widely on African theology and African involvement in Ubuntu philosophy.

He was a strong proponent of African theology and deeply acknowledged their morality, African heritage, religiosity, and culture. He also recognised that African community and individuality are deeply rooted in African culture. In 'The Search for New Values, Identity and Security', Mbiti challenged many normative recommendations such as Négritude, African Unity, Pan-Africanism, and African Personality, as all inadequate to address the needs of indigenous Africans societies (1969a:260-265). Even though he appreciated them for their contributions, he upheld that "All these political ideologies and economic attempts point to progress being made in Africa. But it is progress locked in search mode; it lacks concreteness, historical roots, and a clear and practical goal, at least for the individual to be able to find in it a sense of direction worthy of personal identification and dedication" (Mbiti 1969a:260-265). One of the weaknesses of these philosophies, according to Mbiti, is their inability to infuse every sector of life as religion does.

Mbiti argued that a traditional belief is the religious conviction that bears an all-inclusive viewpoint to all the truth of life. Therefore, in traditional philosophy, there is no irrationality amongst the secular and the sacred, amongst the material realm and the spiritual realm, amongst the natural realm and the supernatural realm (Mbiti 1990:2). This outlook defines all truth of life from a religious perception. Consequently, indigenous Africans understand truth from a religious perspective and recognise their distinctiveness as being tied to this religious cooperation. In other words, indigenous Africans do not deduce their individuality from either a philosophical or secular perspective because religion is part of their worldview; it forms a primary part of their individuality and way of life (culture). Mbiti (1969a:263) acknowledged that modern changes (migration, colonisation, enlightenment, technology, globalisation, urbanisation, civilisation, and modernisation) have undermined this viewpoint in significant ways, yet religion remains intact among Africans.

Mbiti (1990:2-4) also contended that African morality valued individual personality, but communal distinctiveness surpasses the individual identity, conceivably in religious matters. Traditional religious beliefs are collectively held because the community is the sole overseer of this African worldview (Ubuntu principles). It is the role of the individual in the spirit of Ubuntu to accept the moral formation and agree to the ethics and code of conduct of being part of the community. The individual is born into a particular community and becomes part of that community through participation in the beliefs and traditions of that community. These moral ethics and practices are not written but handed down from one generation to the next and exist in the heart of the individual, therefore “each person is himself a living creed of his religion. Where the individual is, there is his religion, for he is a religious being. It is this that makes Africans so religious: religion is in their whole system of being” (Mbiti 1990:106).

Mbiti also argued that African philosophy is fundamental to community. He captured this communal position with the currently well-known aphorism, “I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti 1990:106). Mbiti maintained that community is demonstrated through rites of passage and death, blood and marital relationship, clan roots, land, tribal affiliation, ritual celebrations, and shared oppression, and suffering. The community has a vertical aspect that people link with their Supreme Being and the spirit world, while the horizontal aspect includes a link between individuals and social groups, i.e., clans, individual families, the departed, and the unborn (1978:36). Furthermore, the community also includes harmony with the non-human world because ideally, in the Ubuntu

African worldview, nature is “sacred” and human beings have a religious link with the environment (Mbiti 1978:89).

Mbiti also concluded that the two religions – ATR and Christianity – “speak a largely common language and undergird each other”, and Jesus’ message “does not contravene the efforts of African traditional religion” (1999:12). One could argue that there are various commonalities, but the message of Jesus is not the same as that of ATR, and Jesus’ message is for all peoples of the earth, it is not limited to a certain group or locality.⁴¹ At the same time, Mbiti wished to analytically contextualise Christianity in Africa, by the illustration of the African cultural-religious tradition and African communal perspectives, while highlighting that the Christian community differs in some means from traditional African communities.

5.3.1 Anthropological environment of ART

The Ubuntu worldview is a philosophy that can be derived from the anthropocentric and utilitarian environment of ATR. In ATR, human welfare is perhaps a religious drive as Mbiti (1990:1) emphasised that “Africans are notoriously religious ... [r]eligion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it”. This confirms that the utilitarian and anthropological environment of religion in Africa agrees with both notions. To confirm Mbiti’s assertion, Magesa (1997:60) argues that “at all times in a person’s life, religious consciousness is always explicitly or implicitly present. In no way is anything understood apart from the context of God, the ancestors, and the spirits; in no way is any thought, word or act understood except in terms of good and bad, in the sense that such an attitude or behaviours either enhances or diminishes life”. In other words, religion exists for the purpose of conservation and preservation of moral formation. Mbiti (1990:2) found that traditional African’s take their religion everywhere they go – to important tasks such as working in the fields and to everyday activities such as going to a cocktail party. This affirms that ATR has everyday and experiential value by being directly connected to real-life matters in society.

Subsequently, Ubuntu must not just be founded on the virtuous and communitarian fundamentals but also on the ATR worldview where human life is the *summum bonum*, “the central theme of African religiousness” (Okorochoa 1994:72). Besides, ATR is practiced for anthropocentric commitments (Nyathi 2001:9). Charles Nyamiti, supported by Magesa (1997:54), states that “African religious practice is centered mainly on man’s life in this

⁴¹ J.S. Mbiti, 1987a, ‘In search of dialogue in community’, *The Ecumenical Review*, 39(2), 192-196.

world, with the consequence that religion is chiefly functional, or a means to serve people to acquire earthly goods (life, health, fecundity, wealth, power the like) and to maintain social cohesion and order”. Moreover, religion is practiced operationally as a way of promoting and protecting human welfare (Magesa 1997:50). And to make sense of this fact, Mbiti argued that in ATR people “acts of worship and turning to God are pragmatic and utilitarian rather than spiritual or mystical”. This means that people do not worship God out of a need for a relationship with God but for the purpose of existence (1990:5). To explain further, for the utilitarian assessment of religion in ATR, Mbiti (1990:4) suggested that:

To live here and now is the most important concern of African religious activities and beliefs. There is little, if any, concern with the distinctly spiritual welfare of man apart from his physical life. No line is drawn between the spiritual and the physical. Even life in the hereafter is conceived in materialistic and physical terms. There is neither paradise to be hoped for nor hell to be feared in the hereafter. The soul of man does not long for spiritual redemption or for closer contact with God in the next world.

The objective of religion in ATR is to allow people to live morally and value life which encourages the human welfare that the Ubuntu principle envisages. However, moral value and attention to God in ATR with regards to humanity is in the spirit of Ubuntu as “humans contact with time” (Mbiti 1990:5). Therefore, by not taking place for some future messianic hope or apocalyptic hope in which God will bring some vital transformed glorious realism, means that all life forces are anticipated to work and augment the life of humanity and society. The importance of the anthropological and utilitarian environment of ATR offers useful perceptions of the basic vision of Ubuntu that are ignored or undermined by the communal moral and moralistic view of Ubuntu in current Africa.

Successively, religion is pivotal for the preservation and conservation of the moral formation that fosters human good. The significance of the justifiable means applied by the ATR’s utilitarian and anthropocentric landscape rises from extraordinary common sense of defencelessness of traditional Africans. Ngong (2010:24) therefore summarises these notions, saying that traditional Africans see humanity as under constant threat from the unpredictable activities of spirits and witchcraft. ATR’s utilitarian belief of religion also articulates the dualistic spiritualised cosmology in which the situation in human life is seen as the result of the ongoing powerful battle between two frantically contending spiritual powers, one good and the other evil.

Also, Bhebhe (2013:56) clarifies that, in an ATR, “for people to live comfortably, a shared relationship of well-adjusted reciprocity between the physical and the spiritual worlds is to be maintained”. This means, for the welfare of the state, harmonious relationships are required between the spirit world and the people, which “creates equilibrium between the material and spirit world, making the world safe for human beings” (Banda & Masengwe 2018:3). Therefore, human welfare and safety do not only depend on pleasant-sounding relationships with the good spiritual powers, but also carefully prevent “provoking good spirits to avoid their wrath, or aggravating evil powers, to avoid their terror” (Banda & Masengwe 2018:3). This means that any interruption in the stability between humanity and the spiritual powers disturbs welfare. Consequently, from an ATR anthropocentric perspective, Ubuntu is not just a developmental principle of promoting and maintaining communal harmony and cohesion. It is also a philosophy of abundant life that points toward true human existence and a resource for moral formation.

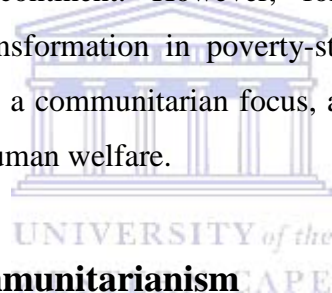
5.3.2 African vision of the Ubuntu worldview and moral formation

The concept of Ubuntu as the foundation for moral formation is necessary to challenge the moral communitarian that looks beyond social cohesion to human welfare. This displayed moral value and communitarian vision of Ubuntu as human relationality, the ideal of personhood, and human dignity lacks a strong emphasis on the moral formation that can be a vision for socio-economic development, political liberation, and human empowerment. Certainly, the post-1994 rise of the winds of democracy that cut across the African continent was fixed on the Ubuntu philosophy, driven notably by the African Renaissance of Pan Africanism and the New Partnership for African Development that was advocated by Thabo Mbeki and other progressive political leaders. Notwithstanding the intensive campaigning about Ubuntu as human dignity, morally virtuous personhood, human solidarity, and cooperation, Africa remains a continent troubled by moral challenges or decay. There is therefore a need for the moral value and communitarian understandings of Ubuntu to prioritise the moral formation of people in the society.

Furthermore, Ubuntu has become a philosophy of moral and communal virtue devoid of human progress, as can be seen in Luke Pato’s cry documented by Smit (2003:55) that “to be African is to suffer”. This is a broad exclamation across Africa notwithstanding the vociferous projections of the continent as a hundred percent Ubuntu. Smit (2003:55) describes Pato’s exclamation as not anthropological, but archaeological and contextual: “Today, now, to be African is to suffer”. Nevertheless, the reality is that suffering, hunger,

pain, and disease are still prevalent in the continent, to the extent that suffering and Africanness have become indistinguishable. The daily devastating happenings in Africa, e.g., corruption, injustice, inequality, poverty, racial or ethnic hatred, fraud, and so on, make it hypocritical to deny the assertion that “to be African is to suffer” is an anthropological decree. Consequently, Ubuntu as a source of moral formation challenges Africa’s assertion of high moral values that are empty of human development. Therefore, an almost four-decades-old lament by Mugomba and Nyaggah (ed. 1980) that Africa’s political independence from its colonialists has only produced a broken continent remains true today amid high proclamations of the Ubuntu philosophy (Magezi 2017:111–112).

A meaningful vision of Ubuntu must be all-inclusive and cover the existing aspects of morality as full human development. A vision of Ubuntu that comprises moral integrity, human dignity, and communal relationships without a deliberate focus on the human existence of welfare is inadequate, self-defeating, and disempowering for many poor Africans whose daily life is a pursuit for emancipation from economic poverty and unjust political systems across the continent. However, for Ubuntu, inspiring substantial socioeconomic and political transformation in poverty-stricken Africa, it must transcend beyond current moral values and a communitarian focus, and be realised as an experiential vision for moral formation and human welfare.



5.4 Mbiti and African Communitarianism

Mbiti is another African thinker who contributed to the discourse on the conceptualisation of a person in correlation to the community in African philosophy. Mbiti appropriated additional moral critique from Placide Tempels as his heir. Mbiti was suspected of being an admirer of Tempels’ philosophy. Kaphagawani (2000:7) states that as a well-known thinker, Mbiti shined as one of Tempels’ foremost disciples. Similar to Tempels, Mbiti was significantly determined by the passion to make known in another way that the African norms of philosophy are naturally different from Western ideology (Kaphagawani 2000:7). To buttress this point, Mbiti claimed that the ethnic nature of Africans, between other things, and how this notion is connected to African communitarianism, is still growing.

Agreeing with Matolino (2008:65), Mbiti argued that all diverse multi-cultural people in Africa have a common forefather and share a common language as well as traditions. Also, where a cultural community shares the same history, the least mythological will hint one’s ancestry to the first man made by God, or they will trace their lineage to the first leaders of

their community who recognised their communities. This demands that Mbiti's product of communitarianism reflects ATR. Therefore, religion is completely rooted in African traditional cultures.

Additionally, in the texts on communities in Africa, Mbiti emphasises that each community has got one's exceptional religious structure with which the community is recognised. The adherents of a particular community are permanently protected by their community because they are native in that community. Accordingly, Mbiti further portrayed that these are the main features of African culture, society, people, or state. A person must be a native or an adherent of it and cannot change the cultural assembly. In a similar vein, Mbiti argued that in some instances ceremony can be done with another cultural assembly, but this is rarely done and applies to both non-African and African perspectives. Also, cultural identity is still a powerful force even in contemporary African statehood, even though that sentiment of cultural identity differs like high temperature, from time to time subject to prevalent situations (1970a:135). This characteristic of a cultural assembly is crucial in the critique of communitarianism because before one considers the whole community, one should identify cultural assemblies through which different people belong and identify themselves within the community.

Interestingly, Mbiti also submitted that in traditional African society, the clan assembly regulates the life of all adherents of the cultural assembly. The whole community is knitted to this clan assembly. For Mbiti, the clan assembly is like an enormous system that stretches horizontally in every direction to hold everybody in any given native assembly. This means that everyone is a father or mother, brother or sister, grandmother, or cousin or brother-in-law, uncle or aunt, or something else to everybody else (1970a:136). This demands that every adherent of the cultural assembly is interrelated, and no individual is seen as a stranger. And such a societal locale adds to the formation of a communitarian society with a common identity.

On a similar note, Matolino (2008:68) claims that, for Mbiti, the relationship arrangement is not simply limited to the relatives of people who are living but also extends to include those who have passed on in life and those who are yet to be born. The living has an onus towards the dead, to save their soul and offer sacrifices for it. Appiah (2004: 26) also submits that, for as one shall see; many religious ceremonial acts have an element that seems to be recognised by their social relationships among people, which informs the philosophies of relations with other kinds of beings.

Moreover, regarding the place of the individual in the traditional African culture, Mbiti claimed that a human person is obligated to one's reality to other people comprising of older generations and current generations. Therefore, a person is merely part of the whole community. The community must therefore make, create, or produce the individual, for the individual is subject to the communal assembly. The physical birth is not sufficient; the child must go through the ceremony of integration so that one becomes completely incorporated into the whole culture. All these ceremonies continue through the physical life of the individual, during which the person goes through one stage of communal reality to another. The last phase is reached when the person dies, and even then, the person is ceremonially integrated into the wider family of both the dead and the living (Mbiti 1970a:141). And from this proclamation, one can gather two inviolable philosophies. This means that the community has special duties to play in development and enlightening an individual for the person to be morally or socially acceptable, and that in traditional African philosophy, death does not mark the end of life and connection among the people of the same cultural assembly or profession. There is a robust promise amongst the dead, the living, and the yet-to-be-born.

Matolino (2008:68) further claims that Mbiti's assertion that the individual's relationships to the community are perpetual and therefore cannot be separated from their realism. The community also has a part in protecting the individual and indeed has been transformed into a real person. Basically, for Mbiti, biological birth alone is not enough. There must be some introduction into all the phases that he calls "corporate existence", and an individual cannot do the introduction on his/her own, but perhaps requires the assistance of fellow human beings in the community to reach that realism. It is a profoundly religious deal. Therefore, only in terms of other people does the individual become aware of one's being and own duties, privileges, and responsibilities towards selves and towards other people (Mbiti 1970a:142). Again, this simply demands that for one to completely understand one's destiny, purpose and value in life, one needs other people.

Likewise, in terms of the interdependent and communal correlation between the individual and the community, Mbiti maintained that whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole community, and vice versa. The individual can only say "I am because we are and since we are, therefore, I am". This is a basic fact of the African understanding of humanity which the Ubuntu principle advocates (Mbiti 1970a:142). This philosophy portrays that in the traditional African society, individual accomplishments and encounters are professed as the community's, and the contrary is also real. This communal methodology,

which is part and parcel of African communitarianism, is very important in classifying people.

Eze (2008b:2) agrees with Mbiti that a community is formed by a ‘people’ – an assembly of individuals that live together by misfortune or fortune of shared antiquities and culture, of common destiny and fate. Thus, no community survives in a vacuum. At the same time, however, an individual’s bias is unavoidably situated and understood within the community. Klaasen (2022) therefore concludes that to achieve an inclusive and peaceful integrated community, the assertion that ‘when an individual develops, the community also grows’ should be the hallmark of every society.

5.4.1 Mbiti’s notion of morality

According to Mbiti, the notion of the moral value of Christian principles is apparent in one’s conduct and perception of a creator God who is responsible for the moral formation of a religious and moral order. ATR (if the generalisation here may be exempted) agrees with the truth of a creator God, but it does not seem to be developing all facets of religion in hopeful ways. Therefore, the more professed presence of African religion is the comparatively revealing demonstration of creation myths. Then, neither can it be entrenched that the indigenous African believes in a creator God by discerning the universe (1977:40). Consequently, it is also challenging whether the belief in a creator God dominates all other beliefs, as Mbiti appealed.

Furthermore, Mbiti asserted that there is existence of a religious order of the universe and that the creator God is considered responsible for this notion. Equally, he maintained that “God gave the moral order to people so that they might live happily and in harmony with one another” (1977:36). Admiring Mbiti, one should view morality as an authoritative code of comportment unswervingly approved by God. The moral code is therefore not independent, but its independence is derived from the creator God. Therefore, any breach of the moral code would consequently be wrongdoing against God and the teaching (Nel 2008:39). This observation of Mbiti disagrees with the opinion that the human is the centre of the universe, which is replicated in the creation myths. Mbiti does not share the possession of the moral code with any form of a notion concerning divine reward as one would anticipate from a divinely approved code of conduct and moral formation (1977:38-39, 175).

Moreover, Mbiti elaborated on the specific morals that the value is measured in terms of what governs individual and socially acceptable codes of conduct to the advantage of humanity and to avoid exclusions in society. Also, when he asserts that these moralities are

entrenched in people's practices, customs, and rituals which are transmitted from one generation to next generation, it appears that the moralities are related to socially celebrated modes of action derived from experiences of what is in the interest and welfare of the community (1977:175-181). His supposition is that God gives people their moral conduct and the custodian thereof is substantiated knowledge of wisdom. In this admiration, Mbiti's clarification endorses Mudimbe's (1988:51) assessment of a Christianisation of the discourse about indigenous African religion. It is obvious in this instance that Mbiti is still promoting the notion that faith in a creator God gives wisdom to morality and not the conflicting philosophy. This disagreement describes the two major critical situations vis-à-vis an African conceptualisation of morality: for example, Mbiti claims that religion is the source and foundation of morality and the other promotes the ideology that the moral imperative is logically independent of religion.

5.4.2 Ubuntu theory of moral formation

The greatest contribution of Ubuntu to life is the philosophy of Ubuntu's theoretical features to the process of birth and the moral formation of humanity which are widely valued by society. Nevertheless, the process of moral formation does not end with physical childbirth. However, a pregnant woman's labour pain is slowly taken over by the close family, the extended family, and ultimately, the community in which the person resides. And from the moment of conception, the foetus starts growing and becomes a child of the society rather than that of his/her parents. Therefore, the lifelong process of beginning that Mbiti refers to, and its many rituals and rites, are instances of such integration with community. Consequently, the community gradually takes over the process of helping the child realise his/her potential. The physical placenta and umbilical cord epitomise the detachment of the foetus from the mother, but this detachment is not final since the two are still near to each other. Nonetheless, the child begins to fit in the wider circle of the society (Mbiti 1969a:110).

