Consciencism, *Ubuntu*, and Justice

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Abstract
In this paper, we argue that while Consciencism and ubuntu share common principles, the one cannot be understood as an expression or representation of the other. Rather, the principles they share should be understood as emanating from, and animated by, a primary source: traditional African communalism. This primary source is a true reflection and evidence of the commonality of the philosophical underpinnings of African thought – Consciencism, rooted in Akan (Ghanaian) thought and practices; and ubuntu, is rooted in the thought and practices of peoples of Southern Africa. Both Consciencism and ubuntu defend the restitution of humanist and egalitarian principles in traditional African societies. We highlight the significant differences between Consciencism as a philosophical system and ubuntu as an ethic or worldview of practical action, and, their responses to the issue of justice. We submit that Consciencism can embrace the ethic of ubuntu in its harmonization of the conflicting heritages of African society; and that ubuntu can evolve into a system of thought by taking a cue from the systematicity and coherence of the philosophical anchoring of Consciencism.

Introduction: Is Consciencism an expression of *ubuntu*?

This essay compares the philosophical tenets of *ubuntu* and Kwame Nkrumah's *Consciencism*. The primary motives for this are to examine the claim that *Conciencism* is an expression of *ubuntu*, to deepen understanding for the commonalities and differences among these philosophies, and to use a comparative analysis to judge their strengths and weaknesses. The relevance of Kwame Nkrumah's *Consciencism* to issues affecting South Africa

and Southern African people, from where the notion of *ubuntu* emerges, was first established at the launching of the book in April 1964. In a speech delivered at the launch titled "On the Application of Consciencism in Ghana and Africa", S.G. Ikoku[1] challenged readers of *Consciencism* in the following:

> Here again, the student of *Consciencism* has got to come to grips with other moral and social theories. For example, he simply cannot tolerate a moral or social theory which preaches racial discrimination as in South Africa, and racial superiority as in Central America and the USA, or racial supremacy as under fascism. Nor can *Consciencism* accommodate social theories that support a caste system whether this is based on religion as in India, or on the colour of the skin as in South Africa and the Southern States of the USA, or on birth as under feudalism or on the control of the means of production as under capitalism. These systems are either founded upon or have come to accept the inequality of man…*Consciencism* does not quarrel with religion which it recognizes as a necessary instrument for spreading moral values in any community. But *Consciencism* is vitally interested in the moral values disseminated by religions. Because they uphold the system of apartheid, the teachings of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, for example are antithetical to *Consciencism*.[2]

Ikoku's position offers wide-ranging insights into the ambition of *Consciencism* to offer theoretical resources for battling social inequalities and discrimination, in Ghana and other parts of the world where inequalities prevail. By listing racial discrimination and apartheid, Ikoku intimates a connection between the philosophical tool of *Consciencism* and any other moral or social theory that rejects apartheid. One can state with confidence that his views imply that a subscriber to the ideals of *Consciencism* should embrace and support theories that advocate and uphold the equality of man. This connection to other theories that uphold the equality of man substantiates and makes worth examining Mkhwanazi's[3] comparison of tenets of *Consciencism* to those of *Ubuntu*.

We agree with Mkhwanazi that the ethics of *ubuntu* and *consciencism* coincide at several points. They both uphold the principles of egalitarianism and humanism and call for the restitution of these principles in contemporary African societies. Furthermore, both *ubuntu* and *consciencism* assert and defend the equality, dignity, and value of all human beings. But we disagree with the conclusions he draws from his observation of the similarities between *ubuntu* and *consciencism*. In our view, these similarities do not imply, as Mkhwanazi infers, that: *consciencism* is an 'expression of ubuntu'; that consciencism reflects and represents essential elements of the *ubuntu* philosophy;[4] and that the similarities between them "point to the centrality of the philosophy of ubuntu among all the people of Africa in general."[5]

In our view, Mkhwanazi's analysis exhibits a two-fold error. Firstly, in comparing the two he makes the one, *consciencism*, derivative of the other, *ubuntu*; and secondly, he projects from this derivation the universality of *ubuntu*. The analysis and explanatory strategy of the relationship between the two that we propose is not one that makes either of them a

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[1] S.G. Ikoku was a Nigerian academic and politician who, before his exile in Ghana in the early 1960s, was the leader of the opposition in the Eastern House of Assembly representing the Calabar Municipality from 1951-1962. [Source: https://joliba-africa.com/2015/12/05/samuel-gomsu-ikoku-1970/]. Two of his books are: *Nigeria's Fourth Coup D'etat: Options for Modern Statehood* (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1985), and "*Nigeria for Nigerians : A Study of Contemporary Nigerian Politics from a Socialist Point of View*" (A. I. Press, Takoradi, 1962).

