The meaning of sharing under marketised education: an Ubu-ntu perspective

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Abstract. Reading his-story (history), her-story and our story from the perspective of Mother Africa reduced from her original position of *Mater Preciosa*, (the cradle of humanity: a precious Mother), to a Mater Dolorosa (a mother of sorrows) through conquest in the unjust wars of Western colonialism, our argument is that education – the bearer of the Western epistemological paradigm – continues to be primarily in the service of protecting and promoting the enslavement of politically independent Africa. Our thesis is that this service ought to be terminated because it is unethical. There is no reason to suppose that unlike other empires before it, the dominant unholy trinity of economicide, epistemicide and religicide perpetrated against Africa is an eternal order of things under capitalism. We adopt the philosophy of ubu-ntu to elaborate on our thesis. We will focus specifically on the marketisation of education taking examples mainly from *conqueror South Africa*[1] and the Covid 19 pandemic.

Modu wa taba: Sengwalweng se re laodisha gore thuto ya histori e be e sekametje kudu lehlakoreng la banna. E ile ya kgaphela thoko histori ya basadi le rena batho ka moka ba tjwelago pele go hlorishwa ke ditlamorago tja bokoloniale bja naga tja Bodikela. Re tla bala histori ye re gopola gore Afrika ke yona Mme mmelega motho, yena mothopo wa motho bjaloka ge re mo tseba lehono. Tlhaselo le phenyo ya makoloniale a go tjwa Bodikela e gobaditje Mme Afrika ya mo dira lekgoba go fihlela lehono. Ge mabaka a eme ka mokgwa wo, sebakwa ke gore Mme Afrika a busetjwe sekeng kudu matjatjing a lehono mo re bonago thuto e beile tshelete kua pele. Thuto e tjweletja pele kgobadi mahlakoreng a mararo. Wona ke a; leruo, tsebo le sedumedi. Tokologo ya Mme Afrika e a kgonagala ka gore ga gona gore pusho ya go hlongwa ke batho ke moka ga e na mahomo. Re tla laodisha taba tje re lebeletje yona nagathopjwa ya Afrika Borwa. Re tla boya re e fetleka re lebeletje leuba la Covid 19.

Keywords: democracy, education, freedom, market, ubu-ntu

1   Introduction

The unholy trinity of economicide, epistemicide and religicide was deployed by the West in its original conquest of Africa in unjust wars. From there Africa was subjugated and her wealth below as well as on the surface of the soil, including her art works, was and continues to be the object of greedy, and ruthless extraction. In the course of time, other predator states joined the West in the exploitation of Africa. The concession to decolonisation (Hargreaves, 1988) in Africa

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[1] The appellation, conqueror South Africa is historically legitimate and ethically justified.

granting only political independence[2] left the door wide open for the continuation of manipulation assuring Africa's many-sided dependency on the West, China[3] and Russia, among others.

Reading his-story (history), her-story and our-story from the perspective of Mother Africa reduced from her original position of Mater Preciosa, (the cradle of humanity: a precious Mother), to a Mater Dolorosa (a mother of sorrows) through conquest in the unjust wars of Western colonialism, our argument is that education – the bearer of the Western epistemological paradigm – continues to be primarily in the service of protecting and promoting the enslavement of politically independent Africa. Our thesis is that this service ought to be terminated because it is unethical. There is no reason to suppose that unlike other empires before it, the dominant unholy trinity of economicide, epistemicide and religicide perpetrated against Africa by the West and many other novel predators of Africa is an eternal order of things. We adopt the philosophy of *ubu-ntu* - rooted in an African orientation in philosophy[4] – including all the branches of learning - to elaborate on our thesis. We will focus specifically on the marketisation (Bertelsen, 1998) of education taking examples mainly from conqueror South Africa and other parts of the world.

Contextualizing education in conqueror South Africa

Ubu-ntu education was known and practised from time immemorial by the Bantu peoples (Hammond-Tooke, 1974) of Africa. It is still known and practised despite its suppression and distortion by the ethically unjustified violence of Western colonialism. The Romans plundered North Africa for more than six hundred years. (Raven, 1993) It was their field to feed their stomachs by reaping from the labour of the Africans. This was followed by Western colonialism inaugurated by *Romanus Pontifex*, (1455) the Bull of Pope Nicholas V, granting Africa to King Alfonso V of Portugal without the prior knowledge and consent of the indigenous peoples of Africa. These two his-storical (historical) events mark the forcible subjugation, conversion to the religion of the colonial conqueror (christianisation)[5] and the compulsory pauperisation - material and intellectual - of the indigenous peoples of Africa. (economicide and epistemicide)

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[2] Makonnen, Y., 1983. International Law and the new states of Africa, Addis Abeba, UNESCO

[3] Moyo, Dambisa, 2009. Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa, London, Allen Lane. The book was reviewed by Ama Biney, "Dambisa Moyo, Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa", Africa Today, Vol. 56, No. 1, Fall 2009

[4] Wiredue, J. E., 1972. On an African orientation in philosophy, Second Order, Vol. 1 Number 2, p. 10 I have explained the difference between "Wiredue" and Wiredu elsewhere. Ramose, M B., Ubu-ntu ethics in dialogue with Kant's deontic ethics, Estudos Kantianos, 9.2. 2021, p. 32-33 Wiredu is the correct and authentic spelling.

[5] We take the view, like Wole Soyinka (1999, 32) that the "convention that capitalizes this (christianity, christian) and other so-called world-religions is justified only when the same principle is applied to other religions, among them, the Orisa". Accordingly, we will in the main use the small letter "c" for christian/christianity including reference to the God of this religion. Where capitalization is used it will be in inverted commas. The use of capital or small letters with reference to all religions and their respective gods is intended to eliminate the implicit hierarchy and, thus the imagined superiority of some religions and their "gods" over all the other religions of the world.