Mbiti (1969a:107) expressed, “[N]ature brings the child into the world, but society creates the child into a social being, a communal person”. The community fosters the continual process of moral formation of a child into a mature person in the community. The child is helped into personhood by society. Personhood, perhaps, is always accomplished through the medium of the community. Shutte (2001:30) maintains that “our deepest moral obligation is to become fully human. And this means entering more and more deeply into the community with others. So, although the goal is personal

fulfilment, selfishness is excluded”. This development is indispensable not only because it is the pathway to be acquainted with the community but also because it is basic for the spirit of humanness (Ubuntu). A person who failed to nurture relationships acceptable to others is considered inhumane. Society thus recognises first one as a person, and then as an adherent of the community.

Moreover, every person is helped by the community and should therefore collaborate in the moral formation of others. The critical process of moral formation is becoming a part of the community. Gbadegesin (1991:65) alluded that “every member is expected to consider him/herself an integral part of the whole and to play an appropriate role towards achieving the good of all”. The latter involves mutuality since a person can only understand personhood through other persons in their communities or societies.

Metz and Gaie (2010:275) postulate that “African ethics is essentially relational in a way that other western approaches usually are not”. They juxtaposed the African reason of justice, impartiality, and understanding of human rights with contemporary Western philosophy. The straightforward substance of the human rights theory and argument is confined to the African understanding of justice. Metz and Gaie (2010:275) noted that Ubuntu includes “an impartial element, part of which is a matter of individual rights. Traditional African societies have often thought of human life as having a dignity that implies recognition of certain universal human rights”. Human rights are not negotiable in some Africa countries. They are given and are almost indistinguishable to the contemporary Western notion of human rights. Metz and Gaie (2010:283) assert this assumption when they state that, “despite the moral prominence given to their community, native sub-Saharan societies are well-known for having welcomed a stranger to their villages, giving him food and shelter for at least a period of time”. This practice is not aid. It is established on the understanding of human dignity and equality for social justice, equity, and fairness.

Metz cites some remarks by the South African Constitutional Court which occasionally appeals to Ubuntu and its knowledge of basic human rights when constructing legal opinions in agreement with Shutte’s philosophies of rights. And to cite one concrete instance, Justice Yvonne Mokgoro (1997:2-3) states that, “Human rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person. This, in my view, is not different from what the Spirit of Ubuntu embraces”. Basically, Metz and Gaie (2010:283) suggest that the native African conception of justice, which is epitomised in Ubuntu, can be abridged to, and exceeds both Kohlberg’s theory of justice (respect for equal rights of

person's model) and moral formation of caring (relationality and reciprocity of care model).

The core of African moral formation, which is epitomised by Ubuntu, is a human way of life (culture). The principles of care and justice, even Ubuntu relationality, are a resource for moral formation, which is the expansion of the quality and quantity of human life. Onah (2008:12) argues that the aim of African ethics is that “at the center of traditional African ethics is human life. Africans have a sacred reverence for life ... to protect and nurture their lives; all human beings are inserted within a given community. The community, therefore, is a means to an end: human life”. Onah summarises that the furtherance of life is, therefore, the defining factor (Ubuntu principle) of African traditional moral formation and its development of reassurance only in the community. Therefore, living amicably in the community is moral responsibility aimed by God for the furtherance of life (2008:13).

Thaddeus Metz, who coined this moral principle, wholeheartedly accepts the SSA position towards life. “An action is right just insofar as it promotes the well-being of others without violating their rights; an action is wrong to the extent that it either violates rights or fails to enhance the welfare of one's fellows without violating rights” (2007a:330). Subsequently, even if it is not always clearly indicated, the critical aim of Ubuntu is to safeguard fundamental human rights. In this regard, Tutu (1999:35) mentioned, “[H]armony, friendliness, community are great goods; Social harmony is for people the *summumbonum* – the greatest good”. Even though Tutu did not state that social harmony is a resource to a conclusion, which is human life, he remarked that immoralities should be avoided because they either portend or demoralise human life. The Ubuntu concept of moral formation includes respect for the dignity of other human existence, recognition of their personhood, the establishment of the human relationship with others, while at the same time dynamic reverence and praxis of human rights, and the implementation of social justice. Its major aim is to develop the optimal context and environment for the growth of the quality and quantity of human life.

5.4.3 African selfhood

The significance of what is called African selfhood is revealed when asking the question whether there is a difference in the understanding of personhood in relation to one's immediate community in Africa and in the liberal Western world (Engdahl 2021:55). There is

some connotation as the two quotes from Mbiti on kinship and the individual make this clear that:

The kinship system (entails) ... that each individual is a brother or sister, father or mother, grandmother or grandfather, or cousin or brother-in-law, sister-in-law, uncle or aunt or something else to everybody else. That means that everybody is related to everybody else, and there are many kinship terms to express this precise kind of relationship pertaining to individuals (Mbiti 1980:56).

And the individual does not actually stand a chance alone, perhaps:

[T]he 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 reproduce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group. Physical birth is not enough: the child must be integrated into the entire society (Mbiti 1980:108).

The “political philosophy of African founding fathers such as Leopold Senghor, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Kwame Nkrumah, and Jomo Kenyatta” would give similar outcomes. They all agree with an African personality based on “socio-centric characteristics” (Imbo 2001:129). Anthropologists, sociologists, and philosophers are unanimous as well: “society is central in the formation of African personhood”.⁴²

Thus, there has been a good reason to re-evaluate what is African selfhood from four scholars or thinkers to come to this point: Imbo, who is the leading philosopher; Ifeanyi Menkiti; Kwame Gyekye; and Wiredu. Therefore, Menkiti (1984:140) pronounced the communitarian aspect of the African person and “asserts that Africans reject the Western views that consider the individual radically self-conscious and distinct from the external world”. He further states that: “As far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories, whatever these may be. And this primacy is meant to apply not only ontologically, but also regarding epistemic accessibility” (Menkiti 1984:17). One should argue that through the lens of in-depth

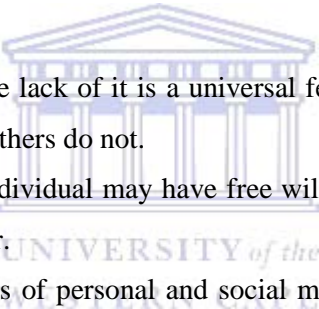
⁴² It is here of great significant to relate this whole discourse to the very similar, longstanding discourse in South Africa, ever since the independence in 1994, that of *Ubuntu*. I am certainly struck by so many similarities in the conversations. It is about time to bring this whole discourse up on a global level, acknowledging the fact that Africa has something precious offer to the world.

rootedness of an ongoing human communal assembly that the individual comes to see him or herself as a man or woman, respectively, in the community.

According to Gyekye, Menkiti is going to the extreme, perhaps “[t]he web of social relationships” becomes all-decisive. He rather advocates what he calls a “restricted or moderate communitarianism”:

The actions and choice of goals of the individual person emanate from his rational will. Thus, the self-determining is also self-assertive. The communitarian self, then, cannot be held as a cramped or shackled self-acting robotically at the beck and call of the communal structure. That structure is never to be conceived as or likened to, the Medusa head the sight of which reduces a person to inactivity and supineness – in this case, cultural or rational or intellectual supineness (Wiredu & Gyekye 1992:112).

Ironically, Wiredu’s input perhaps speaks about Akan’s philosophy of Ghana’s proposition of keeping free will and responsibility together, not to be taken for granted in Western discourse. One should take note of the following five things which express what free will is:

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- First, neither free will nor the lack of it is a universal feature of the human condition; some people have free will, others do not.
 - Second, one and the same individual may have free will with respect to one sphere of conduct but not in some other.
 - Third, since there are degrees of personal and social maladjustment, we can speak of degrees of free will.
 - Fourth, the concept of free will has normative as well as descriptive components.
 - Fifth, and, perhaps most interestingly, both free will and responsibility refer to the same aspect of human consciousness and conduct, namely, the ability of an individual to retain his human self-identity in conduct (Wiredu 1996:130).

Characteristically, freedom and responsibility are kept together. This is a sign of dealing with the problem of free will in a social context only, as there is no other context. One could argue here that one ought not to worry about possible determinism, but it is rather a question of soft determinism. Western philosophy tends to separate the problem of free will and the question of responsibility, but this is not the case in the Akan tradition:

[I]t follows from the conception in question that there can be only one problem of free will or responsibility, not two problems, one of free will and the other of responsibility.

This is probably the most interesting difference between the Akan-inspired view of free will and soft determinism or compatibilism in Western philosophy. The soft determinist also does not think that determinism imperils free will, but he speaks of the problem of free will and responsibility as if there are two problems here (Wiredu 1996:131).

Perhaps, if anything is to be found in the comment on free will and responsibility is that they played into the collective forms of reality in Africa. Here is a portrayal of individual freedom, but never isolated from the social group (Engdahl 2021:58). Imbo asserts that Menkiti, Gyekye and Wiredu make important contributions to African personhood and advocate a communitarian approach. Imbo has no problem saying that “no African is really independent” and leans towards the view propounded by Menkiti. He also endorses p’Bitek’s view that every human is bound in chains. Moreover, “[P]eople are not born free. Freedom is won from the chains of societal life only in slow stages, and then never completely” (Imbo 2001:149)

Nonetheless, Imbo also acknowledges that, in line with Rousseau, one could juxtapose that “no voluntariness with the autonomy of the community members” (2001:150). This juxtaposition is interesting. It in effect means that even if the point of departure is communitarian, there must be some leeway for individual efforts. Imbo draws a conclusion that is valuable. However much un-churched he is, his conclusion reminds me of the catholicity of the church, how it should be. The best we can hope for, he says, is a paradox, “a kind of collective autonomy”. This paradox somehow even leaves room for Sartre’s dictum that we are condemned to be free (Imbo 2001:150). Imbo (2001:150) submits that:

Collective autonomy means that individual members of the community, taking their interconnectedness as their point of departure, seek the communal good. The communal good is here construed most broadly to encompass the earthly and spiritual dimensions. Even though the common good is sought after by all, each is still an individual (and not part of an amorphous groupthink). It is through community members and its concepts that individuals acquire the capacity to reflect on and seek goods (both private and common) and hence become persons. This is the only meaningful interpretation of the idea of an African personality.

Engdahl underscores the vital importance of this whole discussion. Nevertheless, one must ask necessary questions: What is African about all of this? In addition, there is a problem

lurking behind all the talk on communitarianism. One should bear in mind that the collective may also hide and hold a host of human beings without a self/selfhood. Many women are suffering under such an oppressive collective culture (Engdahl 2021:59).

Likewise, the notion of the human person is therefore captured in the thoughts and actions of the African people, thereby giving credibility to human relationships, determining and shaping relationships in ways that cherish the moral value of life – supporting positive transformative efforts in building human societies, irrespective of gender, race, and religion. It is the contention of many that, critical to the African worldview of her present and future engagement in global affairs, is this age-long concept that she would need to reflect upon and propose to her present state and globally. This is because of the peace and human security concerns on the continent arising out of the governance and deficits of the democratic principles experienced, together with the onslaught of the international community. This is especially so in the areas of trade and commerce which relegate Africa to the so-called ‘Developing Economies’, which are characterised by endemic poverty, violence, political instability, pandemic, corruption, together with sickness and the burden of disease.

The Ubuntu principle of ‘I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am’ reinforces the argument for a communal perception that works for the establishment of the community of persons without borders; a community that works for and seeks the well-being of others. This is a community that considers both barriers and boundaries as limiting to cooperation and collaboration in the context of a global world; a world of equal opportunities that seeks to correct the long-standing ideological and economic categories of ‘rich’ and ‘poor’, ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ (or ‘less developed’). This is a world that does not consider its interests at the expense of others, a form of either neglect or marginalisation. In fact, Mbiti (1970a:141) stated it as follows:

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. When he suffers, he does not suffer alone but with the corporate group; when he rejoices, he rejoices not alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours, and the relatives whether dead or alive... The individual can only say: I am, because we are and since we are, therefore, I am. This is the cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.

The moral formation and cultural values relate to gender segregation and role models, together with the kinship ties from the family to the ethnic or national identities. However, it

is necessary to inquire whether what essentially defines *personhood* is related to these 'convenient identities' that divide rather than unite humanity. The greatest challenge encountered in the debate on personhood has to do with language which is beyond Africa. It is the language from foreign lands that have dominated the minds of many in Africa through modernisation. With the onslaught on the African culture, language has been forced to shift, and so thought patterns have shifted as well.

5.4.4 Ubuntu philosophy of moral diversity

Discussed next is the Ubuntu philosophy of diversity and respect of valued moral living of human beings within the community for social prosperity and personhood. This thoughtfulness is well captured by the adages that "a person is a person through other persons" (Shutte 1993a:46) and "a human being is a human being through the otherness of other human beings" (Van der Merwe 1996:1). Agreeing with Van der Merwe that Ubuntu decrees that to be human is to distinguish the sincere changes of our fellow citizenry. The acknowledgment of and respect for each person's distinctiveness is a critical constituent of humanity. This character involves the values of divergence of, customs histories, and languages, all of which establish human society.

Even though Ubuntu is fundamentally Unitarian, diversity is a vital part of it in totality. Moral diversity fits into the very spirit of Ubuntu conception. Moral diversity is what inspires the importance of unity; therefore, the most major meaning of Ubuntu in its moral worth to the variety of any community as well as individual moral, psychosocial, and social growth. The diversity of others, e.g., customs, languages, moral values, and histories, help people recognise their duty, uniqueness, role, and neediness (Van der Merwe 1996:2-3).

Mbiti (1990:106), on the other hand, opined 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". This is established by Mbiti's assertion that the community helps the individual become diverse and distinctive while indoctrinating him or her communitarianism, and suitable moral norms and ideals.

Additionally, personhood is a moral developmental concept of the culture of Ubuntu, whereby such moral development is supported by the community. Mbiti (1990:106) reiterated 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 beginning of person’s life is commonly age-related and diverges depending on the certain culture. According to Mbiti (1990: 106), these rites suggest religious, moral, behavioural, and moral formation, thereby “these rites continue throughout the physical life of the person, during which the individual passes from one stage of communal reality to another. The final stage is reached when he dies and even then, he is ritually integrated into the wider family of both the dead and the living”. The dead believers in society continue as the living-dead until they are no longer recalled by any living person. They are assumed to be continuously undertaking the ritual of integration into the world of the dead even as they are gradually gone by the living. The rituals of commencement entail the role of humanity in the work of creation.

Mbiti (1990:107) particularised this starring role when he remarked that “just as God made the first man, as God’s man, so now the man himself makes the individual who becomes the corporate or social man”. Also, the commencement rituals need other people as well. Therefore, a personal way of life (culture) entirely autonomous from society is absurd. Hence, Mbiti (1990:107) suggested that “only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his being, his duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people”.

In a similar vein, Mbiti claimed that in the process of person moral formation by all other persons and in all appropriate developments of the beginning, person exclusivity is not only accepted or tolerated but also valued and given a distinctive role in society. The person is helped to know that he or she is exceptional, therefore a needed organ within the community. Moral diversity is a blessing to the community. Also, to person, moral diversity and pluralism help differentiate the person from the rest of the community membership. Furthermore, the intention of ceremonial processes is to keep cutting the umbilical cord so that the child is continually born into the wider human family, united into it as his or her personhood unfolds.

Moreover, another passage from one’s mother into the nuclear family, before extended family, before the ethnic or tribal family, and before the human family in general (Mbiti 1990:118). Mbiti (1990:119-120) contends that those ceremonious practices have great moral formation and education willpower, therefore, “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”. The ceremonies consequently make the candidates pact with, admit, and use moral diversity for the common good of the society in which he or she lives. The recurrent commencement of ceremonies seeks to aid the youth to accept their role in the wider human society, as well as honour and respect the development of every human life. The exceptionality of the most important tests is the ceremonious moral value of accommodating diversity and using it for both communal and personal advantage.

Gyekye also affirms that the community and the individual should be ascribed the same moral status because the community cannot exist without the individuals who give it its corporate reality while, at the same time, no individual could survive without the favourable environment provided by the community. Gyekye (1997:41) sums up 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”.

To conclude, just as an individual cannot live without the upkeep of other individuals and the community at large, Ubuntu believes and no community can live in the world alone minus existence in harmony and solidarity with the rest of the communities that share the earth. Moral diversity and uniqueness, both among individuals and among societies, are riches, especially because to Ubuntu, humanity is by large a product of human relationships. This African worldview is seen in Ubuntu’s emphasis on the establishment and maintenance of harmony between different ethnicities, tribes, or races.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined the unfathomable normative scholarly works of John Samuel Mbiti’s understanding of Ubuntu as a resource for moral formation in present-day Africa. Mbiti’s life as well as literary and academic works were explored, particularly his contribution to the African philosophy of Ubuntu. Furthermore, a different notion of the application of the Ubuntu worldview as propagated by Mbiti’s philosophical interpretations, which include the anthropological nature of ATRs and the African vision of the Ubuntu worldview as a basis for moral formation, were scrutinised. Subsequently, Mbiti’s approach to African communitarianism in juxtaposition to the notion of morality, African selfhood, and the Ubuntu theory of moral formation and philosophy of moral diversity of society were carefully evaluated.

Mbiti's normative approach to Ubuntu has much to contribute to society, which is why he is in favour of this African worldview, as captured by the saying: 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am'. For whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and vice versa. The Ubuntu worldview is still and has continued to serve as a code of morality and ethics the society inculcates daily. The philosophy and perspective of Mbiti's concept of ATRs have helped people experience the basic principle of Ubuntu as the basis of moral formation in contemporary Africa and beyond.

The three previous chapters unpacked the viewpoints of the three main scholars under study, namely: Shutte (Chapter 3), Gyekye (Chapter 4), and Mbiti (Chapter 5). Based on the insights of this research, the following chapter that is (Chapter 6) compares these scholars' views.



CHAPTER 6:

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST OF THE VIEWS OF AUGUSTINE SHUTTE, KWAME GYEKYE & JOHN MBITI

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 outlined the viewpoint of Augustine Shutte and Chapter 4 described the perspective of Kwame Gyekye. The previous chapter, Chapter 5, provided a comprehensive overview of John Mbiti's philosophy of Ubuntu as the likely resource for moral formation in contemporary Africa. It sketched details of his life, literary and academic works, and highlighted his findings on ATR. Moreover, it examined Mbiti's understanding of the Ubuntu worldview and that of other philosophers on different aspects of present-day Africa, which also looked at the anthropological landscape of ATRs as the basis for moral formation, along with the African vision of the Ubuntu worldview. It additionally evaluated Mbiti's normative approach to African philosophy (Ubuntu) and its contribution to African communitarianism in terms of the notion of morality, theory of moral formation, as well as the Ubuntu philosophy of moral diversity in modern Africa.

Herein current chapter, I compared the views of Augustine Shutte, Kwame Gyekye, and John Mbiti on several aspects of their definition, approach, and use of the African concept of Ubuntu ethics in their impact and contribution towards an African philosophy and moral formation in contemporary Africa.

The chapter further explored the various theories of moral formation and looks at the Christian ethics/morality of these theologians/scholars, namely: Alasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, Johannes van der Ven, Ernst Conradie, John Klaasen, Robin Gill, and Desmond Tutu. The use of worship, narrative, character, and community as the potential resource for moral formation are scrutinised to ascertain commonalities of the principles of Ubuntu in present-day Africa and further afield.

Also, this chapter provides a fresh perspective on Ubuntu as a new pioneer for moral formation with specific dimension of significant influence and impact of South African approach of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu theology and developing community with other potential contribution on African Christian spirituality, the African Christian concept of God, and Ubuntu as the centrality of worship in Tutu's life. Tutu's Ubuntu theology describes a community that is comprehensive of gender, class status, race, and includes the

non-human community. The community is also the context for the moral formation of the individual. Tutu's Ubuntu theology also places emphasis on the role of God in the community and not so much on the individual for moral formation. In addition, the chapter highlights the four characteristics of Ubuntu theology, namely: Ubuntu theology that builds an interdependent community; integrates cultures; recognises the distinctiveness of a person; and that can overthrow apartheid.