[2] Speech reprinted as Appendix in Ajei (ed.) 2017, p. 343.

[3] Mkhwanazi, E. S. N. (2017). "Consciencism as an expression of Ubuntu". In: M. Ajei (ed.) *Disentangling Consciencism: Essays on Kwame Nkrumah's Philosophy*. Lanham: Lexinton Books, p. 261-278.

[4] Ibid., p. 261

[5] Ibid., p. 274

subordinating or derivative ethical theory. In our framework, *consciencism* is conceived not as an expression of *ubuntu*, nor is *ubuntu* conceived as an expression of *consciencism*. Rather, we propose that the two be understood as expressions of a fundamental ethos of African societies, viz: African communalism.

In the following section, we give brief accounts of both *consciencism* and *ubuntu* and show the underlying foundation. The section that follows this highlights significant differences between *ubuntu* and *consciencism* and show that they may have different reflections; and in the third section we examine the notion of justice in the two philosophical systems. An articulation of the symbiotic relationship that could exist between the two systems follows, and a final section summarizes the claims in the preceding sections and concludes the essay.

The Foundations of *Consciencism* and *Ubuntu*

The sub-heading of the first (1964) edition of *Consciencism* is "Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and Development with Particular Reference to the African Revolution." In the second (1970) edition, this was abbreviated to "Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization." These sub-headings are indicative of the theme and agenda of *Consciencism*. African societies, for Nkrumah, are plagued with five fundamental problems: the effects of colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism; which have engendered disunity, and lack of development. Solving these problems, in his view, requires a philosophy or an ideology that will serve as an intellectual map for combating these problems and guiding the transformation of African societies from the status of colonies to independent and developed societies. *Consciencism* is envisaged as that philosophy. As Kwesi (2017) explains, the aims of *Consciencism* in its socio-political manifestation are

> first, to chart a course of action to defeat colonialism and imperialism; second, to reveal the whims and caprices of neo-colonialism so that the defeat of colonialism does not become pointless; third, to marshal all the various forces and groups in a territory towards a national (or continental) unity;

and finally, to articulate an (philosophical) ideology suitable for national reconstruction and development.[6]

Consciencism, therefore, offers an ethical and political formula for the full-scale liberation of colonized and newly politically independent African societies. It is a necessary philosophy; for the five problems enumerated earlier have rendered in citizens of African societies a crisis of conscience and conflicting ideologies. The influence of indigenous African cultural traditions on contemporary life, along with contact with Euro-Christian and Islamic cultures, effected through colonialism, missionary work, and trade; are responsible for these:

> African society has one segment which comprises our traditional way of life; it has a second segment which is filled by the presence of the Islamic tradition in Africa; it has a final segment which represents the infiltration of the Christian tradition and culture of Western Europe into Africa, using colonialism and neocolonialism as its primary vehicles. These different segments are animated by competing ideologies.[7]

Thus, the crisis has created a three-segmented and conflicting philosophies which animate ordinary life and the activities of social institutions. Nkrumah predicts that African societies "will be racked by the most malignant schizophrenia"[8] should these conflicting ideologies be allowed to persist without a cogent strategy for harmonizing them in a conceptual framework that gears toward development of these societies He argues that such harmony must be forged to be in tune with cardinal principles

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[6] Kwesi, R. (2017). "The Logic of Consciencism". In: M. Ajei (ed.) *Disentangling Consciencism: Essays on Kwame Nkrumah's Philosophy.* Lanham: Lexinton Books, p. 185.

[7] Nkrumah, K. (1970). *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization.* London: Panaf. p. 68

[8] Ibid., p. 78

underlying the African traditional way of life. Put differently, African thought must form the fulcrum of the synthesis, which will comprise a "new emergent ideology" that employs as its instrument a solidified philosophical statement. This philosophical statement Nkrumah dubbed *philosophical consciencism*, and characterized it as "the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality."[9] Thus, *philosophical consciencism* proceeds from the present content African consciences, to indicate a direction for forging human and social progress out of their conflicted state.