Ancient Greek philosophy, with particular reference to slavery, (Wrenhaven, 2012: 9-42) supported, somewhat inadvertently perhaps, these two historical events to establish and uphold to this day the unholy trinity of economicide, epistemicide and the religicide perpetrated by the West against the indigenous peoples of Africa. The trans-Atlantic slave trade unjustifiably and arbitrarily depopulated Africa for the economic benefit of the Western colonial conqueror. The indigenous African peoples' ways of knowing and doing were treated with contempt and relegated to the sphere of the not worthwhile to know except where they threatened the unfair advantage which the Western colonial conqueror claimed to be its "right"[6]. In this way experience, knowledge and truth understood by the Western colonial conqueror were imposed upon the indigenous peoples of Africa as the only and highest form of knowledge and truth. This was epistemicide. It is still very much alive today. If this were not true then the enduring struggles in conqueror South Africa for the "transformation of the educational curriculum" would not be existing. The indigenous African peoples continue their struggles against epistemicide in the name of "justice against epistemicide". (de Sousa Santos, 2014) The struggle aims to demolish "the cognitive empire" (de Sousa Santos, 2018) of the West and replace it with a collective, democratic reconstruction of a pluriversal, *whole-istic* epistemology based upon the principle of equality between human beings and among nations.

The religions of the indigenous peoples of Africa were not saved from the onslaught of conversion to Christianity. This is by no means an excuse for Islam which was implanted in Africa without invitation from the indigenous peoples of the Africa it had conquered. (Kennedy, 2008: 201-224) Here we will focus on christianisation. Against the advice of many of the Patristics, for example, Tertullian who held that "It is a crime of impiety to deprive persons of freedom of religion and to prohibit them from choosing their deity, that is, not to permit me to honour whom I wish to honour. No one wishes forced homage, not even human beings," Christianity undertook the journey to convert others[7]. This commitment to religicide continues to this day.

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[6] Ramose, M. B. (2018). "Towards a post-conquest South Africa: beyond the constitution of 1996", South African Journal on Human Rights, https://doi.org/10.1080/02587203.2018.1550937

[7] We read that "Christian Europe has subdued barbarous nations and changed them from a savage to a civilized condition, from superstition to true worship. It victoriously rolled back the tide of Mohammedan conquest; retained the hardship of civilization; stood forth in the front rank as the leader and teacher of all, in every branch of national culture; … And, in fact, the Church is wont to take earnest heed that no one shall be forced to embrace the Catholic faith against his will, for, as St. Augustine wisely reminds us, 'Man cannot believe otherwise than of his own will'." **Immortale Dei** Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Christian constitution of states, Given at St. Peter's in Rome, the first day of November, 1885, paragraphs 21 and 36 respectively. Paragraph 13 of **Libertas** Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the nature of human liberty. Given at St. Peter's in Rome, the twentieth day of June, 1888, extolls the leadership of "the Church" in christianisation and "civilization. "The heathen" appears twice in this paragraph; "barbarian" and "barbarism" each appears once and "civilized" appears once. But sixty-nine years later we read an Encyclical permeated with bellicose zeal, the language of war. The language is contained in **Fidei Donum** Encyclical of Pope Pius XII. On the present condition of the Catholic missions, especially in Africa, Issued at St. Peter's in Rome, on the twenty-first day of April, in the year 1957. "Let them give financial assistance to the Catholics of Oceania and to the missions in Asia; such assistance is of the utmost importance, especially in those countries where the *battles of the Lord are being fought so fiercely*."(paragraph 3, my italics) "We confess that these numerous duties and undertakings must necessarily be carried out as soon as possible and that they require a fresh growth of apostolic vigor in the Church, so that there may rush forth into *the open battlefield of the Lord* 'countless phalanxes of

Sometimes it assumes subtle forms by resort to the surreptitious hierarchisation of religions in terms of "advanced", (Nostra Aetate, Pope Paul VI, 1965, par. 2 sub-par. 2) leaving no doubt as to which religions are yet to "advance".

The threesome, economicide, epistemicide and religicide are mutually founding and reinforcing. They continue to be used as the lethal weapons that sustain the prevailing condition of the many frequent deaths - undoubtedly preventable - of multitudes of African peoples for the benefit of the West, including its posterity acting in its defense within Africa. Conqueror South Africa is no exception to this general condition. We will take it as our primary example in our discussion of the topic on hand.

The education of the Bantu in conqueror South Africa[8]

Committed to the continuation of the tradition of *Romanus Pontifex*, the successors in title to Western colonial conquest describe their self-appointed status to educate the Bantu in conqueror South Africa thus:

> *The White man, with his background of well over a thousand years of Christianity and civilisation, has accepted the vital mission of bringing the message of Christianity to the Black man, and of helping in the process of civilising a people who have spent countless centuries in the isolation of Darkest Africa. For the White man it has been a difficult task, as primitive and pagan concepts and practices have had to be overcome – and are still being overcome in the more backward areas of the continent. (The South African Bureau of Racial Affairs [SABRA], 1955: 2)*

The above citation delineates the encounter between "the White man" and the "Black man" in a country baptised South Africa. "Christianity and civilisation" are the main characteristics of

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apostolic men, not unlike those who sprang up in the primitive Church'."(paragraph 4, my italics.) "What a consolation it is for you, beloved sons, and what a pledge of assured victory to consider that this hidden and *peaceful warfare* that you are waging for Holy Church is not yours alone or that of your age or your people…" (paragraph 81, my italics. Through the superb oxymoronic bathos of a "peaceful warfare", the faithful is urged to fight on as victory is assured. But warfare is meaningful, argued Clausewitz the philosopher of war, only if maximum force is used to defeat the opponent. And so, the compulsion to convert to Roman Catholicism – rejected in **Immortale Dei** – is deemed legitimate by **Fidei Donum**. It is significant, in terms of the contemporary political history of Africa, that **Fidei Donum** was issued in the same year when Ghana was granted only political independence under Kwame Nkrumah's slogan: "give me first the political kingdom", an unmistakable echo of the christian "seek ye first the kingdom of heaven". But up to this day Africa is not heaven for the indigenous African peoples conquered in the unjust wars of Western colonialism. These peoples live in their own continent turned almost to Dante's *Inferno*.