I further investigated how Tutu's understanding of moral formation through worship, forgiveness, and reconciliation influences the principles of Ubuntu in contemporary Africa. The penultimate section gives a critical reflection of Ubuntu philosophy and discusses the criticisms of various scholars. Finally, a personal reflection of Ubuntu as a basis of moral formation is provided.

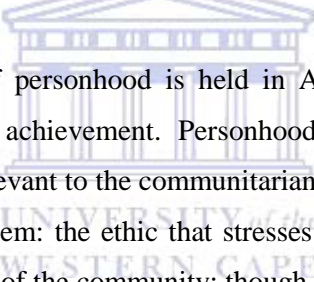
6.2 The Contrasting Worldviews

The significant difference between Shutte, Gyekye, and Mbiti is evident in the ways they address the African worldview (Ubuntu) and moral formation. Shutte's understanding is based on his moral beliefs in God, Ubuntu, charity, and virtue (or character), whereas Gyekye's approach to African communitarianism is a theory to go by because it reflects the African philosophy through religion, morality, Ubuntu, and the interdependence and interrelatedness of African people with the natural world. On the other hand, Mbiti's approach to traditional African society argues that communities have distinctive religious beliefs which they identify with. The community forms the communitarian societies, and these communities are morally and religiously enshrined. This is made possible because people in a single community are bound by the same religion, the same principles guiding and regulating moral formation and, more significantly, they share an identical opinion of how an individual is conceived in an African society. They are also bound to share how a person must communicate within the community.

According to Placide Tempels' (1959) work entitled *Bantu philosophy*; communitarian morality is of the utmost importance if a person needs to be accepted in the African society. The African communitarian society has no space and place for persons who disturb the moral values of the community. It is the existence of Ubuntu and moral principles that facilitates an African-friendly moral formation because a morally upright person relates well within the community and the rest of creation. Moral formation and Ubuntu in this perspective correlates with responsibilities, rules, and obligations within the ambit of the

human condition as appropriated by “reason”, following the clues of Kantian Enlightenment thinking. Reason alone, as contended by rationalist methodologies of moral formation, cannot always bring about “good” action, as it is influenced by undesired choices. Hauerwas’s⁴³ moral formation, in contrast, is characterised by community, character, worship, and socialisation. Klaasen’s⁴⁴ view follows that of Hauerwas and asserts that narrative in relation to moral formation forms part of the renewal of the story of Jesus’ birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. The story is narrated through the participants in worship.

According to Metz’s perspective of Ubuntu thinking, Kantian reason appears to divest African morality of its worldview and overestimate moral formation, while Shutte’s philosophical approach is closer to the world of which African morality has developed. Similarly, Mbiti’s normative approach to Ubuntu is similar to the philosophy of pastoral care when he says: “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am”; while Gyekye’s conceptual perspective is summed up in an Akan proverb: “All persons are children of God; no one is a child of the earth”, and to validate the reasoning that a person is viewed as a ‘theomorphic being’, having the form or aspect of God. Gyekye (1997:52) submits,



Thus a moral conception of personhood is held in African thought; personhood is defined in terms of moral achievement. Personhood regarded in terms of moral achievement will be most relevant to the communitarian framework that holds the ethic of responsibility in high esteem: the ethic that stresses sensitivity to the interests and well-being of other members of the community; though not necessarily to the detriment of individual rights.

The notion of *moderate community* gives reason and choices a role. The implications for development in the notions of rights, individual rights and reason thereby create power relations on many levels, e.g., between Africa and the West, cultural norms and the rights of individuals, individual and community, adults and children, men and women, and so on.

Perhaps Shutte’s emphasis on African principles with their philosophical qualities has the possibility to augment and affect Western principles. Shutte (1993a) promotes African philosophy in his book, *Philosophy for Africa*. He also mentions an important forerunner of African philosophy, Leopold Senghor (1964), noting his criticism of Europe and his

⁴³ S. Hauerwas, 1983, *The peaceable kingdom: Primer in Christian ethics*, Notre Dame Press, London.

⁴⁴ J.S. Klaasen, 2008, ‘The interplay between The Christian story and The Public story: In search of commonalities for moral formation under democratic rule’, Unpublished PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University.

importance on traditional African thinking. With regard to Senghor, he reflects on the crucial features of African ideology:

[L]ike all African philosophers he recognizes certain ideas as fundamental to traditional African wisdom: that reality is force and the world process an interplay between forces; that humanity is part of this universal field of force; that at the bottom all force is alive, spiritual rather than material; that the individual's life and fulfillment are only to be found in community with others (a community that does not end at death); that morality is the development of natural tendencies to fuller being and more abundant life; and finally that all human life and world process is directed and empowered by a transcendent origin of life and force (Shutte 2001:26).

Incorporating the African philosophies of Gyekye, Shutte and Mbiti creates a remarkable argument, comparison, and submission because they include naturalistic and theistic elements. Shutte's understanding supports the person to act morally and ethically on his/her individualism or community, whereas Gyekye argues that communitarian moral formation acknowledges the importance of individual rights but that it does not do so to the detriment of responsibilities which a person ought to have towards the community or other people of the community. The meaning of this is that the person cannot pursue personal goals which are outside the communal moral and social dictates. And for Mbiti, in traditional African society, the aristocracy arrangement regulates the life of all people in the community. The entire community was tied to the system. For Mbiti, the aristocracy arrangement is like a massive network stretching to accommodate everyone in the community. This entails that every member of the family relates to one another, and no individual is treated as an outsider. Such a societal background contributes to the establishment of a communitarian society with a shared identity. Once a society becomes communitarian, one can therefore argue that such a society has similar morality, morality, and community.

With regards to African morality, the three notions or theories (Gyekye, Shutte and Mbiti) explored how people can resuscitate Ubuntu as source of moral formation, through understanding the Ubuntu principle as a pinnacle of moral guidance. The challenge is that the word Ubuntu is not simple and is rather misunderstood or abused, regardless of communitarian and individualist versions of interpretation. Shutte's concept of the African community and African individual, hence of Ubuntu, seeks a cautious stability where "each individual of the community sees the community as themselves, as one with them in character and identity; each individual sees every other individual member as another person.

Therefore, there is no room for a separation between the individual and the community” (Shutte 2001:27).

On the other hand, as part of Gyekye’s *moderate communitarianism*, which gives meaning to the principle of *reciprocity*, where he asserts that the communitarian moral and political theory considers the community as an elementary common good, advocates a life lived in agreement and collaboration with others, a life of reciprocation, assistance and interdependency, a life in which one shares in the fate of another person. More so, Gyekye’s kind of life of mutual reciprocity and interrelationship is very fulfilling and rewarding. To add, Mbiti’s assessment means that African society contributes to shaping the humanness of an individual who cannot exist alone except with other people of the family or community. This implies that the community can ensure a harmonious relationship among people of the society through a shared moral value and Ubuntu spiritism.

Furthermore, Shutte’s approach as a Catholic priest (philosophy) is based on Aristotelian-Thomistic studies. Also, Mbiti, coming as an Anglican priest, has challenged the Christian supposition that traditional African religious philosophies were ‘anti-Christian and demonic’; furthermore, Gyekye is a significant figure in the development of contemporary African philosophy.

The differences and similarities between Mbiti, Shutte, and Gyekye are noteworthy, especially Gyekye’s assertion that SSA philosophers are more communitarian. Gyekye accused Mbiti’s notion of African communitarianism as being radically defenceless, which thereby creates a so-called *moderate communitarianism*. It is precisely at this juncture that philosophers like Shutte, who also deliberate both Western and SSA philosophers, advocate a well-adjusted ‘compromise’. Shutte does not assert that African philosophy is a comprehensive account of how to live, but he maintains that both Western and African philosophers are absolute, and that instead of challenging one another, they should complement each other.

The diverse means of applying Ubuntu into people’s ‘way of life’, as offered by Mbiti, Shutte and Gyekye, undoubtedly reveals the disparate African ideology and people’s awareness of the tension between ‘philosophy’ (people’s efforts to discover and relate to the rational perspective of existence which comprises moral formation and ethics) and ‘worldview’ (focusing on profound insights concerning realism). These scholars believe that the individual cannot be understood outside the community. The individual cannot exist without other members of the community. A person becomes a full person because of contact and interrelationships with other members of the community.

6.2.1 A comparison of the dissimilarities of the practice of Ubuntu

This sub-section provides a comparison of the positions of Mbiti, Shutte and Gyekye of the Ubuntu practice of human relations and rights over one another using a similar constructive methodology. Shutte's Aristotelian-Thomistic interpretation of happiness as a means to morality supports people's moral formation which is not grounded on responsibilities, obligations, and duties. This metaphysical perspective of Ubuntu contends that Ubuntu has more to offer in a normative concept, unlike Mbiti who suggests a detailed understanding and contextualisation of a moderate community of people, while Gyekye, on the other hand, advocates for a modern, religious, radical community of people.

Though Shutte is more theological in his philosophy, he also embraces the rationalist ideas of Emmanuel Kant and empirical ideas of theorists like David Hume, chiefly because Shutte was also a renowned scholar in the discipline of morality, particularly science and faith. He affirmed the prominence of the autonomy and freedom of an idealistic humanoid, overemphasising the anthropological capability, saying that "for Kant, freedom means autonomy, self-determination. Hence the conception of our God cannot include anything that could suggest a power external to our own. This appears problematic, and indeed it is a problem that I do not think Kant himself ever solved" (Shutte 2005:297). The motivation for Shutte's assessment is that genuine autonomy for the individual is only achievable in connection with others.

Interestingly, Patrick Giddy conducted several studies on Shutte's work, and noted that the primary critique of Shutte was the complicated link between freedom and authority, and between spirituality and materiality, as indicated in 'Religious Laws: The Christian Problem' (Shutte 1976): "The problem I was thinking of was the way many (if not most) religious people think of religion in terms of obedience to some religious authority whose commands or laws have some divine sanction. And I was able to use the work I had done in my master's thesis on Kant and Hegel to criticize this given the value of the freedom which those authors stress" (Giddy 2016:38). Giddy (2016:63) also discusses Shutte's view on the nature of spirituality, stating that:

Shutte suggests, finally, that this (comment: my spirituality) can be reconciled with my materiality in a non-dualist way. My spirituality is my relatedness to myself, while my materiality is my relatedness to other-than-self. If one thinks of my dependence on the world around me, and on other persons, then the first develops only through the

second. My spirituality is, paradoxically, enacted in direct proportion (and not indirect) to my dependence on other-than-me.

Notwithstanding the similarities in their respective approach to Ubuntu, the differences between Mbiti, Shutte and Gyekye are paramount. In Gyekye's⁴⁵ position for a *moderate version of African Communitarianism*, although he admits that the individual is understood as part of the bigger community, he asserts that Mbiti arises with what he called *radical communitarianism* which, according to him, does not distinguish the issue of autonomy and individual rights. For Gyekye, independence and individual rights should not be compromised at the expense of the community. Gyekye's moderate communitarianism constitutes 'the community of mutuality, freedom and rights, the principle of reciprocity, responsibility as a principle of morality, and the common good'. This means that, for Gyekye, communitarianism is a valuation of community as a reality and not as an absolute relationship of individuals. Therefore, community in the context of communitarianism is seen as a group of persons connected by interactive words, which are not necessarily biological, who consider themselves predominantly as members of a group and who share common interests, goals, and values.

The importance of moral formation in Gyekye's form of moderate communitarianism and the Akan conceptualisation of a person would be the categorisation of someone who chooses to lead a lonely lifestyle as a non-person. An individual who exhibits morally blameworthy conduct is also branded as a non-person. He says that for communitarians, personhood is earned in the moral formation and not just handed over to the individual at birth. Gyekye's idea of the common good means that there are those universal enviable things needed for the normal functioning of an individual within a society.

In a similar vein, Menkiti (1984) agrees with other African thinkers in the moral formation of a person in African thought. Like Mbiti, Menkiti opined that a person in African thought is not defined by psychological or physical characteristics, but rather by his/her relation to the community because communal realisms take pre-eminence over an individual's history and experiences. If this is the case, then it is valid therefore to argue that the traditional African community makes sure that conservative and preservative societal taboos, laws, and regulations are observed in the best interest of the entire community. Paradoxically, failure to abide by societal norms renders a person an imperfect individual.

⁴⁵ For more details, see K. Gyekye, 1997, *Tradition and modernity: Reflections on the African experience*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Menkiti (1984) asserted that in Africa, personhood is not automatically granted at birth but is acquired as one matures in society. Such maturity takes quite a long time, and is usually achieved by people who are of forward-thinking age. These people, who are much older according to Menkiti, had the time to learn what it means to be a person through the acquisition of knowledge of norms and social values that governed their society. Therefore, by adhering to and obeying these norms, they become successful in living up to the norm of personhood, and hereafter significantly contribute to the safeguarding of the socio-cultural values of a particular society.

6.3 The Evaluation of Ubuntu and Moral Formation

One of the frontrunners of African communitarianism is Leopold Senghor from Senegal. In his opinion, Africans understand the community as supreme to its components (i.e., individuals). Subsequently, the community is more important than the individuals who make up the community. Similarly, in Senghor's opinion, solidarity must take precedence over person's verdict and activities. Community needs should be examples of person needs. He affirms that Africans place more prominence on the communion of persons than on their independence (Senghor 1964:93-94).

In his book entitled *Consciencism: Philosophy and ideology for de-colonization*, Nkrumah argues that from the African perspective everything that exists is in a complex network of lively forces of tension but with necessary complementarity and interconnection (Hord & Lee 1995:58). Nkrumah's understanding is consistent with Senghor's statement of the African worldview (Ubuntu). However, Nkrumah emphasises the unavoidable tension and conflict within the African essence of universal unity in Ubuntu culture while Senghor places greater emphasis on the importance of cosmic unity and the societal within African culture (Hord & Lee 1995:46-50). According to Gyekye (1997:41), the most satisfactory way to recognise the claims of both communality and individuality is to ascribe to them the status of equal moral standing.

It is essential to understand that Metz kept Shutte in high regard as his predecessor, hence his statement that Shutte was one of the first professional philosophers in South Africa to publish books on African philosophy and Ubuntu. In his evaluation of the virtues of Ubuntu, Metz (2011:537) quotes Steve Biko: "The claim that one can obtain Ubuntu 'through other persons' means, to be more explicit, by way of communal relationships with others". He accordingly emphasises the aspect of communiqué and relationship in the speaking of Ubuntu.

On this point, he mentioned that an adequate illustration is a study related by Augustine Shutte in his book *Ubuntu that is an Ubuntu: An ethic for the new South Africa* (Metz 2007a:327). As a good example, he refers here to the story about the German and African nuns' ignorance about one another's cultures for conversation keeping. The African nuns found it acceptable to talk whilst working and the German sisters, of course, decidedly not. There is generally a good relationship between African people, but when a problem arises that cannot be resolved, the elders are usually consulted to do mediation. Both Shutte and Metz were aware of these demands of good relations and failure thereof leaves a door open for abuse and corruption, which is then experienced at the political, social, economic, and religious levels.

In contrast, Mbiti's assessment or approach to the position of the person in African culture is expressed in the statement: "I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti 1970a:141). As the basis for his analysis, Menkiti upholds that the African view affirms the ontological primacy, and henceforth the ontological independence of the community. He says that "as far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of the individual life histories, whatever these may be" (Menkiti 1984:171). From this notion, Menkiti (1984:172-174) concludes the following:

- the African view contrasts with the Western view, in that "it is the community which defines the person as a person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, wills or memory"
- the African view supports "the notion of personhood as acquired"
- "Personhood is something which has to be achieved and is not given simply because one is born of human seed"
- "As far as African societies are concerned personhood is something at which individuals could fail" (Menkiti 1984:172-174).

He understands the idea of achievement of personhood also from the use of the pronoun 'it' in various dialects, including English (1984:173), to describe offspring and children (1984:173). Menkiti's opinion on the theoretical position of the community vis-a-vis that of a person, and his account of personhood in African moral, social, and political philosophy, could therefore be overstated or not entirely correct, and require some refinements or amendments according to Gyekye. Furthermore, Gyekye instead argues that the theoretical analysis of personhood in African worldview, such as Menkiti's view,

that gives the community precedence above the distinct individual, requires a similar moral formation of societal position of individual believed by some thinkers, together non-African and African. Their position was beached in the ideological choice of socialism – ‘African socialism’ – prepared by greatest African political leaders in the early days of radical freedom. However, the promoters of the philosophy of African socialism, such as Nkrumah, Senghor, and Nyerere, in their concern to discover port for their ideological excellent in the in the traditional African thinking around civilisation, contended that socialism stood suggested in the African traditional notion of communalism (Gyekye 1997:298-299).

Furthermore, the Ubuntu principles and discussion thereof leads to learning about the community and “moral formation”, and interestingly, Shutte (2001:111) shows how it starts in the family, that “as the mother teaches conversation to her child she will learn as much about herself as the child – if she is truly teaching”. It is in the family nucleus where the seed of communication is planted, preparing the child for community and schooling for good moral growth.

Accordingly, maintaining interactions with others is important for moral growth as a person through every phase of one’s life. Thereby, “from birth and childhood, through adolescence into adulthood, through marriage and parenthood and old age, our need of something that only others can give is recognized and celebrated in all sorts of initiation and ceremonies” (Shutte 2009:38). Communication and relationships form the source of all-natural growths of moral formation. Shutte’s keenness is more towards family and the community, teaching and learning the African way to develop the individual to better interconnect and understand within the community. Metz also alluded that it is more focused on rational paths towards independence, and hence Kohlberg’s approach or “stages of moral and character formation”, with the “tasks” for each stage are relevant.

6.3.1 Theories of moral formation

It is necessary to reflect on the theories of moral formation, although moral development and socialisation cannot be associated with moral formation. According to Kretzschmar and Tuckey (2017), although moral formation is anxious with relations and existence at one with God, the self, and others that hint to mortal prosperous and all-inclusive welfare (the product), before moral formation remains the approach (the practice) that are used to achieve this welfare. Moral formation comprises development in eloquent; doing and being, together with moral relations, moral living, and the prosperous of human being and all formation in

agreement with God. Christian ethics as an academic discipline has taken tremendous strides in the Western world as well as the developing world. This research is also situated within the University of the Western Cape's study project on moral discourse.

The work of **Ernst Conradie**⁴⁶ (2006) in the textbook *Morality as a way of life*, is a basis for my discussion and theory of moral formation, along with the work of **John Klaasen** (2012) in *Open-ended narrative and moral formation*. Both scholars have written widely on moral discourse. Conradie (2006:6) makes the point that in various discussions in the field of ethics or morality, the focus is mostly placed on issues of “moral or responsible decision making”, whereas “there are at least two more critical areas that also need to emerge when dealing with the question of morality: the need for virtuous people to build a good society and a vision for a good society”. Conradie (2006: 8) points out that there has always been a tension between these three questions and that it has not always been possible to maintain cohesion between them. In fact, he indicates that there were times in history when one of these moral questions was emphasised in opposition to the others.

Conradie (2006: 53) adds that in the late twentieth-century ethical or moral discourse, one may observe that there is a move away from an “ethics of doing”, which focused on what constitutes a good action, to an “ethics of being” that focused on the type of person one should be. This move was influenced especially by Alasdair MacIntyre's book *After virtue* (1981), and led to the recovery of virtue ethics in various circles including Christian theology (cf. Hauerwas 1975) and a feminist ethics of care (cf. Noddings 1984).