Consciencism comprises a coherent philosophical system with metaphysical, ethical and socio-political theoretical components. Its ethical dimensions are expressed in its humanist and egalitarian orientations. Its political dimension is reflected in the recommendation of socialism as the system of governance that will realize the ethical dimensions for African societies. And materialism is the metaphysical doctrine that anchors these applied philosophical ideas and principles. Nkrumah's metaphysics asserts a material continuum of being. This enables the categorical convertibility of dead matter into self-consciousness. It is, thus, a monistic theory that absolutely rejects the dualist diametrical opposition of material and the non-material furniture of existence. Its facility of categorical conversion facilitates "the emergence of self-consciousness from that which is not self-conscious; of mind from matter; of quality from quantity,"[10] and is easily transported into normative space to ground ethics and political philosophy.

This is what validates the prescription of a harmonization process by which African knowledge and values would absorb the other two cultural influences that inhabit the African conscience. In Nkrumah's mind, the elements of traditional African culture that ought to ground this conceptual framework are two cardinal principles: humanism and egalitarianism. A humanist society is one that treats human beings as ends in themselves by upholding their moral worth and dignity, and accepting the necessity of guaranteeing for all persons equal opportunities for their development."[11] It is the principle that underlay traditional African communalist ethos, which manifested in each individual seeing "his well-being in the welfare of the group,"[12] and for which reason socialism was a preferred political and economic philosophy. Thus, the emergent independent and Africa should adopt socialism, as one can find its causal ancestry in the communalist and humanistic ethics of traditional African society.[13]

Thus, the humanistic impulse of traditional African communalism was founded on the principles of egalitarianism. The principle of treating human beings as ends in themselves, in a manner analogous to Kant's second formulation of his Categorical Imperative,[14] suffices to establish the egalitarian principles of socialism that contemporary Africa ought to pursue. An egalitarian society eschews all forms of slavery and subjugation of human beings. Yet it does not mean an absence of difference – classlessness. It recognizes and accepts differences among men, but these differences are relevant only at a functional level. Besides their functional value, differences in Nkrumah's egalitarian system are not allowed to make a fundamental difference. They do not make a difference at the level of the intrinsic worth of the individual, which guarantees equality of being.

The metaphysics of *consciencism* undoubtedly relies on an Akan theory of being,[15] that is recognized by most professional

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[9] Ibid., p. 79
[10] Ibid., 20

[11] Ibid., 81.
[12] Nkrumah, K. (1973), *The Struggle Continues*, London: Panaf Books, 80.
[13] Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 73.
[14] Kant's formula is "act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end" (Paton 1948, 32).
[15] Nkrumah does not state this explicitly in *Consciencism*, but it is easily inferred from the work and its antecedents. Three earlier works, written between 1941-1943 attests to this: In "Primitive Education in West Africa", published in *Educational Outlook* (Vo. XV, No. 2, 1941, pp. 87-92), Nkrumah argues for a strict relationship between

philosophers who are familiar with the language,[16] which postulates a unified structure of existence with visible and invisible realms.[17] This universe of being is hierarchical, with *Onyame*[18] at the top and next in descending order from *Onyame* are *Abosom* (deities), *Nsamanfo* (human beings who have departed the visible realm of existence for the invisible one), human beings and, finally, physical objects[19]. Another postulate of Akan cosmology is that the universe is endowed with varying degrees of force of

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education and the context in which it is meant to be applied and claims this was the philosophy and practice of it in Akan society. The second work, "Education and Nationalism in Africa," which appeared also in *Educational Outlook* (Vo. XVIII, 1943, No. 1, pp. 32-40) echoes the thesis of 'Primitive Education..' by affirming education as the most potent instrument for the preservation and progression of culture, and arguing that colonial education in West Africa subverts this aim of education. The third work that precedes *Consciencism* and extols the virtues of Akan thought is *Mind and Thought in Primitive Society. A Study in Ethno-philosophy*, a Thesis Nkrumah intended to be submitted to the University of Pennsylvania for partial fulfillment of the award of a Ph. D degree, and which must have been written between 1943-1945. In this work, Nkrumah re-conceptualizes the goals of education and seeks to show that such conceptualization is endemic to Akan culture, and that the educational structures and practices of this culture are capable of achieving that goal.

[16] Prominent among these are J. B. Danquah, Kwame Nkrumah, W. E Abraham, Kwasi Wiredu, and Kwame Gyekye.