[8] Conqueror South Africa is the successor in title to the Union of South Africa. Concerning the latter, we read that "So, by the right of conquest, entrenched by legislation, the principle of legal differentiation on racial grounds was the legacy upon which the Union of South Africa was constructed". (Hepple, 1960, 795) This construction is reaffirmed by the 1996 constitution of conqueror South Africa. It is therefore historically legitimate and ethically justified to refer to the country known as "South Africa" as conqueror South Africa. In Northern SeSotho (Sepedi) – one of the languages of the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of Western colonisation – the appropriate name is, *nagathopjwa ya Afrika Borwa*.

"the White man". These twin sisters of conquest in an unjust war are regarded as "the vital mission"; an assignment of life and death which "the White man" must fulfil in its relations with "the Black man". The principal point about this "vital mission" is that "the Black man" was neither consulted in its making nor was his consent required concerning the practical implementation of the "mission". The "mission" to christianise "the Black man" on this basis is a direct echo of *Romanus Pontifex*.

The invocation of "civilisation" is the reaffirmation of the doctrine of Discovery[9], the international law of colonialism. (Miller, 2011: 854) In the Middle Ages, Saint Thomas Aquinas referred superciliously to Aristotle as "the pagan" (*paganus*) while christianising "the pagan's" philosophy (Ullman, 1955: 457) to suit christian ends. (Steenberghen, 1970) Thus "pagan" was the line of demarcation between "advanced" and "primitive" religions. More than three centuries later, the same concept was used by others, (Laubscher, 1937) including SABRA, and continues to underlie relations between "the Black man" and "the White man" in conqueror South Africa. The preamble to the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1961 reaffirms both this relationship and "the vital mission" to be fulfilled.

The SABRA image of Africa

"Africa" is portrayed by SABRA as having three degrees of comparison, namely, dark, darker and "Darkest Africa". The text does not identify the three regions of Africa corresponding to each of the three shades of darkness. However, its selection of darkness is historically and philosophically significant to the extent that it recognises by design or inadvertently, Hegel's characterisation of "Africa proper" as the region of darkness; the kind of darkness that cannot be the subject of history. (Hegel, 1956: 99) The British museum in London confirms – as at 2017 – Hegel's division of Africa into two: the Africa that had contact with Europe – North Africa or the Mediterranean cultural space, situated upstairs, and "Africa proper" the veritable region of "darkness", situated in the lowest ground floor.

The Polish racist novelist, (Achebe, 2010: 12-13) Joseph Conrad also chose darkness in his depiction of Africa in his novel, Heart of Darkness. Hegel, Conrad and SABRA converge on their determination to depict Africa as the region of darkness. This provides the reason for leading Africa out of darkness by providing light to it through "education" and christianisation. (SABRA, 1955: 4 and 9)

Education in conqueror South Africa – a forcible imposition by the West

The preceding paragraphs show that "education" in conqueror South Africa is a forcible imposition by the West. It is permeated and dominated by the Western epistemological paradigm matched with christianity. It is education for the economic and epistemological

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[9] There are reports and reactions to the news that the Vatican has "repudiated" the doctrine of Discovery. I do not here elaborate on my full reaction to this. Suffice it to state, however, that the "repudiation" is problematical in that it is reported by one of the Vatican organs and does not have the status of for example, **Fidei Donum**, issued at St. Peter's in Rome, on the twenty-first day of April, 1957, Pope Pius XII; **Africae Munus**, given at Ouidah, in Benin, on 19 November 2011, Pope Benedict XVI

enslavement of the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation[10] by the West. This holds for both the "Coloured"[11] and Indian population groups in the country.

The Bantu peoples together with some of the members of all the other population groups resisted this forcible imposition though some of them submitted to it. Today the former manifests itself in the intensifying struggle for curriculum change (Nkoane, 2006: 52-56 and Ramose, 2006: 43-45) and the "fees must fall movement", (Martinerie, 2021: 1-20) for example. In different degrees and, from varied perspectives these struggles belong to the "epistemologies of the South" pursuing justice against the unholy trinity of epistemicide, economicide and religicide. They are an active response to the ethical imperative to make a transition from education for servitude to education for freedom bringing an end to the "cognitive empire" (de Sousa Santos, 2018) established by the West in the South. This is the context in which *ubu-ntu* finds itself. What is *ubu-ntu*?

The philosophy of ubu-ntu and ubuntu as a philosophy

Ubuntu is the root of African philosophy among the Bantu-speaking peoples. The African tree of ontology, knowledge and ethics stems from ubu-ntu with which it is connected indivisibly. Apart from a linguistic analysis of ubu-ntu, a persuasive philosophical argument can be made that there is a "family atmosphere", that is, a kind of philosophical affinity and kinship among and between the indigenous peoples of Africa. No doubt there are and, will be variations within this broad philosophical "family atmosphere". But the blood circulating through the "family" members is the same in its basics[12]. In this sense ubu-ntu is the basis of African philosophy.

In terms of geographic demarcation, we agree partially with the delimitation of De Tejada. The ubu-ntu philosophy we are about to discuss "goes from the Nubian desert to the Cape of Good Hope and from Senegal to Zanzibar[13]." However, this delimitation is questionable since the Sahara Desert is not the indelible birthmark of Africa[14]. For this reason, the meaning and import of human interaction before the birth of the Sahara Desert must be taken into account. We shall not, however, pursue this line of inquiry in the present essay.