In an ethics of being there are especially three additional questions that must be addressed, namely: which virtues must be refined, why is the recovery of virtue important, and how does the formation of people of good moral character take place? (Conradie 2006:51). I am going to focus on the third one, namely the need for and approach to moral formation which the principle of Ubuntu encourages. Conradie (2006:72-77) suggests that one may identify at least five distinct approaches to moral formation:

⁴⁶ Ernst Conradie (1962) is a Senior Professor in the Department of Religion and Theology at UWC. He teaches Systematic Theology and Ethics. He served as chairperson of the Department for three terms, as chairperson of the Arts Postgraduate Board of Studies, and the Arts Research Committee, and as acting Deputy Dean for Research and Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Arts. He has read numerous papers at national and international conferences. He has obtained various fellowships, scholarships, and invitations for periods of research in Utrecht, Oxford, Berkeley, Heidelberg, Exeter, Princeton, Stellenbosch, Decatur, Georgia, and Amsterdam. He has registered several major collaborative research projects, including ones on Christianity and Ecological Theology; Ecology and Eschatology; Anthropology and Ecology; The Earth in God's Economy; Ecumenical Studies and Social Ethics; Redeeming Sin: Hamartiology, Ecology and Social Analysis/Diagnostics; and Food Contestation. He is a co-editor of the journal, *Scriptura*, and the secretary of the editorial board of the series *Studies in Ethics and Theology*.

- In the first place, he refers to a communal approach to ethics or morality. The focus is on how to behave and how virtues are learned according to the “worldview of the community” to which the person belongs. The emphasis here is on a person’s role, responsibilities, the processes of socialisation, and accepting what is expected of him or her according to the specific community to which the person belongs.
- Secondly, Conradie refers to the methodology to moral formation which takes place within an institutionalised context, where the focus is not so much on the community, but on institutions within a pluralistic society. The focus of this approach is on respect for authority. A ‘good’ person is defined according to his or her loyalty towards a particular institution. Moreover, moral formation is hence understood as “training in obedience to authority, that is, the authority of the institution, the charismatic leader, the sacred text, the divine being” (Conradie 2006:74).
- Thirdly, in the context of the European Enlightenment due to the influence of Immanuel Kant, moral formation is approached in terms of rational argumentation. The individual needs to be persuaded on rational grounds about what is right or wrong, about universal moral principles and the responsibilities that follow from these. The methodology to moral formation shifted from that of being morally guided by the rules of an institution to the assumption that individuals have the freedom to make moral judgements. This methodology to moral formation consequently fosters the ideals of freedom, conscience, and responsibility.
- Fourthly, a different approach to moral formation was adopted in theories of responsibility (influenced by scholars such as Max Weber, Hans Jonas, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, and theologians such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Heinz Eduard Tödt, and Wolfgang Huber) (Baron 2017:5). Indeed, the focus here is on moving away from an emphasis on moral conscience to recognise and accept responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions. However, moral formation is thus centred on “a call to individuals, communities, and institutions to accept responsibility and exercise responsibility in decision making” (Conradie 2006:76).
- Finally, in the context of modern virtue ethics, a degree of consensus developed concerning several variables critical to the establishment of a context conducive to moral formation. Conradie (2006; cf. Vosloo 1994) highlights the following requirements in these ways:
 - Where virtues are rooted in a more comprehensive vision of the good life, of a good society;

- Where virtues are usually embodied and carried through narratives, through paradigmatic stories;
- Where regular exercises, rituals and (spiritual) disciplines are the context within which virtues can be internalised;
- Where such paradigmatic stories are conveyed by “communities of character”, namely groups, traditions, and communities of people who live with integrity, honesty, and loyalty;
- Where conversion, transformation, and discipleship are necessary for those who participate in such “communities of character” (this also requires a long, intense, and often painful process of moral formation);
- Where role models, examples, heroes, saints, martyrs, significant adults (and all inspiring figures play a key role in guiding people through such processes of moral formation, providing direction, motivation, and inspiration;
- Where friendships (in a variety of ways and forms) are crucial in order to sustain people on this road of moral formation;
- Where credibility is born from the concrete practicing of central convictions and virtues; such credibility eventually serves as the criterion for whether or not moral formation has taken place.

There are no easy recipes that must be followed to achieve moral formation. More significantly, moral formation is certainly possible through the moral values of the Ubuntu principle. For a new moral vision and appropriate ethical or moral principle to take place within the community to address societal challenges, e.g., GBV, health service, religious conflict, rape, etc., there is a need for the re-orientation of people. However, the moral formation of a person’s character takes place over an extended period and requires the collective efforts of parents, teachers, community leaders, and other state actors.

Conradie (2006:26-27) further highlighted the classical expression of the vision of a good society which signified calls for the vision of Ubuntu and moral formation. He reiterates that numerous poets, prophets, and politicians in South Africa call for the retrieval of the spirit of Ubuntu to address the “deep moral crisis” in the country and globally. The vision of Ubuntu seems to express at least three vital convictions:

- That a human being is a human being through other human beings. One’s basic sense of identity is formed through one’s belonging to a larger community.

- Respect for the basic human dignity of others is essential because one's own sense of identity and dignity is determined by the way in which others are treated.
- It also calls for solidarity within human communities. Those members of local communities who are experiencing difficult personal circumstances and those who have specific material needs should be assisted by others in the community.

Therefore, in calling for the spirit of Ubuntu, the individualism that is prevalent in modern urbanised and industrialised societies is often criticised. Perhaps many hope to retrieve something of the social harmony of a traditional African village. Moreover, the enthusiasm for the concept of Ubuntu should guard against a romanticised version of “the sweet African village of the bygone period”. In traditional culture, the spirit of Ubuntu did not always prevent authoritarian rule, cruelty against outcasts, the oppression of women and children, and brutal ethnic conflict (Conradie 2006:27). Ubuntu may therefore be understood (perhaps more appropriately) as a future vision for a good society – a society that never existed before in the contemporary world.

The work of **John Klaasen**⁴⁷ (2012:113-117) in an *Open-ended narrative and moral formation* considers reason as an important phenomenon for moral formation. He examined the limitations of using reason as theory, such as negligence of community and tradition, and found relevance in the manner reason is used in an open-ended narrative perspective. He argued that reason is not rejected, however used in a more all-inclusive method that embrace constructive consideration. Moreover, moral judgements are embedded in modernity. Consequently, modernity is characterised by using reason, the assessment of individual as independent, and guidelines could be practically practice generally. The difficulties of modernism comprise the decline of the person in diverse parts and the social nature of the person.

Klaasen (2012) additionally affirms usage of narrative in the work of Everett (1985 & 1999) illustrated how images and symbols, such as woodcraft and worship to foster moral formation. Although William J. Everett's alteration of worship inspires partaking and discourse, especially, even discourse and partaking are engaged to programs, including

⁴⁷ John Klaasen studied at University of the Western Cape; The College of Transfiguration; The University of Kent in Canterbury; and Stellenbosch University. He currently is a Minister of Religion in the Anglican Church in Southern Africa and acted as a Lecturer in the Department from 2009-2015. He was appointed to the position of Senior Lecturer in 2016 and became the Head of the Department later that year. In 2019, he was promoted to Associate Professor. He is continuing his term as both Lecturer and Head of Department. His field of research is in Narrative Theology, Theology, and Development, and he lectures in Practical Theology (Homiletics, Pastoral Care, Christian Education, Narrative Theology, Theology, and Development) and Ethics (Worldviews and Morality).

values of democracy. Such discourse can only take place when reason is useful as theory because the tradition is not allowed to critically engage with current moral values and norms.

On the other hand, Stanley Hauerwas's (1983) narrative methodology is closely aligned to communitarianism. Here, narrative and community are related to the moral value of freedom. Perhaps his use of the Christian narrative as the norm for Christian ethics relates to non-Christian ethics. In an open-ended narrative where morality is formed, law and principles cannot be rejected for moral formation. The use of narrative takes major influences on the way moral formation is formed for society. One of his valuable contributions is his constructive criticism of the open-minded methodology to morality. He criticises the almost exclusive use of reason and individuality in the liberal method to moral formation. Another important influence is his use of community and its importance for good morals and good moral people.

Klaasen (2012) concludes that open-ended narrative allows for interaction between narratives. In such an understanding of narrative, the one does not control the other, but the two narratives engage critically to form morality. In such an approach to moral formation, the narrative has the following physiognomies:

- It must be critical in its reflection on moral formation because the story is open-ended or in continuation; continuous reflection keeps the narrative truthful, consistent, and relevant.
- It must seek commonalities with other narratives of the set society. The commonalities are important for norms that provide a framework within which moral formation takes place.
- Symbols and symbolic language (worship) are important to link two narratives into a “functional whole” (Klaasen 2012:115).

6.4 Christian Ethics: Ubuntu as a Source of Moral Formation

Christian ethics as an academic discipline has taken tremendous strides in the Western world as well as the developing world. This has largely been because of the prophetic role of the church. The church as a moral community is called upon to lead the debate on morality and right moral choices. The church has redeemed this role mainly in two ways, namely: through (1) the important influence the church has, notwithstanding the decrease in church audience in the Western world, and (2) the new phenomenon in ethics, that of community.

It is argued that Ubuntu has an impact on the moral attitudes, dispositions, and behaviours of its readers and audiences. This specific section focused firstly on facilitating discussions in the field of virtue ethics, and secondly, to ascertain certain ways in which Ubuntu plays a role in moral community and moral formation. This section further gives a brief account of the classic literature on virtue ethics. The research draws mainly on the resources from Christian Ethics, especially the discussion on the theories of moral formation, and consequently, various Christian scholars and their contributions to the discourse of virtue ethics. Finally, it concludes with the role of Ubuntu theology or principle as a resource for moral formation.

6.4.1 Alasdair MacIntyre

Alasdair MacIntyre in *After virtue* (1981) critiques the Enlightenment Project, which is one of the most important treatises of Anglophone moral and political philosophy in the 20th century.⁴⁸ He argues that the latter, based on individual preference and emotivism, was set up for failure due to its inability to provide a purpose.

MacIntyre voiced that the character of tradition in ethics offers it with its *telos*, which moral philosophers, such as Hume, in their version of ethics, and Kant (the categorical imperative) failed to provide. He further emphasises the return to and recovery of an (Aristotelian) ethic of virtue, and discusses the source of moral behaviour based on the discourse of the three central concepts of virtue, narrative, and tradition. He defines *virtue* as “an acquired human quality, the possession, and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such good” (MacIntyre 1981:191). He explains that *narratives* provide ‘context’ to people’s actions. *Tradition*, he argues, is ‘historically extended’, ‘socially embodied’, and concerns ‘long-standing arguments’. Individuals engage in practice towards the good within communities, in relation to the story of the community to which a person belongs, which is a person’s context.

To this, he argues that the individual with ‘long-standing arguments’ and hence the communities of character and tradition serve as the individual’s moral framework. Virtue ethics has a long tradition, documented from classical times; MacIntyre argues for its

⁴⁸ Alasdair Chalmers MacIntyre was born 12 January 1929. He is a Scottish American philosopher who has contributed to moral and political philosophy as well as the history of philosophy and theology. He is a senior research fellow at the Centre for Contemporary Aristotelian Studies in Ethics and Politics (CASEP) at London Metropolitan University, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, and Permanent Senior Distinguished Research Fellow at the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture. During his lengthy academic career, he also taught at Brandeis University, Duke University, Vanderbilt University, and Boston University.

recovery in a contemporary perspective to ethics. After the monumental work of MacIntyre, many contemporary ethicists adopted and made significant influences on this discourse. The following section, therefore, provides a very brief overview of a few scholars who contribute to this perspective.

6.4.2 Stanley Hauerwas

Stanley Hauerwas is one of the best prominent North American theologians and has broad teaching experiences.⁴⁹ Hauerwas brings an important dimension to the description of moral formation through the use of Christian stories. Hauerwas stands in the tradition of important philosophers, such as Alasdair MacIntyre, who show the primary significance of the community over individuality for moral formation. Hauerwas has made a significant contribution to the discourse of virtue ethics and the role that communities show in the formation of virtues. His books *Character and the Christian life: A study in theological ethics* (1975) and *The peaceable kingdom: A primer in Christian ethics* (1983) has been widely read.⁵⁰

The forming of a person's moral character by internalising the moral values and norms as entrenched in the community are articulated in the account of Hauerwas (1983) who writes on the formation of virtue and character. He concentrates on how individual are formed within the community and how their development is linked to the stories and the metaphors that centre on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hauerwas states that the individual living the moral life outlined in the metaphors and stories of the tradition and Christian narrative will challenge the social conditioning of his or her time, becoming transformed and striving to bring the peace and love portrayed through the life of Jesus to the world.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Stanley Martin Hauerwas (born 1940) is an American theologian, ethicist, and public intellectual. Hauerwas was a long-time professor at Duke University, serving as the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School with a joint appointment at the Duke University School of Law. In the fall of 2014, he also assumed a chair in theological ethics at the University of Aberdeen. Before moving to Duke and the University of Aberdeen, Hauerwas taught at the University of the Notre Dame. Hauerwas is considered by many to be one of the world's most influential living theologians and was named "America's Best Theologian" by Time magazine in 2001. He was also the first American theologian to deliver the prestigious Gifford Lectures at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland in over forty years. His work is frequently read and debated by scholars in fields outside of religion or ethics, such as political philosophy, sociology, history, and literary theory. Hauerwas has achieved notability outside of academia as a public intellectual, even appearing on The Oprah Winfrey Show.

⁵⁰ Cf. S.L. Carter, 2012, 'Must liberalism be violent-a reflection on the work of Stanley Hauerwas?', *Law & Contemporary Problems* (4)75, 201-219.

⁵¹ Cf. S. Hauerwas, S., 2012, 'Remembering how and what I think: A response to the JRE articles on Hauerwas', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 40(2), 296-306.

In his usage of narrative for moral formation, Hauerwas claims that the Christian story is primary for the formation of good moral people. Hauerwas's approach to moral formation is characterised by his practice of community, character, worship and socialisation, and to a lesser extent, imagery. The Christian community is where good people are formed through the practice of a truthful story. These good morals are formed in worship and the worshippers' become participants, and thus part of the moral renewal of good morals. Also, the symbols help the worshippers to enter an in-depth understanding of the properties and rituals of worship. The worshippers have a more profound understanding of what is presented and so a clearer sense of the morality that is conveyed. This morality and their in-depth understanding become part of the worshippers' nature of their conduct and morality. Moral formation, in this sense, is more than decisions or rationalisation. It has to do with the formation of persons in relation to other people.

6.4.2.1 Character and community

As an illustrious ethicist, Hauerwas responds to current ethics or morality with an ethic of character in the community. Modern ethics subjugates itself with principles and laws. According to Hauerwas, both methodologies are basic in their emphasis on choices, principles, individualism, decisions, intuitiveness, choice, command-obedience, and situation. They neglect the person as a social being, the role of the community in the formation of the person, and the long-term growth of a person. Hauerwas's unique input to Christian ethical or moral reflection lies in his philosophy of character and virtue. In his earlier writings he defines the task of Christian ethics as follows:

Once ethics is focused on the nature and moral determination of the self, vision and virtue again become morally significant categories. We are as we come to see and as that seeing becomes enduring in our intentionality. We do not come to see, however, just by looking but by training our vision through the metaphors and symbols that constitute central convictions. How we come to see therefore is a function of how we come to be since our seeing necessarily is determined by how our basic images are embodied by the self ... i.e., in our character. Christian ethics is the conceptual discipline that analyses and imaginatively tests the images most appropriate to score the Christian life in accordance with the central conviction that the world has been redeemed by the work and person of Christ (Hauerwas 1974:2).

These notions further broaden in his discourse that followed in 1975. These texts comprise the key characteristics of his assumption, namely: virtue, character, and moral training. These

characteristics are vital for Christian ethics and not decision making or law. In his present writings, decision-making and law are given the least priority in ethics, and later (since his book *Character and community: Toward a constructive Christian social ethic*) are given almost no priority, as he argues for an ethic of character in the community. He sums up that:

Christians have not been called to do just the right, to serve the law, though doing the right and observing the law are not irrelevant to being good. Rather for Christians the moral life, at least scriptural, is seen as a journey through life sustained by fidelity to the cross of Christ, which brings a fulfillment no law can ever embody (Hauerwas 1983:31).

Christian character is formed over time, but unlike the relativism of existentialism and situationism, or the abstract ethics of natural law, it takes into consideration the vitality in the formation of moral life. Since humanity is created in the nature of God, sinful humanity is separated from God. Therefore, it is through communion with God that humanity partakes in God's divine dream of the nature of God. Since the knowledge of the understanding of ethics, humanity reveals God's nature by taking on God's character. For the Christian, this process occurs through communal worship.

6.4.2.2 Character, community, and narrative

Hauerwas's three elements of Christian ethics include character, community, and narrative. Though it is evident that some of the elements mutually influence each other over time, all of the elements are essential component of Hauerwas's Christian ethics. The presence of all three elements is required to replicate the more precise component of Hauerwas's perspective of Christian ethics. In his previous works, Hauerwas employed further status on character, but community and narrative were significant for character formation:

Appeals to the agency as a characteristic of the self cannot in principle guarantee our 'freedom'. All determination, since our very ability to know what we have done and to claim our behaviour as our own, is dependent on the descriptions we learn. There is no contradiction between claims of agency and our sociality since the extent and power of any agency depends exactly on the adequacy of the descriptions we learn from our communities. Our 'freedom' therefore, is dependent on our being initiated into a truthful narrative, as in fact, it is the resource from which we derive the power to 'have character' at all. Put simply, our ability to 'have character' does not require the positing of transcendental freedom, rather it demands recognition of the narrative nature of our

existence. The fundamental category for ensuring agency, therefore, is not freedom but narrative (Hauerwas 1983:43).

6.4.2.3 Character

The first pronounced effort by Hauerwas to define an ethics of character was made in *Vision and virtue* (1974:48-67). His perspective of ethics in his writings was philosophical. In *Character and the Christian life: A study in theological ethics* (1975), he offers a theological narrative of character. He begins his explanation with a summary of philosophical and theological questions.

Under the heading ‘Character and Freedom’, Hauerwas offers a comprehensive answer. Freedom is typically related with decisions and actions. To be free is to have a choice. But freedom built on choice says nothing about the factors, the condition, or those issues beyond one’s control. To break through such restrictions, Hauerwas advocates that people look at the personality as an agent. Simply put, what it means to be a person is to act in the world. Activity includes a sense of duty for what one does. To speak of a representative is to speak in the first person; the person is therefore not something deeper than the representative, but the representative character. The representative is also compatible with the notion of character. Character is not about choices people make or actions people take, but rather the form of their agency taken through belief and intentions. Character is not something that is a surface for an in-depth reality of the person.

6.4.2.4 Community

Notwithstanding the assertions of existentialists and situationalists, that moral assumptions are proclamations by independent, wholly lucid instinctive means, people come to moral conclusions through social beings in a community. To do Christian ethics apart from the community that practices the latter, insincerely divorces the moral character (Willimon 1983:29). Christians are to become part of the community that practices history. The Christian cannot be a person by him-/herself but needs the other to become a person. The Christian answers to the gift given by God (to enter the story), and the need of the other elicits a reaction. It is the need of the other that makes freedom possible for the person, and allows him/her to overcome the greatest interruption to independence – personal absorption.

In one of his most current works, *With the grain of the universe: The church’s witness and natural theology* (2013). Hauerwas continued with his practice of community, character,

and narrative when he places the observer at the centre of the Christian narrative. In choosing to emphasise Karl Barth's understanding natural theology as unfathomable when separated from the filled dogma of God, Hauerwas highlights Barth's assertion that Christians must be witnesses of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Hauerwas 2002:206). He likewise submits that witnesses also help people to learn who they are. Knowledge of the witness comes through the retelling of the restoration of humanity and the narrative of God's creation.