[17] A number of authors claim the same for other African cultures. One of the strongest defenses of this claim occurs at Bujo, B, 1998, *The Ethical Dimensions of Community*, Nganda, C. N. (trans), Nairobi: Paulines Publications, pp. 15, 16, 33

[18] The most powerful of the beings that inhibit the Akan universe

[19] Although the hierarchical ontology is almost universally accepted by the listed philosophers, its monistic character is sometimes disputed. Gyekye, for instance, has attributed a dualistic universe to the Akans, assigning all the categories of being beyond human beings to be the immaterial/spiritual realm of existence, whereas observable entities like trees have been consigned to the physical realm. We question the veracity of Gyekye's view, and suggest here that admitting the visible and invisible components of beings need not imply that these aspects of existence are diametrically opposed categories as the notion of dualism would suggest. Rather, there is good judgment in conceiving these two realms as two points on a continuum, and not distinct realms. One reason for this is that an *obosom*, for instance, which in a strictly dualistic interpretation of Akan cosmology will be assigned to the immaterial realm, is believed to be capable of physical manifestation and as such, enter into a visible world. On the other hand a tree, which in a strictly dualistic universe would be conceived as a physical entity, is believed to be constituted of non-physical properties by many Akan thinkers. This makes a clear-cut dichotomy of the immaterial/material or spiritual/physical in Akan ontology implausible.

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power, all of which derive ultimately from *Onyame*. Gyekye reports that

> This force or power is *sunsum*...in this metaphysic all created things, that is, natural objects, have or contain *sunsum*. Every deity (*obosom*) is a *sunsum* but not vice versa. *Sunsum*, then, on my interpretation, appears to be a generic concept, it appears to be a universal spirit, manifesting itself differently in the various beings and objects in the natural world.[20]

Belief in the existence of universal *sunsum* makes reasonable the view of this ontology of be-ing as one. The manifestation of this pervasive energy in particular and specific beings, in the perceivable and imperceptible worlds, constitutes the different modes of expression of this energy. Thus in this ontology, human beings, like all categories of being, are just part of this generalized be-ing. This makes implausible a separation of be-ing (as matter) from be-ing (as consciousness). Ultimately, be-ing is understood as being a wholeness, or that which makes everything connected into a whole. The notion of be-ing as oneness readily leads to the view that each particular existent is merely a speck in a pattern of interactions within the wholeness. Further, its correlate, the notion of universal energy, yields the view that each existing entity has power to interact with every other entity. Osuagwu considers this world of universal and necessary inter-relations as analogous to the intercommunicative network of contemporary Information Technology, and consequently characterizes the African world as a "cyber-cosmos."[21]

This metaphysical basis of consciencism, and its expression in the principles of humanism and egalitarianism, is parallel to a metaphysical grounding of the ethics of *ubuntu*. According to

[20] Gyekye, K., (1995), *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 72-73

[21] Osuagwu, C. G., (2006), *Cybercosmos: The African Network Universe*, A lecture delivered under the Tshwane Renascent Africa Lectures series, University of South Africa, Pretoria, March 22-30, 2

Ramose, the word '*ubuntu*' couples two words: *ubu* and *ntu*. *Ubu* concerns be-ing in general, in so far as "It is enfolded be-ing before it manifests itself in the concrete form or mode of existence of a particular entity."[22] Oneness is characteristic of *ubu*. *Ubu*, thus, correlates with the Akan *sunsum*. However, this enfolded be-ing is always oriented towards unfoldment, as it seeks "incessant continual concrete manifestation through particular forms and modes of being."[23] *Ntu* expresses this process of continual unfoldment. Thus, *ubu* as generalized be-ing has the possibility of infinite manifestations[24]. *Umuntu*, the embodied human being, is one such manifestation, and this embodiment is constituted by an "onto-triadic structure of be-ing."[25]

Two implications flow from this cybernetic character of existence that have significance for normative theory. The first is that each human being has an intrinsic source of agency. As the Akan ontology earlier discussed suggests, every being belongs to that class of existents whose essence is a power (to act in the world) that is contingent upon a universally pervasive metaphysical power. Humans are, by virtue of this, active sources of actions that influence their own and other lives, and affect the total life force of their communities by the manner of application of this innate attribute. The second implication is its theoretical basis for the notion of solidarity in community. By exhibiting trans-individualist dimensions, Akan metaphysics provides adhesive for social bonding.[26] So does the metaphysics of *ubuntu*.[27] The solidarity, deriving from the perceived "wholeness" of existence, has definite implications for value preferences and

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[22] Ramose, M. B. (1999), *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, Harare: Mond Books, 41
[23] Ibid.
[24] The affirmation of this thesis by the Igbos of Nigeria is encoded in the igbo term for 'the world'. This is *Uwa* which, according to Osuagwu, literally means "the Unfolding". See Osuagwu, C. G. "Cybercosmos: The African Dynamic Network Universe", *The Tshwane Renascent Africa Lectures*, delivered at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, 20-31 March 2006, p. 2
[25] Ramose, 1999, 50
[26] Ajei, M. O.(2014), *The Paranormal: An Inquiry into some features of an African Metaphysics and epistemology*, Hamburg: Missionshilfe Verlag, p. 48-49