Philosophy in ubu-ntu

It is best, philosophically, to approach this concept as a hyphenated word, namely, *ubu-ntu*. *Ubuntu* is actually two words in one. It consists of the prefix *ubu-* and the stem *ntu-*. *Ubu-* evokes the idea of be-ing in general. It is enfolded be-ing before it manifests itself in the concrete form or mode of ex-istence of a particular entity. *Ubu-* as enfolded bei-ing is always oriented towards

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[10] For a distinction between "the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonization" and the conquered peoples of South Africa, see, Ramose, M. B., 2007. In memoriam Sovereignty and the 'new' South Africa, p. 320

[11] For a critique of the appellation, "Coloured", see Ramose, M. B., 2012. Reconciliation and reconfiliation in South Africa, Journal on African Philosophy, Issue 5, p. 24

[12] Ki-Zerbo, J., quoted by De Tejada, F.E., The future of Bantu law, ARSP, Beiheft Neue Folge, Nr. 11 1979. p. 304

[13] De Tejada, F.E., The future of Bantu law, p. 304

[14] Davidson, B., Africa in history, Granada Publications Ltd., London, 1974. p. 28

unfoldment, that is, incessant continual concrete manifestation through particular forms and modes of being. In this sense *ubu-* is always oriented towards - *ntu*. At the ontological level, there is no strict and literal separation and division between *ubu-* and - *ntu*. *Ubu-* and *-ntu* are not two radically separate and irreconcilably opposed concepts. On the contrary, they are mutually founding in the sense that they are two aspects of bei-ing as a one-ness and an indivisible whole-ness. Accordingly, *ubu-ntu* is the fundamental ontological and epistemological category in the African thought of the Bantu-speaking people. *Ubu-* as the generalized understanding of be-ing may be said to be distinctly ontological. Whereas *-ntu* as the nodal point at which be-ing assumes concrete form or, a mode of being in the process of continual unfoldment may be said to be the distinctly epistemological[15].

The word *umu-* shares an identical ontological feature with the word *ubu-*. Whereas the range of *ubu-* is the widest generality *umu-* tends towards the more specific. Joined together with *-ntu* then *umu-* becomes *umuntu*. *Umuntu* means the emergence of *homo-loquens* who is simultaneously a homo sapiens. *Homo sapiens* here speaks to the being with the right to exist-reason. Ex-is-tence is coeval with the right to reason[16]. It speaks to Aristotle's definition: "man is a rational animal". The apotheosis of "reason" in the West, with its deleterious effects on women and the conquered peoples, is seen, for example, in Thomas Aquinas in whose time "reason" was perhaps an instrument of mollification, a means for submission and compliance with dogma. But under the banner of Kant's *sapere aude*! (dare to reason), "reason" was used as a weapon for a critical questioning of beliefs and practices and, a challenge to dogma. At the same time, it was used as a means to exclude other human beings and turn them into slaves; a position that Kant himself affirmed in his earlier philosophical position. (Kleingeld, 2007: 582 and 586-592)

Umuntu is the specific concrete manifestation of *umu-* which continues to conduct an inquiry into be-ing, experience, knowledge and truth. This is an activity rather than an act. It is an ongoing process impossible to stop unless motion itself is stopped. On this reasoning, *ubu-* may be regarded as be-ing becoming and this evidently implies the idea of motion. We propose to regard such incessant motion as verbal rather than the verb. - *ntu* may be construed as the temporarily having become. In this sense - *ntu* is a noun. The indivisible one-ness and whole-ness of *ubu-ntu* means, therefore, that *ubuntu* is a verbal noun.

Because motion is the principle of be-ing, for *ubu-ntu* do-ing takes precedence over the do-er without at the same time imputing either radical separation or irreconcilable opposition between the two. "Two" here speaks only to two aspects of one and the same reality. *Ubu-ntu* then is a gerund. But it is also a gerundive at the same time since at the epistemological level it

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[15] For a philosophical exploration of Ramose's understanding of "be-ing", see Hallen, B., "Be-ing and being Ramose", in Lauer, Helen and Yitah Helen, (ed.) The tenacity of truthfulness Philosophical essays in honour of Mogobe Bernard Ramose, Mkuki na Nyota, Dar-es-salaam, 2019, p. 14-15 and Janz B. B., "Mogobe Ramose, cosmopolitanism, and the being to come, p. 257-268. See, also Janz, B. B., "Ubuntu as enactivism: Mogobe Ramose and be-ing", in Janz, B. B., African philosophy and enactivist cognition, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2023, p. 120-121

[16] Gutierrez, G., The power of the poor in history, (trans.) Barr, R. R., SCM Press, London and Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1983, p. 101

may crystallize into a particular form of social organisation, religion or law. *Ubu-ntu* is always a - ness and not an - ism.

We submit that this logic of *ubu-ntu* also applies to *hu-* and *-nhu* in the Shona language of Zimbabwe. Therefore, it may not be rendered as *hunhuism*[17] as Samkange has done. The - ism suffix gives the erroneous impression that we are dealing with verbs and nouns as fixed and separate entities existing independently. They thus function as fixations to ideas and practices which are somewhat dogmatic and hence unchangeable. Such dogmatism and immutability constitute the false necessity based upon fragmentative thinking. This latter is the thinking - based on the subject-verb-object understanding of the structure of language - which posits a fundamental irreconcilable opposition in be-ing becoming. On the basis of this imputed opposition be-ing becoming is fragmented into pieces of reality with an independent existence of their own[18]. The philosophy of *ubu-ntu*, as explicated thus far, recognises separate entities in existence but its point of departure is not fragmentative reasoning.