6.4.2.5 Narrative

The narrative is designed through Christian characters. Hauerwas affirms that the nature of Christian ethics takes the form of a set of stories, or a story in one story or tradition, that in turn forms a community. Christians do not respond so much to laws or rules as they do to the narrative that tells of God's business with creation. The narrative character of ethics is because people come to intimacy with God. It is through the narrative of Christ and Israel that people understand the world and themselves (Hauerwas 1983:24). The narrative through history shows where this "interdependence" finds meaning. And to believe the character truthfully is to know the person in relation to God. Therefore, people believe themselves when people place their story in God's story. Hauerwas' argument is that the narrative is neither unintentional nor linked to Christian principle. There is no more efficient way of talking about God than in narrative (Hauerwas 1983:25).

The narrative character of people's knowledge about God, the self, and the world is a reality-making claim that the creation and people who exist in it are God's creation. Narrative is theologically central to the explanation of Christian existence. Hauerwas (1983:23) alluded to three significant points: (1) the narrative shows the reality of the person and the world as creatures. Narratives are epistemically critical of people, knowledge of God, and themselves, since people know themselves only in God's life; (2) the narrative is the distinctive method of people's language that requires a change of the person, for the person to be truthful, and to see the realism; and (3) God has discovered God-self narratively in the history of Israel and the life of Jesus Christ. Although most of Scripture is not a mythical narrative, except for the Gospels, it does relay the story of the covenant with Israel, the life of Jesus Christ, and the history of the church.

6.4.3 Assessment of the virtue ethics of Hauerwas

This section discusses five points of influence of Hauerwas's virtue ethics.

(a) The first main influence of Stanley Hauerwas in the field of ethics includes the documentation of the insufficiencies of ethics by natural law. He identified natural law as having subsequent problems:

- 1) Firstly, it gives rise to biased moral psychology as the explanation of an act is determined by a viewer without any reference to the nature of the agent. This underscores the importance of judgement of the action from the observer's point of view which Catholic moralists seek to avoid.
- 2) Secondly, natural law does not adequately account for how theological philosophies are a morality that it is to form the individual and community and describe the world.
- 3) Thirdly, it confuses the assertion that Christian ethics is an ethic that can be recommended to anyone with the claim that people know the content of that ethic by looking at the human.
- 4) Fourthly, it fails to see the diverse or fragmented world with many moralities; instead, it sees one with a universal ethic.
- 5) Fifthly, because of its strong continuity between the church and the world, it fails to provide the "distance" the church needs to be critical of the world in order to recognise and deal with the challenges presented by the communities and violence of the world.
- 6) Sixthly, it ignores the narrative character of Christian convictions.
- 7) Lastly, it highlights the power of those who disagree with one another (Hauerwas 1983:63).

(b) Hauerwas's second influence flows directly from his critique of natural law. As a substitute of doing ethics from the view of natural law, he established a Christian ethic from Christian principles. Christians, like non-Christians, are predisposed to moral independence, but the fact that they belong, or are willing to belong to a community that highlights the story, ritual, and others dedicated to God, divorces them from non-Christians. Therefore, he submits that,

Theologians, therefore, have something significant to say about ethics. But they will not say it significantly if they try to disguise the fact that they think, write and speak out of a distinctive community. Their first task is not, as has been assumed by many working in Christian ethics and still under the spell of Christendom, to write as though

Christian commitments make no difference. In the sense that they only underwrite what everyone already in principle knows, but rather to show what those commitments make (Hauerwas & MacIntyre 1983: 33).

Also, these beliefs, he recommends, are repeated and enacted in the church community. The church community is the place where Christians learn to form ethics or morality and character. The notion “character of the community” is a certain Christian ethic and makes a sole input to the field of ethics or morality.

(c) A third influence is Hauerwas’s engagement in the triumph over autonomous decision-making. For the last twenty and more years, theologians and philosophers have been involved in the discussion between community and individualism. Hauerwas trailed the paths of Alasdair MacIntyre and James Gustafson, and other famous theologians and philosophers, to bring about the indispensable phenomenon of community to ethics or morality. From the early 1980s, his works were driven by the importance of community. By the late 1980s, his concept of community was so well established that he attracted many who read and deliberated his work. Hauerwas called the community “the church community”, although he acknowledged that other images exist for this gathering, such as “body of Christ”, “the way”, and “people of God”. This definite and accurate orientation to the community, the church, has drawn not only praise but also condemnation for its severe objection and separation from the world (Klaasen 2008:145).

(d) Fourthly, Hauerwas’s narrative way of seeing ethics is used by relegated groups, such as feminists, to challenge the misrepresentation of truth and perception based on sexuality. Although he warns against implicit cooperation, i.e., through disguised secular resolutions such as Marxism, the sexual revolution and feminism, the narrative provides a path of accepting the creation and seeing the creation as God’s dominion (1983:146).

(e) The fifth significance of Hauerwas’s notion on a community of character shows involvement in the discussion of worshippers. In Western society and other parts of the world where worshippers have degenerated significantly over the last few eras, the concept of the community adds to investigating, understanding, and explaining this miracle. It is especially Hauerwas’ later writings on the community that makes a significant impact as it compares

Christian ethics with the community as its main perspective for moral formation (Klaasen 2008:147).

6.4.4 Johannes van der Ven

The Dutch theologian Johannes van der Ven has also contributed significantly to the discourse on moral formation.⁵² His influential book on moral formation, *Formation of the moral self* (1998), has been well received in South African discourse. Following a multidisciplinary approach, he particularly focuses on moral formation. Widely read and discussed by various South African scholars, his book has become the main source of numerous studies in the field of virtue ethics. It is also notable that virtue ethicists and theologians draw from theories in other disciplines, such as sociology, philosophy and psychology, especially utilising the input of van der Ven (1998).

In *Formation of the moral self*, van der Ven (1998:40) describes formation as that “which encompasses both informal and formal moral education and has both transitive and intransitive aspects”. The formation of the moral self, he argues, “is a dialectic process: I am not only formed, but I also form myself”. He further states that:

The formation of the moral self takes place within the parameters of the developing self, which is intrinsically in interaction with its environment, especially its human environment: family, other primary groups, neighbourhood, and congregations, as well as the broader pluralistic and multicultural society. As part of this interaction, the self is in communication with all the people it directly or indirectly contacts; and in this process of interpersonal communication, it develops its intrapersonal communication. By actively and passively, narratively and argumentatively participating in this multidimensional communication, the self tells and is told its moral story; it spins and is spun in its own web of meanings, from which he says, character emerges (van der Ven 1998:40).

Van der Ven (1998) identified and discussed seven modes in which moral formation can take place. The first two are informal processes (*discipline and socialization*), which occur in the family and the community. The other five modes (*transmission, development, clarification, emotional development, education of character*) are regarded as formal

⁵² Johannes van der Ven is full professor in practical theology and director of the Nijmegen Institute of Studies in Empirical Theology (Niset) at Nijmegen University in the Netherlands. Since 1995, he is the president of the International Academy of Practical Theology, Netherlands.

processes that take place in recognised institutions of learning in society (which include schools and churches) that are set up as educational institutions for this purpose. Let me concisely explain how these modes are helpful in the process of moral formation:

- (i) The mode of *discipline*, according to van der Ven, is directed at habit formation. *Discipline* occurs informally during the practices and interactions in the household. The parents introduce children to societal values and activities and the child is trained to exercise self-control to act on these. Van der Ven provides clear guidelines for effective discipline for parents. The parents within the protected environment will train the children to accept the values of the group.
- (ii) *Socialisation* is a process that occurs at home, in the family, and through the community and the church. The child adopts the behaviour when he or she observes and remembers the moral convictions of his or her teachers, parents, friends, and role models. They are inspired and this motivates them to live such a life. In the process of developing their own self, they incorporate what they see and what they feel into their own lives as accepted values.
- (iii) *Moral transmission* is an external process whereby a 'group' carries over, passes on, transmits, and teaches the values of the group to its members. The group might be a church and through its moral teaching (for instance, Sunday school, or catechism, or through sermons) present what it regards as good, acceptable moral behaviour.
- (iv) The mode of *development* refers to the internal thought processes involved in the formation of virtues. It has to do with how a person comes to understand what is 'right' and 'wrong': how people are taught to make clear judgements between moral issues.
- (v) Van der Ven maintains that a person needs to explain why they believe a certain action or behaviour is right or wrong. This approach is referred to as *moral clarification*. It is based on a liberal perspective. It is a person's own way of making sense of moral issues. This is not what the church, or other institutions, regards as morally acceptable, but is constructed on the liberal humanist model whereby a person decides on his or her own what is acceptable moral behaviour.
- (vi) Moreover, *the emotional formation* has to do with the development of healthy emotions. It refers to the experience of each person in terms of specific emotions in becoming good people. The emotions that are particularly important as argued by

van der Ven are basic trust, empathy and sympathy, ego-identity, a sense of justice, sex and love, and shame and guilt.

(vii) The *education of character* (seventh mode) rests on the assumption that all the modes, as referred to above, are linked together to form one's character.

6.4.5 Robin Gill

The methodology of Anglican theology, which is well represented by Robin Gill, includes Christian theology.⁵³ Gill is aptly qualified in his multi-disciplinary perspective as he holds postgraduate degrees in both sociology and theology. His works show that theology not only contributes to but also inspires other disciplines. This perspective differs to that of Hauerwas who either rejects other disciplines or just utilises them for inspiration (Klaasen 2008).

The latter is apparent in Hauerwas' usage of sociology. Using his multi-disciplinary method, Robin Gill makes use of empirical research to explore the relationship between worship and moral formation. His statistical investigation of Christian communities supports the community-oriented method of moral formation. This methodology (community-oriented) has reassured the church, especially in terms of moral formation. Victory over individual decision-making (which has controlled ethics, morality and philosophy) enabled Christian ethicists to express with fresh authority independence of philosophy. Some ethicists (including Hauerwas and his associate Willimon) developed the concept of community as an idealistic occurrence. Their knowledge of the community (the church community) is hard to separate from the antagonistic link with the world (Klaasen 2008).

6.4.5.1 Social science and theology

The subsequent provoking assertion by Robin Gill sets him apart from many of his contemporaries:

⁵³ Robin Gill held several distinguished positions as William Leech Professorial Fellow in Applied Theology at The University of Newcastle upon Tyne between 1988-1992. Other positions included: Senior Lecturer, Department of Christian Ethics and Practical theology, University of Edinburgh; Associate Dean, Faculty of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, 1985-1988; He has also held a number of church appointments, including Theological consultant to the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops 1997-1998; Honorary Canon 1992 and member of Archbishop of Canterbury's theological advisory group, Lambeth Palace 1988-1999. His teaching field includes: sociology of religion, Christian ethics, science of religion, theology and ethics, and health care ethics.

[A]s a theologian, I believe that it is essential for theology to continue rigorous self-criticism: theology is essentially a dynamic discipline in which concepts are tested afresh in each age and culture. In our own age and culture, the social sciences should be playing a more important role, alongside philosophical and historical methods, in the dynamic process of discovery and re-discovery (Gill 1996b:146).

The correlation between the social sciences and theology is consistent with the separation of Christian ethicists from the metaphysical understanding of independent decision-making. Perhaps if theologians can utilise the social sciences in conjunction with theology, then they will be able to transcend the barrier at which thinkers get trapped. This highlights the tension between faith and practice. Faith and practice (praxis theology) comprise two intrinsic features, namely: (1) sociological theories and techniques which can be used to adjudicate the legitimacy of contradictory theological assertions or interpretations of theological concepts; and (2) an accompanying methodology that would determine the social effects of theological positions in a systematic way. This is significant in terms of the influence the practice of the Christian story would have on moral formation, and vice versa.

6.4.5.2 Worship

The ideology of the worship of the Christian community is not cognitive-oriented as is advocated by the liberal autonomy of philosophy. Furtherance between church and society exists that is consistent, diverse, mutual, creative, and however truthful. Gill discourses two other levels of Christian ethics: institutionalisation and legitimation. The first confers the indispensability of Scripture for the community. The latter confers the church bodies and their moral positions. In all three levels, plurality is a significant character. To this, he recommends an alternative in the form of a uniform sect, inter-church movement, an individual prophet, and the values of the strain in the church. Whereas the first three can assert integrated moral formation, they cannot expect to represent the whole of Christianity. The fourth notion confesses that churches are divided on most moral questions but uphold unity in diversification. Gill (1996b:13) ends with a rich explanation, which is also the position of Anglican theology, “On this approach (which I finally share myself) the most we can expect to have in common are biblically consonant values or virtues held in tension ...”

Gill's methodology correlates with Hauerwas on several points. He, like Hauerwas, claims that moral formation happens in a community, particularly a church community. Similarly, Gill views the church community as the primary community where moral formation takes place.

Frankly speaking, from a specifically Anglican tradition, Gill describes the community predominantly as a form of identification. Also, when deliberating on a worshipping community, he includes seasonal worshippers and regular worshippers. He describes the church as those who are active, but mostly refers to the institution as a hierarchical structure. The church is the institution which includes its doctrine, canons, and constitutions. The church has well-defined boundaries, and its identity is to be found in these boundaries (Klaasen 2008:179).

However, unlike Hauerwas, Gill determines that more than one community exists and communities other than the church are important for moral formation. Most significantly, drawing from his post-graduate studies in sociology, Gill further concludes that people belong to different communities, and different communities compete against one another in the human sphere of influence. One of the main inferences that Gill makes is the importance of other communities on moral formation. Gill offers great value to the liberal methodology, as moral formation and reason form part of this perspective of moral formation (Klaasen 2008:180).

Gill's explanation of community seems less personal and more fundamental, making it more difficult to fully appreciate the community for moral formation. Although Gill and Hauerwas have many points of connection there are also differences that stand out in their methodologies. Attention is given to Gill's conception of community in relation to the community of worship and how he utilises the open-minded principles for moral formation. Also important is his value of worship and the place that has for moral formation.

In this section, various scholars that made an impact in the field of virtue ethics were discussed. Next, the following section reviews the Ubuntu theology of Archbishop Desmond Tutu as a new potential frontline to Ubuntu as the centre of moral formation and community development.

6.4.6 Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

This section introduces the likely new-fangled perspective to Ubuntu theology of Desmond Tutu as the interdependent of community to moral formation. The tradition of

Ubuntu theology, although commonly practiced amongst most African communities, is a fairly new concept in academia. This concept captured the attention of the (academic) world following the first democratic election in April 1994 in South Africa in resistance to the apartheid era. Ever since 1994, both African and Western theologians have taken this as a serious academic conceptualisation. Desmond Tutu used the notion of Ubuntu to describe moral behaviour or formation. He was one of the most influential South Africans of all time.⁵⁴ In addition to his books, he also wrote numerous academic articles and speeches for people all over the world. He was the former Chairman of the TRC in South Africa, and served as the Anglican Archbishop of Southern Africa from 1986 to 1996. Tutu was also Archbishop Emeritus and patron to many charities and societies in the nation and globally. South African theologians, such as Augustine Shutte, complimented Tutu's work, but also provided important criticisms such as his use of worship for moral formation. This analysis seeks to find the points of connection between these thinkers as sources of moral formation as well as highlight the relationship to Tutu's Ubuntu theology.

Ubuntu as a cultural practice is unique to South Africa and is translated in its popular form as “a human is human through interaction with other human beings”. Tutu utilises moral formation like many Western moral theologians use the communitarian methodology. As a theologian, Tutu's practice of the notion of Ubuntu seems the most appropriate methodology for moral formation for a South African society and globally. Tutu's usage of Ubuntu seeks an all-inclusive and peaceful co-existence for all people. Tutu's narrative of the human community is more inclusive than the attempt of the other perspectives to refer to the community. He is well-known internationally for his efforts of inclusivity in his narrative of the community. In this regard, I relate his usage of community considering the concept of Ubuntu as the basis for moral formation.

Tutu was a prominent minister and worship was significant to his narrative of community and morality. Thus, both personal worship in the form of meditation and prayer, in the Holy Eucharist, and communal worship, is crucial for moral formation. Also, regular celebration of the Eucharist formed the centre of Tutu's worship. The Eucharist reunites people to each other and, more importantly, to God. As an anti-apartheid activist, Tutu's role during the TRC process in South Africa was phenomenal,

⁵⁴ Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu (7 October 1931– 26 December 2021) was a South African Anglican cleric and theologian, known for his work as an anti-apartheid and human rights activist. He was the Bishop of Johannesburg from 1985 to 1986 and then the Archbishop of Cape Town from 1986 to 1996, in both cases being the first black African to hold the position. Theologically, he sought to fuse ideas from black theology with African theology.

although the people are still healing from other societal ills such as xenophobic attacks, inequality, unemployment, rape, injustice, GBV, and so on.

6.5 Ubuntu Theology as the New Frontier for Moral Formation

Tutu's theological principles of Ubuntu undergird his approach to addressing apartheid; a theological and political classification of the battle should be used to navigate the new edge of Ubuntu as the centre moral formation in modern Africa. Ubuntu, as the African notion of the community embraced by Tutu, provides a corrective hermeneutic for Western salvation theology that focuses on the individual. The best of Tutu's theological model is the emphasis on the integrity of creation, and the habitual recalling of our image of God (*imago Dei*) during human conflict (Battle 1997:5).

Tutu's theological model also seeks to restore the oppressor's humanity by releasing and enabling the oppressed to see their oppressor as peers under God. This indicates that there can be a mutual understanding as Jesus teaches through friendship (John 15:15); such mutuality is expressed by Ubuntu. Tutu's Ubuntu theology begins with the account of God's creation, in which human identity is defined in the image of God. He believes that God created humans as finite creatures made for the infinite. However, there is nothing less that God could ever hope for, and that is to satisfy deep human longings. His theology must be viewed through the lens of Ubuntu because "we can be human only in ... in community, in koinonia, in peace" (Tutu, quoted in Battle 1997:5). This means that the only way to determine who one is, is to make sense of and remain properly intelligent to the two persons to appeal to that which is beyond both.

6.5.1 African Christian spirituality

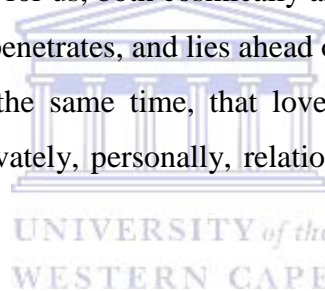
Desmond Tutu considered spirituality the centre of life. The spiritual transforms all human realms, including the political, removing the justification to manipulate persons based on their race or ethnicity. Ubuntu, as life in relation to God and neighbour nourished by worship, manifests the church's integrity to show a hostile society a better way of determining identity than through violence. The church in its public, spiritual witness must be active in the world in such a way as to expose any power alien to seeking God's image in the other (Battle 1997:8). "Christianity can never be a personal matter. It has public consequences and people must make public choices. Many people think Christians should be neutral or that the Church must be neutral. But in a situation of injustice and oppression such as the case of South

Africa, not to choose to oppose is, in fact, to have chosen to side with the powerful, with the exploiter, with the oppressor” (Tutu, quoted in Battle 1997:7).

Perhaps racial or ethnic ideology proved inconsistent with Tutu’s model of theological ethics in the notion of Ubuntu in the light of the *imago Dei*. Tutu (1984: n.p.) described himself “as an ordinary Christian leader, I am motivated by no political ideology or otherwise. What I do or say are determined by what I understand to be the imperatives of the gospel of ... Jesus Christ. I believe I stand in the mainline of biblical and Christian tradition in my understanding of how the Christian faith impinges on our everyday life”.