Without the speech of *umuntu*, *Ubu-* is condemned to unbroken silence. The speech of *umuntu* is thus anchored in, revolves around and is ineluctably oriented towards *ubu-*. The language of *umuntu* `relevates', that is, it directs and focuses the entire epistemological domain towards the ontology of *ubu-*. This it does by the contemporaneous and indissoluble coupling of *ubu-* and *umuntu* through the maxim *umuntu ngumuntu nga bantu (motho ke motho ka batho)*. Although the English language does not exhaust the meaning of this maxim, it may nonetheless be construed to mean that to be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them. *Ubu-ntu*, understood as be-ing human (human-ness); a humane, respectful and polite attitude towards others constitutes the core meaning of this maxim. *Ubu-ntu* then not only describes a condition of be-ing, insofar as it is indissolubly linked to *umuntu* but it is also the recognition of be-ing becoming and not, we wish to emphasise, be-ing and becoming.

In this sense it is simultaneously a gerund and a gerundive since the latter is implied in the imperative, *nga bantu*. In other words, be-ing human as a mere ex-is-tent among others, is not enough. One is enjoined, yes, commanded as it were, to actually become a human being. This is an ethical appeal. What is decisive then is to prove oneself to be the embodiment of *ubu-ntu (bo-tho)* in behaviour because the fundamental ethical, social and legal judgement of human worth and human conduct is based upon *ubu-ntu*. The judgement, pronounced with approval or disapproval respectively, is invariably expressed in these terms: *ke motho or gase motho*. In the original language, in this case the *Se-Sotho* cluster in the Bantu-speaking grouping, these expressions may not be interpreted literally since in literal terms they mean he/she is a human be-ing or she/he is not a human be-ing. A literal interpretation boils down to an affirmation or negation of the obvious if we restrict ourselves to the biological defintion of a human being. Even worse, the negation would ultimately be meaningless since its assertion neither abolishes nor alters the biological definition or nature of a human being. Thus, the affirmation or negation

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[17] Samkange, S. and Samkange, T.M., Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: A Zimbabwe indigenous political philosophy, Graham Publishing: Salisbury 1980.

[18] Bohm, D., Fragmentation in science and in society, Impact of Science on Society, Vol. XX, No. 2, 1970, p. 159-160

of *ubu-ntu (bo-tho)* is a metaphor for ethical, social and legal judgement of human worth and human conduct.

In the light of the above, ubu-ntu is a philopraxis; a philosophy in practice. It is an everyday[19] philosophy. The epistemicide[20] perpetrated by Western colonialism deprived ubu-ntu of a voice in the construction of human relations globally. The achievement of political independence in Africa has provided a platform for ubu-ntu to be engaged in dialogue with other philosophies. But it enters into dialogue with a different face but still encumbured by the unholy trinity of economicide, epistemicide and religicide. One of the major anchors of this unholy trinity is the theory and practice of "science". To this we now turn.

Is there one science, Western science?

I borrow the above sub-title verbatim directly from the article of Okere, (2005: 20-34) It is common cause that the theory and practice of "science" in colonised and decolonised Africa is traceable to the ethically unjustified violence of Western colonialism. By virtue of the ethically questionable "right of conquest" the West claimed "science" as its exclusive property subject to its control. This claim was and, remains an important element of the West's dogmatic standardisation and hegemonisation of "science" across Africa and the rest of its previously colonised world. This kind of "science" is epistemic enslavement in practice facilitating the continual suppression of social justice. This injustice was resisted right from the beginning of the conquests in the unjust wars of colonisation waged by the West. The resistance was not and, is not a wholesale rejection of the theory and practice of "science". On the contrary, the focus is on the unjust consequences of denying the indigenous conquered peoples a say in the construction of science on the one hand and the distribution of its burdens and benefits on the basis of justice aimed at peace in human relations. (Okere, 2005: 32) Okere's article is a continuation of this kind of resistance.

Okere's argument for the movement "towards a pluralistic and complementary world science" should be understood, from the point of view of the philosophy of ubu-ntu as an appeal for the recognition of science as a oneness unfolding as an integral part of the wholeness of be-ing. The -ness suffix in this philosophy speaks to the ever-ready openness to be-ing in its multiple and various manifestations. Dogma is incompatible with this kind of openness. Underlying such openness then is the thesis that science – derived from the Latin *scire*, to know – is the human quest for truth: truth not definable in terms of dogmatic fixations upholding the eternity and immutability of its claims. On this basis, the ubu-ntu philosophy of education is an invitation to everyone to participate in its quest for truth, justice and peace. It is the reaffirmation of everyone's "right to know". (Chimakonam and Nweke, 2019: 130-132)

A proper understanding of the preceding paragraph is best expressed in these terms:

> *Above all we must remember that science could not progress along certain*
> *lines without traversing vested interests and prejudices and without hurting*

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[19] Ngomane, Mungi, Everyday ubuntu, Bantam Press, London 2019
[20] Santos, B. de Sousa, Epistemologies of the South Justice against epistemicide, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder & London, 2014

> *the feelings of the community. To proceed in the face of such opposition has always required a great deal of intellectual courage ... In the whole sweep of history there is nothing more impressive than the spectacle of noble men who had the spirit to fight unreason and ignorance and who did not hesitate, not only to renounce material advantages, but even to jeopardize life and happiness in order to increase the amount of beauty, of justice, and of truth which is the essential part of our patrimony. (Sarton, 1927: 20-21)*

Sarton underlines the quest for truth as the "essence" of science. It is a quest that demands the non-concealment of truth to the extent that the scientist is prepared to give up her or his own life. This I define as epistemic love. (Ramose, 2016: 552-553) In the vernacular (Northern SeSotho) of the ubu-ntu philosophy of education this is conveyed by the ethical maxim: bakgori ba moriti ga se badudi ba wona. The institutionalisation of the scientific endeavour is a complex problem with regard to the disclosure of the total and whole truth. Bronowski, like Sarton, advocates, rightly so, an unswerving commitment to the quest for truth as part of the solution to this problem.

> *Science is an endless search for truth, and those who devote their lives to it must accept a stringent discipline.... they must not be party to hiding the truth, for any end whatever. There is no distinction between means and ends for them. Science admits no other end than the truth, and therefore it rejects all those devices of expediency by which men who seek power excuse their use of bad means for what they call good ends. (Bronowski, 1971: 235 and, 239, 240)*

Truth is not a transcendent abstraction imbued with immutability, immortality and eternity. On the contrary, it is the mutually accepted outcome of the activity of any reasoning subject in its interaction with other subjects. (Bohm, 1994: 181) Accordingly, "nobody is entitled to enforce by compulsion his own truth on other individuals". (Verbeke, 1984: 13) This is the reason for the existence of a "university", more precisely, a pluriversity as an institution intended to engage in the pursuit of more and more critical reasoning (Hogan and Smith, 2003: 174-175) in the search for truth instead of resorting to either physical force or coercion by persuasion. (Wrong, 1979: 32-33) Science ought not to compel "reason to abdicate its critical function and become a mere instrument of the system". (Boff, 1985: 52)

This understanding of the human quest for truth through science, using pluriversities and other institutions as sites of research, is consistent with the philopraxis of *ubu-ntu* because it is an ethical pluriversal invitation to all human beings to be collectively active in the human quest for truth, justice and peace. Henceforth we will use this meaning of science unless inconsistent with the context. We now turn to *ubu-ntu* education seeking its meaning with particular reference to the eruption of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Ubu-ntu education

Education through ubu-ntu philosophy and culture is documented in multiple texts (Krige, 1950, Gyekye, 1998) sometimes different in their perspectives and placing emphasis on selected aspects. (Ramose, 2004: 148-156) Writing on this philosophy of education is sometimes found even in literature. (Wangusa, 1989: 114-116) It is not the intention here to narrate the same

story. Rather, the intention in this essay is to identify specific ethical maxims of ubu-ntu and inquire into how they have and, may respond to the ethical problems facing Africa especially in the economic-social sphere.

The point of departure for the proposed inquiry is that many African philosophies of education concur on the view that "education begins at the time of birth and ends with death". (Kenyatta, 1970: 99) On this understanding, education is a life-long process because it involves the formation of character. Without disregard for natural phenomena the *ubu-ntu* philosophy of education places special emphasis on the cultivation of inter-personal relations, beginning with the family, for the good of the individual and the promotion of goodness throughout the community. Underlying this meaning of education is the ethical maxim, *obra ye nnoboa* meaning, life is mutual aid. (Wiredu, 2003: 293) This ethical maxim is not confined to Africans within Africa. It extends to all human beings across the globe because there cannot be ubuntu without *umuntu*. On this basis, ubuntu is open to dialogue with other philosophies of education. We now turn to illustrate this briefly.

Dialogue between ubu-ntu and other philosophies of education

Russell acknowledges that the power of industrialism is the cause of the decay of the ideal of "learning for the sake of learning"; an ideal which contributed much to the understanding of education as a contribution towards character formation and individual self-fulfilment. He considers that the decay cannot result in irreparable damage only if pure learning is "brought into relation with the life of the community as a whole". (Russell, 2010: 192) Here we see the coincidence of insight between *ubu-ntu* and Western philosophies of education on the point that education ought to be linked to "the life of the community as a whole". *Motho ke motho ka batho – umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye bantu* – is the ubu-ntu ethical maxim linking individual life to the life of the community as a whole-ness rather than "a whole". This maxim translates into; a human being is a human being – in the ethical sense – through respectful and humane relations with other human beings. Today the concept of community is deepened and expanded from a delimited geographic "nation" space within which there is cultural interaction with the global space populated by different cultures. This is complicated by a complex history of intertwinements, conflicts, contentions and even co-operations between and amongst the multiple cultural groups. The school and the "university" are two features of this complex history. They are important sites of education.

Russel notes that one of the problems of the "universities" is the "desire to get endowments from ignorant millionaires". (Russell, 2010: 192) This opens the door for "universities" to become entangled in the prescriptions of industrialism. They become establishment institutions under the control of the plutocrats. Against this, Russell proposes an "educated democracy, willing to spend public money on objects which our captains of industry are unable to appreciate". (Russell, 2010: 192) Forty-five years later, Bronowski questions the partnership between science and the establishment. He warns that "no science is immune to the infection of politics and the corruption of power". Like Russell, he argues for the "disestablishment of science". (Bronowski, 1971: 241) The disestablishment of science "must mean a change from national to international policies. … The body of scientists as a whole will have to develop a

system of representation to make its policy, in which the young, the bold, the idealistic and the unorthodox have a better chance to be heard than they do in politics". (Bronowski, 1971: 242)

With the deepening and the expansion of the concept of community, the ubu-ntu philosophy of education is historically and ethically faced with the problem of the establishment or disestablishment of science. Today it is evident that the plutocrats have won the tug of war between these two tendencies. Their victory is called the marketisation of education. The market has been elevated to the status of a "God" (Cox, 2016: 231) holding and exercising power over the meaning and use of natural resources, indeed, the meaning of life itself. The prescribed meaning is that all natural resources – including human beings who were latter day "personnel" but are now renamed "human resources" – should be used to obtain maximum profit[21] endlessly in the quest to accumulate wealth in a finite world with finite natural resources. This is the metaphysical "God" of the market in whom all contradictions, contraries and conflicts are resolved.