6.5.2 The African Christian concept of God

Tutu believed that only God “knows [suffering] from the inside and has overcome it not by waving a magic wand, but by going through the annihilation, the destruction, the pain, the anguish of death as excruciating as crucifixion. That seems to be the pattern of true; the greatness that we have to undergo to be truly creative”.⁵⁵ He affirmed that “through Jesus, we know that God is and that God is for us, both cosmically and particularly. This all-embracing love underlies overreaches, interpenetrates, and lies ahead of everything that is and, therefore, is not to be privatized. Yet at the same time, that love supports the development of all individuals who are persons, privately, personally, relationally and socially” (Tutu, cited in Battle 1997:6).



6.5.3 Ubuntu as the centrality of worship in the life of Tutu

Tutu proclaimed that “religion is what you do with suffering, yours and that of others”. Faith in the Christian God who entered suffering takes all human life seriously, including the resurrection of the body. The church practices this claim through ordinary, mundane, material things such as bread, water, wine and oil in order that the material may not be “recalcitrant and alien to the spiritual, and that it will all be transfigured to share in the glory of the kingdom, where all things will have been made new, including human relationships, chief among them the socio-political and economic arrangements for our life together” (Tutu, cited in Battle 1997:7).

Furthermore, this God revealed in Jesus helps individuals determine their identity apart from being strangers and oppressors, and assists them see God’s reality in their individual encounters. In so doing, personhood is discovered, and Ubuntu principles guide

⁵⁵ D. Tutu, 1991, ‘The Archbishop, The Church and the Nation’, *Monitor: The Journal of the Human Right Trust*, June. Port Elizabeth: monitor Publications, 7.

through this development as well. By recognising the image of God in others, one comes to appreciate how God creates by relating to difference. Tutu defines the importance of difference in religion as he further explains how one participates in God's activity of creation in one of his sermons at Saints Michael's Observatory, by stating that:

If religion is seeking to worship and praise God, then it is trying to be present, in awe, wanting to remain in a wordless, imageless experience ... It is to let God empty us of ourselves and to fill us with God's fullness, so that we become more and more Godlike, more and more Christ-like, that we should live and, yet it should not be we who live but Christ living in us. Then we shall be holy even as ... God is holy, a holiness that is not static or does with ritual purity, but a holiness that must express itself in ethical, political, economic, and social responsibility for our neighbour, for the widow, for the orphan and the alien in our midst (Tutu, cited in Battle 1997:7).

Tutu sees all the realms of life in relation to God. "I could not survive at all if I did not worship, if I did not meditate, if I did not try to have those moments of quiet to be with [God]". He does not see his impact in South Africa as political, but spiritual. "It is because of my faith that I know that apartheid to be totally evil", because, he continues, "apartheid says to be human beings are fundamentally irreconcilable" (Tutu, quoted in Battle 1997:7).

The autobiography of Tutu signifies the kind of community that occupies his writings and ministry. The honours awarded to Tutu stretch over diverse fields in religious, academic and social institutions worldwide to acknowledge his quest to form a community that is more than just and inclusive of all. In his foremost book, Tutu (1982:101) described his vision as follows:

For a South Africa that is more open and more just; where people count and where they will have equal access to the good things of life, with equal opportunity to live, work and learn. I long for a South Africa where there will be equal and untrammelled access to the courts of the land, where detention without trial will be a thing of the hoary past, where banning and other such arbitrary acts will no longer be even so much as mentioned, and where the rule of law will hold sway in the fullest sense. In addition, all adults will participate fully in political decision-making, and in other decisions which affect their lives. Consequently, they will have the vote and be eligible for election to all public offices. This South Africa will have the integrity of territory with a common

citizenship, and all the rights and privileges that go with such citizenship, belonging to all its inhabitants.

As early as the 1980s Tutu's theological and ethical or moral formation was based on Ubuntu principles, such as solidarity, reconciliation, rights, decision-making, restorative justice, inclusivity, reason, and interdependence. These principles must be understood and interpreted in the context of community. Tutu calls such theological and ethical or moral reflections 'Ubuntu'.

Ubuntu has a variety of interpretations amongst African scholars, but its meaning is basically translated as "a person's humanity is expressed in relationship with others". Michael Jesse Battle,⁵⁶ who served as Tutu's chaplain and spent a full year under the ministry and direction of Tutu, wrote one of the greatest theological books, entitled: *Reconciliation: Ubuntu theology of Tutu*. He described the Ubuntu theology of Tutu in four characteristics, which are discussed below.

6.5.4 The four characteristics of Ubuntu theology

One of Tutu's first references to Ubuntu is in his description of the African worldview:

In the African *Weltanschauung*, a person is not basically an independent solitary entity. A person is human precisely in being enveloped in the community of other human beings, in being caught up in the bundle of life. To be is to participate. The *summum bonum* here is not independence but sharing, interdependence. And what is true of the human person is surely true of human aggregations. Even in modern-day Africa, this understanding of human nature determines some government policies. After all the Arusha Declaration is counterbalanced by the concept of 'ujamaa' in Tanzania and 'harambee' in Kenya. This is the reason I have spoken of a proper ambivalence towards [economic] viability – acknowledging its positive aspects while rejecting its negative ones and this in an explicit way. A dialectical tension exists here which must not be too easily resolved by opting for one or other of the alternatives (Tutu 1973:39).

Thus, from this African worldview, Ubuntu shaped Tutu's subsequent work as the centre from which to make reconciliation comprehensible in African culture. Tutu needed to communicate at this level because interdependence is necessary for persons to exercise,

⁵⁶ Michael Jesse Battle (born 12 December 1963) is an Episcopal moral theologian known for his works on spirituality, reconciliation, and the views of Desmond Tutu.

develop, and fulfil their potential to be both individuals and a community.⁵⁷ Only by means of absolute dependence on God and neighbour, and human interdependence, can a true human identity be obtained. Tutu's Ubuntu theology has four aims: it builds interdependent communities; it integrates cultures; it recognises the distinctiveness of a person; and it can overthrow apartheid. These aims are unpacked further below under their respective sub-headings.

6.5.4.1 Ubuntu theology builds interdependent communities

Ubuntu, for Tutu, fosters the vulnerability that builds a true community. This vulnerability begins when human divisions are set aside. According to Tutu quoted in Battle (1997:40), apartheid stated that "people are created for separation, people are created for apartheid, people are created for alienation and division, disharmony; we say people are made for togetherness, people are made for fellowship".

Subsequently, people are made for fellowship because only in vulnerable relationships can people recognise that their humanity is bound up in the humanity of others. However, what makes Ubuntu participation in the community different for many Westerners is that Ubuntu theology excludes competitiveness. Instead of being manipulative and seeking, the person is "more willing to make excuses for others" and even discovers new meaning in these others. Communal competition, in contrast, makes humans and their community into little more than a pack of animals. As Tutu pointed out, "if you throw a bone to a group of dogs, you won't hear them say: After you!" (Tutu cited in Battle 1997:41).

From the perspective of Tutu's Ubuntu model, human systems that encourage a high degree of competitiveness and selfishness demonstrate the greatest discrepancy, an "incommensurate difference" that is from God's creation of independence (Tutu cited in Battle 1997:41). This discrepancy can be illustrated by Tutu's interpretation of the creation narrative in which Adam needed Eve as a sign of our interdependency:

You know that story in the Bible. Adam is placed in the Garden of Eden, and everything is honky-dory in the garden. Everything is very nice; they are all very friendly with each other, did I say, everybody was happy? No, actually Adam was not entirely happy, and God is solicitous for Adam, and He looks on and says, 'No, it is not

⁵⁷ A similar conceptualisation of Ubuntu may be found in the doctrine of African Socialism especially expounded by Julius K. Nyerere's *Ujamaa*. See J.K. Nyerere, 1968, *Ujamaa: Essays on socialism*, Oxford University Press, London; J.K. Nyerere, 1973, *Freedom and development*, Oxford University Press, London; and J.K. Nyerere, 1979, 'The rational choice', in A. Coulson (ed.), *African socialism in practice: The Tanzanian experience*, pp. 19-26, Spokesman Publisher, Nottingham, UK.

good for man to be alone.’ So, God says, ‘Adam how about choosing a partner?’ So, God makes the animals pass one by one in front of Adam. And God says Adam, ‘What about this one?’ Adam says, ‘Not on your life.’

What about this one? ‘No’

God says, ‘Ah, I got it.’ So, God puts Adam to sleep and out of his rib he produces this delectable creature Eve and when Adam awakes, he says ‘wow, this is just what the doctor ordered.’ But is to say, you and I are made for interdependency (Tutu cited in Battle 1997:42).

Nevertheless, Tutu’s vulnerable community digs even deeper into vulnerability than Adam did because such a community lays aside all racial or ethnic distinctions as determinative of human identity. Ubuntu proclaims that people should rejoice in how God has created persons differently; therefore, as Adam, we can discover that new meanings and identities are always possible. The only way individuals and communities can be free is together, despite racial classifications. Human categories and effort will not ultimately achieve the goal of a flourishing community. Therefore, an appeal to participate in that which is greater than God provides the theological impetus for Ubuntu.

6.5.4.2 *Ubuntu theology integrates cultures*

Ubuntu, as noted before, is the quality of interaction in which one’s own humanness depends on recognising it in the other. Such recognition comes out because of each person’s culture, but also transcends culture because of the human interaction. Shutte provides an illustration of this from John Heron’s research on the phenomenon of mutual gazing. In this case, the Zulu greeting *ndibona* (“I see you”) is coupled with the Zulu response *sawubona* (“yes”). “In meeting your gaze”, Shutte notes, “it is not the physical properties of your eyes that I fix on, as, an eye-specialist would ... In fact when I pick up your gaze my eyes actually either simply oscillate back and forth between your eyes, or else fixate on a point equidistant between them. What I picked is the gaze, and in the gaze, the presence of a person actively present to me. And the same is simultaneously true of you”. The gaze is neither African nor European, but human (Tutu cited in Battle 1997:45-46).

By recognising one’s identity in the other, Tutu’s theology guards against the Western propensity for racial or ethnic classifications. That is, Tutu’s Ubuntu seeks to show that persons are more than either black or white; they are human. Tutu’s Ubuntu involves a system in which not only is each person unique, but so are the nations of the world. The world is to be international. Tutu (1992:37) clarifies that, “A self-sufficient human being is

subhuman. I have gifts that you do not have so consequently, I am unique, you have gifts that I do not have, so you are unique. God has made us so that we need each other. We see it on a macro level. Not even the most powerful nations in the world can be self-sufficient”.

Thus, Ubuntu implies more than a non-racial, non-sexist, and non-exploitative society. Relatively, it “is a touchstone by which the quality of a society has to be continually tested, no matter what ideology is reigning; it must be incorporated not only in the society of the future but also in the process of the struggle towards that future” (Wilson & Ramphela 1989:269). The notion of Ubuntu establishes that people are not defined by natural sets of properties but by the relationships between them and others. The same applies to cultures in that these combine to form a distinctive society.

6.5.4.3 Ubuntu theology recognises the distinctiveness of a person

In Tutu’s endeavour to address both white and black communities, Ubuntu theology may seem unrealistic. Throughout South African history there has been disintegration in the relationships between black and white people. Ubuntu theology counteracts the long tradition of antagonistic and individualistic language. Ubuntu theology asserts that persons are ends in themselves only through the discovery of who they are in others (Tutu, cited in Battle 1997:42). Humans become a person by living in an environment where there is the interaction of diverse personalities and cultures. If there is no such environment, personhood does not survive. Perhaps the problem in the human community is not so much that some lack knowledge of how to behave in company with others, but they put themselves forward in ways meant to exhibit their superiority, rather than their distinctiveness. Tutu (1982: n.p.) demonstrated this with the following fable:

There was once a light bulb that shone and shone as no light bulb had shone before. It captured all the limelight and began to strut about arrogantly quite unmindful of how it was that it could shine so brilliantly, thinking that it was all due to its own merit and skill. Then one day someone disconnected the famous light bulb from the light socket and placed it on a table and try as hard as it could, bring forth no light and brilliance. It lay there looking so disconsolate and dark and cold and useless. Yes, it had never known that its light came from the power station and that it had been connected to the dynamo by little wires and flexes that lay hidden and unseen and totally unsung.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ D. Tutu, 1982, ‘Response to Graduation of Columbia University’s Honorary Doctorate’ (address), the University of Witwatersrand, 2 August. The degree was presented by Columbia’s president, who came to South Africa with university trustees because the South African Government prevented Tutu from flying to New York.

The distinctiveness of each person depends upon his/her connection with other persons and recognition of a more encompassing context. All humans are born with potential, according to Ubuntu theology, but this potential can be understood only in the context of others and God. During the apartheid system, Tutu believed that in Ubuntu theology personhood was ultimately formed through the church, as the church witnesses to the world, and that God is the one who loves human identities into being. This means that God's love is present before everything else and God is the source of all power. To gain the vision of Ubuntu is to negotiate how to be in the world to access the life of grace in God. As the light bulb fable demonstrates, any claim of control or power is delusory and foolish. Being recognised as a distinctive person, therefore, requires that one be transformed to a new identity.

6.5.4.4 Ubuntu theology can overthrow apartheid

Tutu's definition of Ubuntu and how his theological interpretation of it counters the narrative of apartheid both have to do with how the *imago Dei* is understood in South Africa as the locus of one's identity. "It is absolutely necessary for us to share certain values," Tutu noted on one occasion, "otherwise discourse between us would be impossible for we would be without common points of reference" (Tutu, cited in Battle 1997:47).

The implicit power analysis of Ubuntu became explicit as it faced off against apartheid. The first step as Tutu saw it, and, in some ways, the only step was that Ubuntu would humanise the oppressors in the eyes of black people and that a sense of common humanity would form. "We will grow in the knowledge that they [white people] too are God's children, even though they may be our oppressors, though they may be our enemies. Paradoxically, and more truly, they are really our sisters and our brothers, because we have dared, and belong together with us in the family of God, and their humanity is caught up in our humanity, as ours is caught up in theirs" (Tutu, quoted in Battle 1997:47). This stance had such a profound effect on Tutu that one defining characteristic of his episcopate was the conscious movement toward meditative spirituality. His ability to gaze upon apartheid was precisely through Ubuntu as a theological spirituality rather than a political programme:

We are each a God-carrier, a tabernacle of the Holy Spirit, indwelt by God the holy and most blessed Trinity. To treat one such as less than this is not just wrong ... It is to spit in the face of God. Consequently, injustice, racism, exploitation, oppression is to be opposed not as a political task but as a response to a religious, spiritual imperative. Not

to oppose these manifestations of evil would be tantamount to disobeying God. God has created us for interdependence as God has created us in [the divine] image – the image of a divine fellowship of the holy and blessed Trinity. The self-sufficient human being is a contradiction in terms, is subhuman. God has created us to be different in order that we realize our need for one another (Tutu cited in Battle 1997:48).

By this spirituality, Desmond Tutu encouraged others to live in a confident manner:

So, you say to that old lady walking the dusty streets of Soweto, whose African name her employer doesn't know because she says it's too difficult, so I'll call you by a name, even if it is not yours. You are Jane Annie. You are someone very special to God and the divine image did not say it will indwell clever people. Whether you are clever or not so clever, whether you are beautiful or when people see you, they cover their faces, oh yes; whether you are tall or short, whether you are substantial or not so substantial [you are God's viceroys] (Tutu cited in Battle 1997:48).

Also, out of this confidence of being God's viceroy, persons in the community of Ubuntu are moved to care for others:

We do not need to be clever. We must just be receptive, open, appreciative, to smell the fragrance of the flowers, to feel the cold splash of rain, to catch the familiar odour of damp soil, to see the ragged mother dandling her malnourished baby in rags. And to let the Spirit inside us pray with groaning that cannot be put into words. To marvel at the fact that poor, hungry people can laugh, can love, can be caring, can share, can nurture, can embrace, can cry, can whimper, can crawl over and die – that these tattered rags of humanity are Jesus Christ: 'Inasmuch as you did it to lease of these my sister and brother.' They are God's stand-ins, created in his image. They are precious, they have their names engraved on God's palms, the hairs of their heads are numbered, and God knows them, these nonentities, these anonymous ones who are killed and nobody seems to care (Tutu cited in Battle 1997:49).

Truly, Tutu frequently returned to this point in most of his speeches and sermons. The opposite of Ubuntu with its concern for the neighbour is a made-up competitive society, such as South Africa under apartheid. Perhaps such competitive societies are signs of the fall of creation. In its place, Ubuntu theology is about the moral achievement of absolute

dependence on God and neighbour in such a way that human identity is discovered within societies.

The fourth aspect of Ubuntu theology remained the centre of Tutu's work as the chairman of the TRC in South Africa. Simply put:

The greatest gift that the TRC has given to our people is a single history of what happened during the apartheid years in the area of serious human rights violations. Without the TRC there would undoubtedly have been roughly speaking two histories ... a black history which would have been approximately the truth, because the victims know what happened to them, and ... a white history which would have been based on fabricated denials ... The TRC has put an end to these denials (Allen 2006:370).

Tutu's position as a minister was of noteworthy significance in the accomplishment of the TRC. The director of communications for the TRC, John Allen, ascribed the achievement of the Commission to Tutu when he noted that,

Could the TRC have worked without Desmond Tutu? Its members had to ask this question a year into their work, in January 1997, when Tutu was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a member of the Human Rights Violations Committee, had already seen evidence that the symbolism of his presence was vital among victims-it 'validated the pain they had suffered'. To Antjie Krog, working as a journalist looking on, the TRC without Tutu was unthinkable: 'Whatever others might play, it is Tutu who is the compass ... It is he who finds the language for what is happening' ... And it was Boraine – the man who might have run the TRC himself – who at the end of its work judged that of all the commissioners, Tutu came closest to being indispensable: 'I don't think the Commission could have survived without the presence and person and leadership of Desmond Tutu' (Allen 2006:370).

From the above, it is clear that Tutu's community is not only all-inclusive but in innovative tension with the individual. Ubuntu does not refute self-determination, but it comes through communication with other persons. The critical purpose of Ubuntu is to discern the true humanity of all persons and whatever refuses such humanity is in conflict with Ubuntu. Yet, not strange to African's view of the community, the Western interpretation of community is to a certain extent diverse to that which is articulated through Ubuntu. Contrasting the Western monotonous notion of community, Ubuntu is

not a group of individuals or a way of controlling distinct individuals. Ubuntu understands community as each individual member sees the community as themselves. The individual and the community are the same. Individuals are dependent on each other for life and do everything together in society. Therefore, Tutu clarified the Ubuntu community in one of his sermons as the first black Dean of St Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg:

And so, it was exciting to follow in the footsteps of stalwarts such as Deans Palmer, Trandolph, and French-Breytagh and others who had established a scintillating tradition of worship, music, preaching, and social witness. I will always have a lump in my throat when I think of the children at St Mary's; pointers to what can be if our society would but become sane and normal. Here were children of all races playing, praying and learning, and even fighting together, almost uniquely in South Africa. And as I knelt in the Dean's stall at the super 9:30 High Mass with incense, bells, and everything watching a multicultural crowd file up to the altar rails to be communicated, the one bread and the one cup by a mixed team of clergy and lay ministers, with a multiracial choir, servers and sidemen – all this in apartheid mad South Africa ... (Tutu 1994:34).

Indeed, one of the signs that became tantamount with Tutu's Ubuntu community is that of "the rainbow people of God". In this sign, Tutu recognises the dissimilarities between the various races and cultures in South Africa. These dissimilarities must be seen as dissimilarities that express people's distinctiveness before God and each other. It is not dissimilarities that separate people, but dissimilarities that unite people with God and each other. It is the distinctiveness of each of the diverse racial and cultural groups that hold the South African community together and make people grow through their communication with each other.