The marketization of education

The marketization of education (Bertelsen, 1998: 130-158) has brought about the situation in which the plutocracy has decreed that more funds be allocated to the natural sciences, technology and management sciences and much less to the humanities and social sciences. (Bridges and Jonathan, 2003: 136-144) This decree has at least two effects. One is that even those without inclination or talent in the better funded fields might feel coerced to pursue studies in the favoured disciplines. Another effect is that some might drop out of studies completely. The decree itself is surreptitiously creating its own human being; a being born with a hammer in one hand and nails in the other hand and, wearing a tools belt around its waist, ready to plunge into the servicing of the industrial machine through employment.

This invention of the human being denies that human beings can be otherwise talented and inclined. It is also a false promise to the youth that once they obtain the relevant qualification they will be employed. It is evidently oblivious of the fact that unemployment is a structural necessity for the survival of the prevailing socioeconomic system that is "unjust at its root". (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013: paragraph 59) *Laborem Exercens* exposes the fallacy that there is a necessary connection between obtaining an educational qualification and finding employment corresponding to it. "It is particularly painful when it especially affects young people, who after appropriate cultural, technical and professional preparation fail to find work and see their sincere wish to work and their readiness to take on their own responsibility for the economic and social development of the community frustrated". (John Paul II, 1981. *Laborem Exercens*: On human work, paragraph 18) In spite of this, it appears that educationists are somewhat lax in affirming this truth to the students. Instead, they seem to be more enthusiastic in assuring them that an educational qualification is the key to employment. (Pauw, 1946: 104)

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[21] Chomasky, N & Waterstone, M., 2021. Consequences of Capitalism Manufacturing discontent and resistance, Great Britain, Hamish Hamilton refer to this tendency for insatiable thirst for profit as the logic of "profits *über alles*", p. 339

If this were true then conqueror South Africa today would not be facing the deadly problem of poverty, unemployment and inequality, (PUI). (Terreblanche, 2012: 118-119)

The emphasis on employment is pedagogically disturbing. It is the invention of *jobomania* – an intoxication with the desire to be employed concealing the fact that job seeking stems from colonial compulsion to work for another primarily for the benefit of the same another. Seen from this perspective, *jobomania* is normalised original ethically unjustified force to work for another's benefit commonly known as profit. *Jobomania* downplays and obscures the possibility of self-employment. By so doing, it elevates employment to a norm through which the inalienable right to subsistence – the right to life – may be exercised. But there is no a priori reason for the normativisation of employment because the right to life was exercised in the past without the need for employment by another. The presumption that the socio-economic system of capitalism is suitable for the exercise of the right to life is morally disturbing on the ground that the system itself is "unjust at its root". It is inconsistent with the *ubu-ntu* ethical maxim that life is mutual aid.

The marketisation of education has attained only a precarious victory over the disestablishment of science. This is because the tension between the two trends is palpably vibrant. This aspect is of crucial importance to the response of *ubu-ntu* philosophy of education to the eruption of Covid 19 as one of the contemporary ethical problems. (Biesta and Burbules, 2003: 81)

Covid 19 and the ubu-ntu philosophy of education

Covid 19 erupted like a surprise attack. It shocked many and sharpened the shock by claiming many lives in a short space of time. This heightened panic and instilled fear (Ramose and Sethuntsa, 2020) as efforts were made frantically to deliver a medical solution to the deadly pandemic. One of the major features of efforts to save lives during the search for a medical solution to the pandemic was the double prescription to wear masks covering the mouth and the nose and to maintain "social distance" between human beings. Here we will pay special attention to the prescription of "social distance".

 We distinguish between "social distance" as a preventive medical measure and "social distance" as an ethical question. Concerning the former, we have no problem. The same cannot be said with regard to the latter. For this reason, we will focus on it by reference to some of its predecessors. We turn first to Western colonialism as an example of "social distance".

The "social distance" of Western colonialism

The violence of Western colonialism was ethically unjustified. It used the claim that some human beings were actually not rational animals to construct the dividing line between animals with reason – the Westerner – and, animals without reason; the Africans, Amerindians, Australasians and even women. This dividing line demanded social distance between these two categories of animals. The Westerner holding themselves to be the exclusive seat of reason, deemed it just to enslave other human beings as the trans-Atlantic slave trade testifies. The social distance to be kept between reason and unreason, slave-holder and slave is ethically untenable. The abolition of slavery by the Western coloniser in all of its colonies was based on the recognition

that slavery is immoral. But physical enslavement is not the only form of slavery. Cognitive or intellectual enslavement is also a form of slavery. It is alive in our time as the struggle for "justice against epistemicide" attests.

Poverty and hunger often resulting in preventable deaths serve as the dividing line of the economic social distance between "developed" and "underdeveloped" countries. Sometimes this social distance is referred to as the South and the North with the former known as the poor countries and the latter as the rich ones. Many theories of development were propounded in part to inquire into how the "underdeveloped" countries could be "developed". While these theories were tested, J F Kennedy announced in his inaugural speech, January 20, 1961, accepting the Presidency of the United States of America that:

> *The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power*
> *to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life.*

It is best to believe that Kennedy was telling the truth especially with regard to his use of "all" appearing twice in the same sentence. So, both material and cognitive poverty were in his time features of world history which could be "abolished". The biggest puzzle is that sixty-one years later deadly but preventable poverty and hunger have intensified in the face of the ever-widening gap between the poor and rich countries. (Collier, 2008) One of the major reasons for the persistence of this puzzle is that the West adheres steadfastly to the individual right to private property as well as the exercise of this right to obtain maximum profit in the process of accumulating wealth. To all appearances, this right is deemed to be absolute and justifies the killing of another human being if it is violated. (Sullivan, 1976)

Sixty-one years after Kennedy's declaration we read that it was the banks that benefitted most from the 2008-2009 world economic crash; "the total of the bank bailout has now been estimated at $29 trillion. … The UN Food and Agricultural Organization estimates that to wipe out global hunger would cost $30 to $60 billion per year, so if we had not spent this on bailing out the banks, we could have eliminated hunger for over five hundred years". (Chomsky and Waterstone, 2021: 313) It would seem then that only the "lords of poverty" in the North continue to be the main beneficiaries of "underdevelopment".

Towards the end of his inaugural speech, Kennedy warned that "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor; it cannot save the few who are rich". His warning was repeated thirty-five years later: "The ideology of socialist revolution may have few takers but one should not imagine that the world's poor will remain cowed or passively accept their poverty … A world of wealth and poverty, with appalling and widening differences in living standards between the richest and the poorest nations, is unlikely to be secure or stable". (Hirst and Thompson, 1996: 182)

Against the absolutisation of the individual right to private property, we learn that the whole of Mother Earth is the common panarium (breadbasket) of all human beings. "…, the right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. … If a person is in extreme necessity, he has the right to take from the riches of others what he himself needs". (Pope Paul, 1965. Gaudium et Spes, paragraph 69) The countries of the South are sinking deeper into an ethically questionable bondage of unpayable debt based on the unjustifiable violence of Western colonialism. The many preventable deaths in these countries mean that a situation of

"extreme necessity" exists. Accordingly, the countries ought "to take from the riches of others" precisely by the non-payment of the foreign debt burden.

We read further that; "…, private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditioned right". (Pope Paul VI, 1967. *Populorum progressio*, paragraph 23) "The right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone". (Pope John Paul II, 1981. *Laborem exercens*, paragraph 14) The social distance between the "developed" and "underdeveloped" countries is ethically untenable.

The social distance initiated by the eruption of Covid 19 demanded the discovery and distribution of drugs to treat the pandemic. It forced many countries to close their territorial boundaries. Even member states of the European Union recoiled into their sovereign nation statehood just as they did on the vote to replace the "Union" with the federation of European states. (Habermas, 2012) The stranger appeared as a threat to be repelled before it got closer bringing death to others. Rules for entry into and exit from the countries were made and enforced. Such was the panic arising from the fear of death that the North hoarded drugs ending up with quantities that they did not need. This meant that it would be better if those who had no drugs would die rather than have the excess drugs from the North. This social distance was ethically untenable because it was a practical rejection of the morality of "my brother's keeper".

An ubu-ntu response

We have suggested that the three examples of social distance discussed in the preceding paragraphs are ethically unsustainable. The fact that human beings continue to die of poverty and hunger in the midst of overabundance of means to preserve and promote life goes against the *ubu-ntu* ethical maxim that *bana ba motho ba ngoathogana tlhogwana ya tjie* (children of the same family share the head of the locust). The sages of African philosophy wisely chose the head of the locust, a tiny part compared to its larger body. The point of the choice is to emphasise that sharing is morally significant when it is done out of the substance than the disposable surplus that one has.

That human beings are indifferently left to die when there is an overabundance of means to preserve and promote life goes against the *ubu-ntu* ethical maxim that *lebitla la tlala ga le tsebjwe* (a grave containing someone who died of hunger is unknown in the sense that no one may die of hunger). To make life revolve around the absolutisation of the individual right to property for the sake of "profit *über alles*" (Chomsky and Waterstone, 2021: 339) is to go against the *ubu-ntu* ethical maxim of *feta kgomo o tshware motho* (if and when one is faced with a choice between the preservation and promotion of the life of a human being and the protection of wealth then one ought to choose for the former.)

Chomsky's choice of *über alles* is unmistakably reminiscent of the slogan that ultimately resulted in the Holocaust. In this sense, it is a warning that before the already gnawing holocaust of capitalism eats up others and itself, it is now the time to act against this menacing prospect. The point of departure for action must be that the medical social distance of Covid 19 is an ethical appeal for proximity with the other. It is an ethical imperative to translate into practice the ubu-ntu education of the constant construction and reconstruction of sharing manifested through

mutual concern and care making life a real and practical *obra ye nnoboa*. Ogotemmeli captures this perspective on ubu-ntu philosophy of education thus:

> *The altar gives something to a man, and a part of what he received he passes on to others … A small part of the sacrifice is for oneself, but the rest is for others. The forces released enter into the man, pass through him and out again, and so it is for all … As each man gives to all the rest, so he also receives from all. A perpetual exchange goes on between men, an unceasing movement of invisible currents. And this must be so if the universal order is to endure … for it is good to give and to receive the forces of life. (Griaule, 1965: 137)*

In the light of the foregoing in this section, the philopraxis of ubuntu holds that the message of Covid 19 to the rest of the world is that ethical proximity to the other ought to be intensified in practice. Non-medical "social distance" should be abolished to the extent that it threatens and actualises ethical indifference to the other. This message demands an educational paradigm and an appropriate pedagogy deliberately pursuing an ethical revolution aimed at ethical proximity to the other.

Conclusion

"Human relations based on the recognition, respect and protection of the human dignity of one another require moral education that is focused upon the integral development of the individual and oriented to community service. Such education is ethically significant since it answers to the individual need to have access to as well as to use the resources necessary for the preservation of life. Thus, the question of justice arises in the sense of giving the other their due. It also arises in the sense of distributive justice. It is justice that imposes limits upon the quest for individual happiness. It enjoins individuals to exercise moderation in accumulating and allocating to themselves the necessities of life. Moral education should cultivate these insights in the learner. It can do so by adopting a holistic approach to formal education enabling the learner to understand that education is not for self-edification only and always in relation to the others". (Ramose, 2010: 295)

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