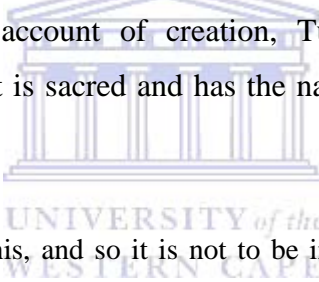
Significantly, on the 9th of May, 1994, at the first constitutionally designated government, Tutu recapped to the South African state that injustice, solidarity, racism, violence, oppression, hatred, freedom, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, and unity have changed divisions. This changeover, which has been defined as gracious, is summarised as the sign of the rainbow people of God. Tutu (1994:261) precisely noted that: "We of many cultures, languages, and races become one nation".

To this effect, one may argue that Tutu's Ubuntu theology was more valuable for moral formation. Tutu's Ubuntu community sees the individual as important only in so far as the individual adds to the development of other persons. The individual is not a

complete entity but is formed through his/her communication with others. The community is at the centre of the innovation of the self, and freedom is found through communication with the other. Freedom is not through justification and obeying the laws but through communication and cooperation with each other. The community is not just a group of individuals but that which gives meaning to the individuals.

Ubuntu community is a unique way in which persons interrelate with each other and grow and develop as persons. It is by no means the way in which persons become individualistic and stagnant. Tutu's Ubuntu is a distinctive way of expressing humanity in connection with others in the community. In the South African framework, both rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed, white and black, male and female, are involved. In this community, the humanity of people grows in the collaboration that takes place.

In the understanding of Ubuntu, community is not limited to humans. Tutu does not limit the community to the human community. Tutu recognises the non-community as part of God's creation and as crucial to the interdependent network. Community thus includes both non-humans and the human community that forms part of God's original order. By using the scriptural account of creation, Tutu informs people that their relationship with the environment is sacred and has the nature of responsibility and care. He asserts that,



We are stewards of all of this, and so it is not to be involved in a passing fad to be concerned about the environment, about ecology. It is not just being politically correct to be green. The material universe has a high destiny. The dominion we were given in Genesis 1:26 was so that we should rule as God's viceroys, doing it as God would-caring, gently, not harshly and exploitatively, with deep reverence, for all is ultimately holy ground and we should figuratively take off our shoes for it all has the potential to be 'theophanic' – to reveal the divine (Tutu 2004:28-29).

Shutte recommends that persons see themselves as forces in the universe and not just as physical bodies with the ability to reason. Perhaps when people see themselves as forces, they live beyond their physical bodies and in connection with other forces that are non-human. In the meantime, persons see themselves not as the person as something private, but the person is outside the body, present and open to all. The person is in relationship with other forces, interconnecting in the community (Shutte 2001:23). Moreover, Battle (1997:51) submits that Tutu's

Ubuntu, then, names the individual's connectedness to her or his community; *seriti* names the life force by which a community of persons is linked to each other. Both concepts assume that a person is intelligible only by being connected to social and natural environments. In this constant mutual interchange of personhood and community; *seriti* becomes indistinguishable from Ubuntu in that the unity of the life force depends on the individual's unity with the community.

6.5.4.5 Tutu's moral formation demonstrates God through worship

Tutu's Ubuntu theology is strictly affiliated with the communitarian moral method by which morality is formed in a community. Critically investigating Tutu's moral concept, van der Ven submits that,

The kind of morality that Tutu proposes is not typically the morality that has been popular in the West since The Enlightenment. He makes no plea whatsoever for procedural morality, contract morality, utilitarianism morality, or consequentialist morality. These are all too neutral, impartial, or unbiased for him. He is concerned with the fate of the Blacks. His morality is entirely dominated by the biased option for the poor. Within this, he develops a combination of classic themes from moral teleology and deontology. Teleology aims at the good life for all: the common good. Deontology unconditionally stresses duties and obligations that cannot be negotiated away. In connection with that, Tutu makes the necessary room for virtue ethics, by which he presents the human models of a virtuous life, which are characterized by justice and strength, temperance, and wisdom. He catches the whole in what is presently known as communitarianism: the morality of the community and of the community of the communities (cited in ed. Pieterse 1995:95).

Tutu's Ubuntu or communitarian moral perspective is like that of the book of *After virtue* by Alasdair MacIntyre and the successive ethics of Stanley Hauerwas and other communitarian ethicists. Hitherto Ubuntu is not high-class or beyond the ethics of the Enlightenment. Tutu is less analytic of the Enlightenment Age and its ethical or moral impact.

Morality, in essence, is formed in the community, but the principles of the Enlightenment can be applied to enhance the moral formation of humanity. Again, people find the original tension between the individual and community. Ubuntu, unlike the communitarianism of Hauerwas, Gill, and others, goes beyond the typical cohesion, commonness or co-option. Ubuntu morality has as its goal the fulfilling of the humanity of

each person, and moral people are those who grow personally through their communication with other people (Shutte 2001:30-32). In this regard, Shutte (2001:32-33) mentions that,

The ethic of Ubuntu was developed in very different circumstances from contemporary South Africa in the pre-scientific, pre-industrial Africa of the past ... Ubuntu is still alive in contemporary South Africa. It is not just an ideal ethic, like that of Plato's Republic or Thomas More's Utopia. It is actually alive as a spirit in people and ways of living, in families' organizations, and enterprises of various kinds.

The most powerful public manifestation of Ubuntu as a present vital force for humanity is the continuing dissipation of the spirit of apartheid. I am not referring to political events but to the process that underlies them. The continuing non-violent revolution in South Africa would not be possible if those who for so long were oppressed by the apartheid system were not educated and practiced in the ethic of Ubuntu. The real miracle we have witnessed is the survival of that spirit on such a scale. The extraordinary manifestations of forgiveness during the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which must be something unique in human history, would not have been possible without it.

In another positive effort to present a theology, De Gruchy also finds a connection with Tutu's Ubuntu theology.⁵⁹ De Gruchy compares the popular opinion of the *imago Dei*, as an ontological identity between humanity and God, with the biblical understanding of their relationship. De Gruchy added that humanity is not like God in the sense that people possess the ability to reason or exercise their will; however, people are responsible and have a trusting relationship with God. Likewise, human beings are interrelated and responsible for one another (1995:239).

6.5.4.6 Tutu's moral formation through reconciliation

Tutu and the writers of the historical and theological literature have focused on his title role as an instrument of reconciliation. His notion of reconciliation is demonstrated around the kind of family that God created as stated in the Book of Genesis. Tutu's assertion is that in God's family everyone is a member. This comprises people of diverse colours,

⁵⁹ Cf. S. de Gruchy, 2003, 'Of agency, assets and appreciation: Seeking some commonalities between theology and development', *Journal of theology for Southern Africa* 117, 20–39.

racism, sexuality nationalities, status, religions, or denominations. He opined that this is “the dream of God” and many prophets prophesy in this regard. He quoted the illustrations of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Junior that “King spoke of it from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 when he dreamed of the day that the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners in Georgia would be able to sit together at the table of brotherhood” (Tutu 2004:20). Gandhi also wrote about this in 1929 when he indicated that his objective was not just the brotherhood of Indian humanity but the “brotherhood of man”, and “In today’s reality they would have referred to daughters and sisterhood, too” (Tutu 2004:21).

Similarly, the vision of God as long-established by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Junior is more than the fake egalitarianism expressed by people of the past. God’s vision is about humanity being interwoven with each other as brothers and sisters. Humanity is a family that describes individuals as more than equivalent bodies. Humanity is an adherent of one family. Some distinguishing features of the ideal family are listed below:

- The first feature of God’s family is that family is a gift from God. People do not have a choice of which their sisters and brothers are, for God created us in God’s image, the whole human race is linked in some way. Tutu articulated that people are a gift to each other (Tutu 2004:22). This aspect has been largely responsible for the relatively peaceful way the transition in South Africa took place from a racial, segregated and oppressive society, to a self-governing society.
- The second feature is that differences are achieved through the worthiness and respect of the other. The unity of the family need not be endangered because of disagreement; perhaps, through differences, the family grows in their maturity towards God and each other. This kind of development comes about through love, affirmation, and care of the greater good in the other (Tutu 2004:22).
- The third feature is the preparedness to share. Tutu draws from the early church’s sharing of material and spiritual gifts amongst its memberships. “They all had things in common. When the one part suffered with it, when one part prospered, then the whole prospered with it. There was mutuality in the relationship in which all gave, and all received ... In a happy family, you don’t receive in proportion to your input. You receive in relation to your needs, the ones who make the least material contribution often being the ones who are most cared for – the young and the aged” (Tutu 2004:23).

- The fourth feature denotes the compassion and care members of the family have for each other. This kind of community of compassion and care for the other takes preference over personal gain. It is through the compassion and care of the other that people discover their own abundance. People also discover their common humanity.

As for Tutu, the perfect human family is God's vision for humanity. In the South African framework, with its complexity and diversities, it is God's dream for people to accept one another as sisters and brothers of one family. Tutu (2004:23-24) succinctly states

... that we do belong together, that our destinies are bound up in one another's, that we can be free only together, that we can survive only together, that we can be human only together, then a glorious world would come into being where all of us lived harmoniously together as members of one family, the human family, God's family. In truth, a transfiguration would take place. God's dream would become a reality.

In terms of God's vision of a human family, Tutu (1999:221) appropriately responds: "... we will always need a process of forgiveness and reconciliation to deal with those unfortunate yet all too human breaches in relationships. They are an inescapable characteristic of the human condition". Reconciliation, as Tutu (1999:222) opined, "... is to want to realize God's dream for humanity – when we will know that we are indeed members of one family, bound together in a delicate network of interdependence".

Reconciliation has four features, namely:

- (i) Firstly, the perpetrator needs to admit the truth. If this truth has been fabricated, or if the intention and conduct of the perpetrator has been to misrepresent the truth, then the admittance of it will naturally lead to forgiveness and healing. Similarly, many South Africans have blamed denial or ignorance as the reason for the oppression of millions of South Africans. In Tutu's (1999:217) view, they have refused to admit that they are morally responsible individuals.
- (ii) Secondly, remorse needs to be shown. Therefore, remorse is about taking responsibility for an act of misrepresenting the truth. Tutu (1999:218-219) conceded that, "This requires a fair measure of humility, especially when the victim is someone in a group that one's community had despised, as was often the case in South Africa when the perpetrators were government agents".

- (iii) Thirdly, people need to remember so that the same wrongs are not replicated. By remembering not to retaliate, but attending to the wrongs in such a way that the root cause is dealt with in a way that brings about healing for both the victim and the perpetrator. Remembering is also important in order to understand the influences and circumstances under which the wrongs were committed.
- (iv) Fourthly, reconciliation means denying the right to punish the perpetrator with his/her own wrongs. The loss of this right is to release the victim and restore the humanity of the perpetrator. Tutu (1999:220) again draws from the Christian story when he states that:

Jesus did not wait until those who were nailing him to the cross had asked for forgiveness. He was ready, as they drove in the nails, to pray to His Father to forgive them and He even provided an excuse for what they were doing. If the victim could forgive only when the culprit confessed, then the victim would be locked into the culprit's whim, locked into victim wood, whatever her own attitude or intention. That would be palpably unjust.

In summary, Desmond Tutu's voice is a new perspective to Ubuntu as the basis for moral formation in present-day Africa. Tutu's Ubuntu, which other theologians have contributed to, is the most ideal for moral formation. This study acknowledges the diverse viewpoints that were expressed, and focuses particularly on the positive points they offer for the moral formation of African society. It seems that Tutu's classical approach includes most of the features of the positions held by Stanley Hauerwas and Robin Gill (Klaasen 2008).

However, Tutu includes the importance of the Ubuntu community and the role of God in moral formation. This has a direct impact on moral formation in contemporary Africa. Stanley Hauerwas utilises the Christian community for moral formation as he discards the four forms of individuality, universal principles, decisions, and reason. Hauerwas supports philosophers and theologians that use the communitarian nature of moral formation (Klaasen 2008).

The key criticism against Hauerwas' assessment is his impractical narrative of community. Incongruously, Gill asserts that more than one community exists, and persons belong to more than one community at any given time. Gill, on the other hand, supports Hauerwas' view that the community is the framework for moral formation and church community in particular is pivotal for moral formation. Such a multi-disciplinary method

acknowledges the valuable influence of the principle of Ubuntu in facilitating the moral formation of a society (Klaasen 2008).

Tutu's Ubuntu theology for moral formation is the most ideal type for moral formation in present-day Africa. His usage of narrative, community, signs and worship efficiently shows Ubuntu as a source of moral formation. His usage of Ubuntu, community, and the character of God for moral formation failed not to discard the reason, self, principles, and universal laws for moral formation, which means that the community, as the individual, is not independent. Tutu recognises the reality of both African theologies' attempt to make the community an absolute and Western theology's attempt to make the individual an absolute. He ties this with the cross of Jesus Christ and Genesis account of creation to show how God gives meaning to humanity through redemption and creation of God's family. The sign of God's family advocates that community is beyond human relation, but also comprises the non-human family.

Conclusively, for this purpose, Tutu demonstrates that community is welcoming and any effort to reject people from the community is untrue. The impact of the value of reconciliation and forgiveness is proof of the role of the community in Ubuntu, which creates the possibility for someone to become part of God's community. The worship and praise of God aids the community to see themselves as mediators of God's vision. They also see themselves for who they are in relation to other persons and God. Moreover, worship of God guides members of the community to restore broken relationships.

6.6 The Challenges of Ubuntu Philosophy

Generally, Ubuntu has little to do with Western humanism which locates truth in an individual's capacity for reason and self-determination. Contrarily, the African notion of Ubuntu emphasises the community as defining the person. Certainly, a logical implication of Ubuntu and African conceptualisations of community, especially for Westerners, would be that the individual self is defined by a person's relations with other persons. The question of whether the individual is self-defined by his or her relations with others remains, along with how the community takes on this definitional role (Battle 1997:50).

African philosophers usually respond by employing an African notion of personality called *seriti* (plural, *diriti*), which identifies a life force that makes no distinction between body and soul. For instance, Gabriel Setiloane, an African theologian, voiced that Sotho-Tswana culture, like the Hebrew culture, believes that the human person is irreducible to a

psychophysical person – body and soul. In such a cultural understanding, to attack the body is to attack the soul and its culture (Setiloane 1976:43).

Ubuntu names the individual's connectedness to his or her community; *seriti* names the life force by which a community of persons is connected to each other. Both notions assume that a person is intelligible only by being connected to social and natural environments. In this mutual constant interchange of personhood and community; *seriti* becomes indistinguishable from Ubuntu in that the unity of the life force depends on the individual's unity with the community. Setiloane (1976:42) clarifies that "It is as if each person were a magnet, creating together a complex field. Within that field, any change in the degree of magnetization any movement of one affects the magnetization of all". The notion that *seriti* and Ubuntu need to be understood alongside one another seems clear, otherwise a person's life force would have little enduring reality apart from that person's sense of community. According to Shutte (1993a:47), there remains an inconsistent account of how the experience of reciprocity and mutuality identified in Ubuntu fits with the metaphysical claims of the life force found in the notion of *seriti*.

Nevertheless, Wiredu (1977:39) pointed out that the African idea of community is always in danger of undermining individual freedom, especially in the context of authoritarian political structures or superstitious beliefs relating to one's health. Both Wiredu and Shutte are helpful in that they seek to provide an account of Ubuntu that is not destructive of individual freedom (Battle 1997:51). Tutu quoted in Battle (1997:52) also alluded to this danger when he said:

I have to confess that our shame in Africa, on the whole, we have not been able to accommodate differences of opinion. When you differ from someone, often that is taken to mean that you are an enemy. But that is actually not traditionally African, because in the traditional African community, the chief if he could work out a consensus, and a consensus occurs because people have different points of view ... In many parts of Africa, we must acknowledge with deep chagrin that the only change experienced by many ordinary people is in the complexion oppressors.

Therefore, when using an important cultural notion such as Ubuntu, it is necessary to distinguish its effect from the ways in which it may be abused. Ubuntu is not simply another communitarian model, perhaps Tutu's Ubuntu theology stresses that human means must be consistent with human ends. The strong freedom of individuality and community in African culture should be indistinguishable.

In Thaddeus Metz's (2021) article circulated in the City Press, "What Archbishop Tutu's Ubuntu credo teaches the world about justice and harmony", Tutu argued that Ubuntu in a democratic South Africa ability to combat apartheid-era's politically by pursuing restorative justice and reconciliation. Uncertainty "social harmony is for us the *summum bonum* means the greatest good", perhaps the goal when trading with offenders – as ones who hold African values – should be to found pleasant relations amongst offenders and wounded. However, from this viewpoint, penalty simply for the resolution of repaying offenders, in the way of an eye for an eye, is baseless.

The controversy vis-à-vis Tutu's Ubuntu theology was criticised for promoting reconciliation leases white recipients of apartheid injustice unjustly. Perhaps reconciliation for Tutu did not mean just shaky hands after one person(s) has oppressed and depreciated the other. Rather, it means that the offender and those who profited admitted the offense, and seeks healing the injury. In Tutu's (1999:34) view, from the 1990s onwards, "unless there is the real material transformation in the lives of those who have been apartheid's victims, we might just as well kiss reconciliation goodbye. It just won't happen without some reparation". The TRC that he chaired was designed at helping South Africans come to positions with their history and set the basis for reconciliation. The fifth volume of the TRC Report (1998)⁶⁰ reiterated the necessity for redistribution to develop the lives of black South Africans. Tutu's lamentation of the let-down of white communities to assume sacrifices on their own and to demand reparation from them, for instance, by calling for a "wealth" or "white" tax that could be used to elevate black communities.

Other critic of Tutu is his version of Ubuntu has been one-sided by the way of Christianity. Though Tutu's Christian convictions predisposed his assessment of Ubuntu, the contrary was so true. Tutu's contextual as an Archbishop of the Anglican Church did not automatically reduce his understanding of Ubuntu completely unAfrican.

Tutu controversial trusts that forgiveness is indispensable for reconciliation and sensible to infer his Christian principles predisposed to the ideology of Ubuntu requirement. Some critics might believe that reconciliation may not necessitate forgiveness. Nonetheless, Tutu (1999) might so misguided in thinking that forgiveness would be part of the best practice of reconciliation, an epitome for which to endeavour. Moreover, the neglect of the understanding of human dignity as alluded in Tutu's philosophies about harmony, humanness, and reconciliation, has vast significant, not only in South Africa, but globally.

⁶⁰ The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was presented to President Nelson Mandela on 29 October 1998, and for details see website: <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/Volume5.pdf>.

Tutu is critical of the view about the moral value of people as human being is their independence that is more of Western perception. As an alternative, Tutu (1999:35) claimed that, “We are different so that we can know our need of one another, for no one is ultimately self-sufficient. The completely self-sufficient person would be sub-human”. In short, human dignity is not their individuality, instead their interrelationship, their ability to participate and share with one another, truly their defencelessness. This relational and African morality of human dignity has hitherto to inspire others outside SSA.

6.6.1 Scholarly criticism of the Ubuntu worldview

The concept of Ubuntu also receives much criticism. The most common point of controversy is probably the issue surrounding the exceptionality of the Ubuntu worldview. According to Kamwangamalu (2008), the Ubuntu frontiersman, Johann Broodryk, states that for something to be exceptional, it must be outstanding as well as extraordinary.

Consequently, one must establish whether there are any physiognomies, features, or moral values, for example, happiness, health, compassion, freedom, brotherhood, self-actualisation, justice, human dignity, solidarity in community (Ubuntu) self-respect, hospitability, togetherness, equal opportunity, sacrificial love, etc., which can be recognised at the other end of the ‘isms’, such as communalism, conservatism, communism, Marxism, capitalism, and liberalism. After evaluating the features of each of these, it can judiciously be resolved that Ubuntuism is not exceptionally African. The characteristics of Ubuntu are found in every person’s worldview and are not just confined to that of Africans.

As Venter (2004:159) contends, the encompassing values are not completely African but universal as they relate to the whole human race. Also, it is summarised in most philosophies of life but just expressed and actualised in different ways. Louw (2002:18-19) firmly adds to this argument by agreeing that, “It would be ethnocentric and, indeed, silly to suggest that the Ubuntu ethic of caring and sharing is uniquely African. After all, the values which Ubuntu seeks to promote can also be traced in various Eurasian philosophies. This is not to deny the intensity with which these values are given expression by Africans. But the mere fact that they are intensely expressed by Africans, do not in itself make these values exclusively African”.

Moreover, the concept of Ubuntu originates chiefly from rural African societies. Hitherto, this fact is time and again ignored by academic codifiers who often disregard ever-present controversies, like things such as the problem of street children, the constant alternation between trust and distrust, and the violence against women. As a result, Ubuntu is

frequently generalised, appropriating and simply representing the bright side (de Wet 2005:190). In submission to that, Prinsloo (2000:49) coined that the everyday application of highly abstract principles contained in the Ubuntu worldview poses a serious problem.

Ironically, notwithstanding terms like 'solidarity', 'sharing', 'caring', 'compassion', 'kindness', 'love', 'forgiveness', 'respect', 'conviviality', 'justice', etc., being 'familiar' to all scholars of these issues, they remain thoroughly ambiguous, and as such, unfamiliar in the light of the criteria for the practical implementation of this notion. For example, everybody understands what it means to share food, yet when this becomes a principle that must be applied in people's daily lives, more particularly in people's social, political, and economic activities, and then it is most likely that problems will be experienced in the various situations. Venter (2004:150) agrees with this and holds that the concept of Ubuntu is often used out of context. Subsequently, it becomes misused in numerous instances at the service of philosophies. Nevertheless, Shutte (2001:13) says that in theory the African worldview of community tends to resist the concept of individual freedom and makes it seem irreconcilable. However, the opposite holds true as well, as an individual becomes freer through his or her dependence on the community. Therefore, through their relations with others, the community and the people discover their true, inner self that is individual freedom.

Manda (2009) augments his assessment of the theoretical danger of Ubuntu. He refers to the work of van Binsbergen who asserts that the notion of Ubuntu persuades people to refute other possibilities of identification, for example, fellow citizens of the same state, fellow inhabitants of the same local space, or even fellow members of a community or family. Contrarily, it inspires people at the most abstract and comprehensive level of humanity, that is, fellow human beings. Rather than resorting to the lower, more localised, and more effectively binding categories of humanity, it seeks to appeal to the widest level of society. Simply stated, it becomes the mystifying and demobilising choice of the wrong level of aggregation.

Also, because of the ever-changing cultural backgrounds, the concept of Ubuntu requires ongoing contact and interaction (Vete 2009:35). However, this is not the case, and in many societies, this African way of life (culture) is gradually eradicated by modernisation, civilisation, and enlightenment. Eklund (2008:37) trusts that there is no contemporary forum or mechanism to continuously revive and foster Ubuntu values, as new ways of thinking often replace the old. Accordingly, without solid teaching of Ubuntu, it might vanish. Kamwangamalu (2008) believes that this is especially true in South Africa. He argues that

this country is perhaps the only one in Africa where Ubuntu is frequently spoken about. This will benefit people nothing if it is not practically replicated in their daily behaviours.

The notion of Ubuntu is by no means envisioned to be used as a commodity, yet it has become something largely taken for granted by the business sector. Kamwangamalu (2008) questions: “Is Ubuntu about profit-making. Isn’t the basic point of departure for Ubuntu the view of man as a social being?” Eklund (2008:36), in referring to profit companies such as Canonical Limited who developed the Ubuntu desktop system, states that they are guilty of carrying people further away from the ideology and bringing them closer to the capital market. In addition to that, she argues that if such a company goes bankrupt, the value of Ubuntu will most probably vanish because it has been connected to a capitalist idea. More than that, Venter (2004:150) trusts that in the world of competition, incorporating the values of Ubuntu into profit-making is more likely to be an obstacle instead of some help.

Another aspect of Ubuntu in the business circle needs to be talked about, and that is the adoption of Ubuntu-style management. Prinsloo (2000:49) deems that this management practice cannot solve all of an organisation’s problems. He says that limited attention is frequently devoted to consensus procedures because the Ubuntu culture is integrated at the various organisational levels, the implications thereof should be fully worked out and agreed upon beforehand. Van der Merwe (2012:11) maintains that this management perspective requires an extensive decision-making process and greater consensus. Similarly, he holds that whereas this style might imply an increase in work opportunities, it should not entail reduced payment.

Also, Ubuntu in the context of interfaith dialogue has also provoked criticism. It is largely debated that the Ubuntu worldview tends to be pluralistic, and therefore embraces all religions. However, in practice, this does not seem to be the case. Taringa (2007:192) postulates that Ubuntu in pluralistic dialogue suggests mere tolerance instead of genuine pluralism. Ubuntu tends to deny the otherness of truth claims of all cultures and religions. Perhaps in appealing to be pluralistic it favours ATRs and cultures.

Now, in a political context, Ubuntu also faces condemnation. Kamwangamalu (2000) profoundly questions the worldview of Ubuntu. If a country like South Africa, as part of Africa, where this way of life evidently flourishes, has allowed an evil such as the apartheid system to become the order of the day, then what is the significance of Ubuntu? In addition to that, the TRC analyst, Richard Wilson, argues that, “Ubuntu should be recognized for what it is: an ideological concept with multiple meanings which conjoins reconciliation, restorative justice, nation-building, and human rights within the populist language of Pan-Africanism. In

post-apartheid South Africa, it became the Africanist wrapping used to sell a reconciliatory version of human rights talk to black South Africans” (in Krog 2005: n.p.). Tambulasi and Kayuni (2012:68) conclude this matter by affirming that Ubuntu in politics is worth nothing if it is not tied with good governance. Louw (2002:18) believes that while Ubuntu may be a given, it remains a task. It may be part and parcel of the heritage of the people of African, but it needs to be revitalised in both people’s minds and hearts. Therefore, it is something that still needs to be realised.

6.6.2 My personal reflection of Ubuntu as a source of moral formation

I take enormous delight in the value of the Ubuntu worldview as the etymology for moral formation, especially in an African community, but also globally. However, in broadly researching the concept, I feel more than justified in furnishing my contributions and oppositions. It is believed that the notion of Ubuntu extensively contributes to making any society thrive by aiding the people of Africa to become more socially and morally interconnected. Nevertheless, in the face of the many present realities and social injustices, including inequality, violence, crime, poverty, climate change, corruption, homelessness, racial discrimination, and immorality, I wonder if this is more talk than responsibility.

More particularly, for example, in the light of the xenophobic violence that erupted in parts of South Africa which prompted individuals to display nothing but hatred and contempt for their African brothers and sisters, those who came to the country in desperate search of a better life or greener pastures. When this phenomenon occurred in 2008, thousands of foreigners, particularly from African countries, either died or were displaced due to these horrific xenophobic attacks. Does this perhaps mean that Ubuntu is only something momentarily felt or experienced morally? When I looked around and saw so many people – mostly my African brothers and sisters – being victimised by the selfish revolt of others, it made me cry out in anguish: “Where is Ubuntu?”, and I observed that people are in desperate need of the Ubuntu spirit.

Additionally, the issue surrounding the literary terms of this African worldview, in tracing the roots of ‘Ubuntu’, people have come up with so many different philosophies regarding its origin. If this is the case, then I would like to add my viewpoint. This research has comprehensively dealt with the definition of Ubuntu as the origin of moral formation. However, assigning a theoretical term to this practical way of life (culture) makes it problematic to analyse its historical background. Ubuntu is understood as focusing on the moral values of interconnectedness and interdependence. I strongly believe that, in terms of

the Christian context, this implies that the origin of 'Ubuntu' can be traced back to the Story of Creation when no suitable partner was found for Adam, and God created Eve in fulfilment of this need.

Nevertheless, then again, the origin goes even further than that – to the interconnectedness and interdependence between humanity and nature: God made the earth and created humankind to rule over it and take care of it, yet God blessed humans with the earth and all its fruitfulness. On the other hand, once again, the foundation of 'Ubuntu' goes even beyond that, it goes back to the very beginning of time when God alone existed. Still, God Himself, or should I say, Themselves, is the perfect model of interconnectedness and interdependence: perfect harmony between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – three powers, yet one God. And there is no doubt as to whether this Trinitarian God in all fullness, and not only the Father, was present at the start of creation, as it is proved in Genesis 1:2 (NIV), "... the Spirit of God was hovering over the earth ...", and in John 1:1-2 (NIV), which denotes the Son as the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning".

I thereby conclude that all the values of the Ubuntu principle as a source of moral formation, whether interconnectedness, interdependence, humanness, sharing, solidarity, caring, respect, love, kindness, or whatever the case may be, originated at the very start of creation, and evolved over the centuries with no real theoretical base, but rather as a practical way of living or life (culture).

Finally, and once again from a religious perspective, yet now from an all-inclusive one, I wished to question the excessive number of moral values encompassed in Ubuntu, whereas one could simplify matters and just assign to it one practical value. The notion of Ubuntu holds numerous moral values which collectively imply that people should live peacefully, harmoniously, and interdependently with their fellow beings. Perhaps with the conviction that one value that encapsulates all the moral values of Ubuntu – is love. The Golden Rule, present in all religions, requires that one treats others in the same way that one wishes to be treated by them. Ubuntu literature shows that love is just a related value of humanness.

I believe that the opposite is true, and that love includes all the moral values concerning our relations with others. So instead of saying that Ubuntu means humanness, solidarity, caring, warmth, sharing, respect, compassion, empathy, charitableness, openhandedness, etc., one could just say that Ubuntu means love. As people, it our communal duty to not only look on the bright side, but also question, oppose objects, or contest when

necessary while respecting each other's opinions. In doing so, not only will we be informed by one another, both teaching and learning from those around us, but also working toward the good of the community.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter compared and contrasted Augustine Shutte, John Mbiti, and Kwame Gyekye's approaches of Ubuntu as the fountain of moral formation. It was explained that the Bantu – the human person – is a living force that needs to interact with other persons for the realisation of a complete life. The chapter related their definition, perspective, and use of the African concept of Ubuntu in their contributions towards an African philosophy and moral formation.

Furthermore, the theories of moral formation and the Christian ethics of numerous theologians and scholars of this approach, including Alasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, Johannes van der Ven, Ernst Conradie, John Klaasen, Robin Gill, and Desmond Tutu, were also explored in detail. The use of worship, narrative, character, and community as the cause of moral formation were scrutinised to establish the commonalities and contestations of the Ubuntu principles in present-day Africa.

New perspectives of Ubuntu philosophy as possible factors for moral formation emerged with trusted focused on Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu theology and community development including the African Christian Spirituality, the African Christian notion of God, and Ubuntu as the centrality to worship, as in Tutu's life, were also presented. The four features of Ubuntu theology were also emphasised, namely: Ubuntu theology that builds an interdependent community, integrates cultures, recognises the distinctiveness of a person, and that can overthrow apartheid. The chapter also demonstrated how Tutu's role of moral formation through worship, forgiveness, and reconciliation influences the Ubuntu principles in contemporary Africa. It offers the new paradigm shift in filling the gap of the three notions of Ubuntu as potential source of moral formation in current Africa.

The final sections critically explored the problematic notion of the Ubuntu philosophy and various scholarly criticisms of this African worldview. Various theologians'/scholars' methodologies of the concept of Ubuntu as the beginning of moral formation were also investigated to formally define the African philosophy, morality, and Ubuntu. The notions of individual and community do not override one another, but rather complement each another. For example, our humanity depends on the respect the community has for its individuals, and

vice versa. Perhaps, naturally, the community would seem more important as it sums up the individuals but, at the same time, it also elevates the individual through gratification, justice, generosity, love, conviviality, respect, and solidarity for one another. The final section of this chapter relayed my personal reflections of Ubuntu as the root of moral formation.

Some concluding remarks follow next to bring this study to a close.



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study critically evaluated Ubuntu as an origin of moral formation in contemporary Africa, with specific reference to the approaches of three scholars/thinkers from three different African countries, namely: South Africa (Augustine Shutte), Kenya (John Mbiti), and Ghana (Kwame Gyekye). In addition to describing and analysing each scholar's understanding of Ubuntu as a foundation for moral formation, these diverse approaches were compared and contrasted to capture the prevailing understanding of this concept in modern-day Africa. It further critic the three approaches by introducing new perspective to the three notions of Desmond Tutu religious perception to Ubuntu as the potential source of moral formation from South African viewpoint.

The study was reinforced by the new leading edge of Ubuntu theology of His Grace Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu contribution towards achieving Ubuntu community development and interconnectedness among societies team spirit for moral formation in modern Africa. Tutu's Ubuntu theology and role in TRC process is a unique way of demonstrating humanity in relationship with others in community. Most significantly, the contribution of this study to the field of African Theological Ethics open door for more researchers to engage in this current debate of Ubuntuism as panacea to moral formation in today's Africa and globally.

Firstly, to ascertain the similarities and differences between these three philosophies of Ubuntu as the root of moral formation, a close reading of the corpus of literature was undertaken to distinguish the three views, namely: Augustine Shutte's perspective of Ubuntu, which is captured in the maxim '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'; John Mbiti's notion of 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am'; along with Kwame Gyekye's use of the 'Akan proverb' as an expression of the notion of African humanism (Ubuntu) as the cause of moral development and flourishing community.

Secondly, to complete this research I used a qualitative approach by drawing on significant sources which included books and journal articles to determine the different concepts of Ubuntu as the reason for moral formation in present-day Africa. This research hypothesis was tested and developed through an in-depth and critical analysis of the available literature. The principal methodology was to compare, contrast, interpret, and critically assess the commonalities and contestations of John Mbiti, Augustine Shutte, and Kwame Gyekye's

approach to Ubuntu principle as the fountain of moral formation. The research relates to possible notions of African humanism in contemporary African society and globally.

Thirdly, in addition to unpacking the different definitions of the concept of Ubuntu, the study also outlined the origins of the worldview, as well as the historical development of Ubuntu and its connection to moral formation. The research revealed how moral theory and organisations collaborate through communalism and collectivism which arose from the Ubuntu principle as the etymology for moral formation, based on today's African worldview and moral theory attached to this philosophy. It gave an overview of the diverse applications of Ubuntu in life, i.e. for good cooperative governance, and collaborative and competitive African communities, and some background on the understanding of the African worldview of Ubuntu, the significance of this philosophy in practice, some of the critical challenges of the concept of the Ubuntu worldview, and the overall moral theory of the Ubuntu worldview for the success of African societies.

It further distinguished the concepts of 'community' and 'individual' in the African worldview and understanding of collectivism. It unpacked the various moral theories of Ubuntu, including human rights, communitarianism, personhood, and its approaches to moral development and personhood objections to Ubuntu. It is a known fact that this African worldview has been commonly applied in modern Africa in various ways and contexts, such as in education, moral renewal, political and corporate governance, the arts and media, the religious context, environmental preservation and, most importantly, as a way of life (culture).

The study also described and analysed the commonalities and dissimilarities between the three scholars' perspectives of Ubuntu as the beginning of moral formation. This was done carefully through a review of Augustine Shutte's metaphysical contribution in *Philosophy for Africa* and *Ubuntu: An ethic for a new South Africa*; Kwame Gyekye's conceptualisation of *Person and community*; and John Mbiti's normative notion as presented in *African religions and philosophy*.

In exploring Shutte's perspective further, attention was given to the different applications of the Ubuntu worldview in Shutte's philosophical beliefs, especially African ethics (morality), apartheid (politics), and science as the basis for moral formation today. Consequently, the critical analysis of Shutte's contribution in an *Ethic of a new South Africa* related issues and other scholars of this disciplines understanding of the Ubuntu principle as the etymology for moral development in South Africa, for example, during the TRC, HIV and AIDS epidemic, work: solidarity and creativity, business management, gender relations,

health care, and nation-building. Subsequently, a description was provided of Gyekye's approach to Ubuntu as the cause of moral formation on African ethics or morality, the notion of person, the notion of personhood, and the notion of individualism in African moral theory, African communitarianism, and notion of common good in contemporary Africa.

Furthermore, also discussed was Mbiti's perspective on the anthropological landscape of ATR, and the African vision of the Ubuntu worldview as the root of moral formation. Mbiti's approach to African communitarianism was juxtaposed with the notion of morality, African selfhood, and the Ubuntu theory of moral formation and the philosophy of moral diversity of society.

Likewise, the research discussed the theories of moral formation and Christian ethics of various theologians and scholars of this discourse including Alasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, Johannes van der Ven, Ernst Conradie, John Klaasen, Robin Gill, and Desmond Tutu. The use of worship, narrative, character, and community as the foundation for moral formation forms commonalities of Ubuntu principles in modern Africa and further afield.

The introduction of new perspectives on Ubuntu as an innovative frontline for moral formation of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu theology and community development with a focus on African Christian Spirituality, the African Christian concept of God, and Ubuntu as the centrality of worship as found in Tutu's life was also provided. Tutu's Ubuntu described a community that is all-inclusive of gender, status, race, and the non-human community, the void of social injustice, inequality, and broken communities. The community is recognised as the context for the moral development of the individual. Thus, Tutu's Ubuntu theology emphasises the influence of God in the community which could be seen as the approach to morality, and not so much on the individual, for moral formation.

Thereafter, the study addressed the four characteristics of Ubuntu theology, namely: Ubuntu theology that builds an interdependent community; integrates cultures; recognises the distinctiveness of a person; and that can overthrow apartheid. Also noted was Tutu's role of moral formation through worship, forgiveness, and reconciliation that influences the Ubuntu principles in current Africa; the challenges of the concept of the Ubuntu philosophy; and various scholarly criticisms this African worldview is faced with. Included was a personal reflection of Ubuntu as the basis for moral formation. The study asserted that Ubuntu theology represents the best perspective for moral development in present-day Africa

Furthermore, the research concludes that there are commonalities and contestations in the different approaches to Ubuntu as the foundation for moral formation. I believe that Shutte's view of Ubuntu in contemporary Africa to moral formation is (metaphysical) closer

to Gyekye's understanding of the individual and community; perhaps Mbiti's normative approach to the community is too radical as Gyekye usually called for moderate communitarianism. Conclusively, there is a degree to which the community plays a role in moral development that differs amongst the three scholars.

Moreover, there is no doubt that this African worldview (Ubuntu) carries remarkable worth for people from all walks of life. It is so intrinsic to the well-being of people that without it, society would have been more cruel, wicked, and heartless place. So, because of Ubuntu, people acknowledge that their humanity is tied up with the humanity of others, and that people cannot be human alone, but only through their relationships with others. The biggest danger that the Ubuntu worldview faces is that it has largely become a mere concept reduced to theoretical terms. Nevertheless, this pitfall should be overcome so that this value can be incorporated into our daily lives, characterised by intensely feeling it, expressing it, embracing it, and living it. Furthermore, this research can be used as a basis for further studies on the Ubuntu philosophy and moral formation in modern-day Africa and beyond.

Finally, the study acknowledges the geographical constraint and availability of literature on the three selected philosophers (Shutte, Mbiti, and Gyekye) of Ubuntu as the foundation for moral development in contemporary Africa. It would therefore be interesting to broaden or expand the scope of this research to perhaps several more geographical locations or regions, e.g., Eastern, Western, Northern, and Southern African perspectives, and then draw a comparison and contrast how the Ubuntu principle has been approached or applied as the heart of moral formation in present-day Africa.

To bring this study to a close, I leave you with these few thought-provoking words uttered by Barack Obama (cited by Williams 2018: n.p.) several years ago at Nelson Mandela's memorial service:

There is a word in South Africa – Ubuntu – that describes his greatest gift: his recognition that we are all bound together in ways that can be invisible to the eye; that there is a oneness to humanity; that we achieve ourselves by sharing ourselves with others, and caring for those around us.

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