[27] Ramose,1999, 45-46

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social organization. The need for such solidarity is implicit in Nkrumah's humanism and egalitarianism, and in the ethics of *ubuntu*.[28]

Mkhwanazi has characterized *consciencism* and *ubuntu* as engaged in a project to re-humanize Africans. In this re-humanization project, he conceives of the parallel between *ubuntu* and *consciencism* in this manner:

Consciencism, like *ubuntu*, seeks first to restore the dignity and self-respect of the African person who was colonized. The colonizer, in his racist treatment of the African person, denied Africans of their humanity by exploiting and in some instances annihilating them from the face of the earth. In the postcolonial situation, there is therefore a need to heal the African of this injury and many others. Thus consciencism plays a healing role by seeking to re-affirm Africans in their humanity...In the same vein as consciencism, the philosophy of *ubuntu* appeals to the former colonizer to recognize the humanity of the "Other", as by doing so the former colonizer will be simultaneously recognizing his and her humanity. In other words, the former colonizer is less a human being when he treats others in an inhumane way. Therefore, *ubuntu* and *consciencism* appeal to the colonizer to become a true social partner to the African.[29]

The parallels that Mkhwanazi traces between *consciencism* and *ubuntu* as expressed above, allows him to infer that consciencism is an expression of *ubuntu*, and that this further points to "the centrality of the philosophy of *ubuntu* among all the people of Africa in general." [30] This coincides with Roederer and Moellendorf's assertion that "*ubuntu* represents notions of universal human interdependence, solidarity and communalism which can be traced to small-scale communities in pre-colonial

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[28] Ramose, M. B. (2003) "Globalization and *Ubuntu*". In The African Philosophy Reader, (eds.) P. H. Coetzee ad A. P. J. Roux, London: Routledge, pp. 626-650, 643
[29] Mkwhanazi, 274-275
[30] Ibid., 274

Africa, and which underlie virtually every indigenous African culture."[31] This is unsatisfactory from a logical point of view. For, from such a view, it is erroneous to infer that one thing, A, is an expression of another thing, B, from merely observing that A is similar to B. Similarly, one cannot infer that A is a representation of B simply from the fact that A and B share similar principles. To make A an expression, or a representation, of B, implies that A is subordinate to, or is derivative from, B.

For instance, one can perceive a resemblance between the queen and the portrait of the queen; the portrait of the queen is a representation, a copy of the queen. Hence the relation between the queen and the portrait of her is a relation that marks a difference in quality: the portrait is inferior in quality to the object (the queen) itself. The portrait can be dispensed with, but not the queen. To assert such a subordinating relation in terms of difference in quality between *ubuntu* and *consciencism* requires argumentation to that effect. Mkhwanazi, however, does not provide any such argument. The relation is merely assumed, but not well-motivated. The assumption rests on the error of making one thing a representation of another thing purely on the basis of the similarities the two things share. The similarities between two things, by itself, is neither an argument, nor a plausible basis, for asserting that the one is an expression of the other.

The logical error under discussion here is not innocuous; for it leads Mkhwanazi to the conclusion that *ubuntu* is central to all African societies. Indeed, to the extent that the philosophy of *ubuntu* highlights human-ness, human relations, and the recognition of each other's humanity, it is in tandem with many ethical and philosophical systems. In this regard, almost all cultures and societies, that in general recognize and respect the humanity and equality of all human beings, could be characterized as expressing *ubuntu*. However, this level of generality of making every form of respect for equality and humanity an expression of *ubuntu* is unsatisfactory. For it renders the notion of ubuntu superfluous rather than distinctive, for where every system is an expression of *ubuntu*, no system actually is. It also makes the conception of ubuntu uninformative, as it renders it to be all much ado about nothing. Yet, quite obviously, something distinctive and peculiar remains about *ubuntu* philosophy that is worth analysing, elaborating, and recommending to the rest of the world. As Metz points out, "*ubuntu* as an ethical theory has a lot going for it as an account of how individuals and institutions should be moral in the twenty-first century." [32] The centrality of *ubuntu* to all African societies that Mkhwanazi and Roederer have in mind is informed by juxtaposing *ubuntu* with *consciencism* and claiming that *consciencism* expresses *ubuntu* philosophy. But as we have pointed out, the principles of humanism and egalitarianism that *consciencism* upholds do not emanate from *ubuntu* philosophy. They are principles that, for Nkrumah, underlie the communal structure of traditional African societies which were discredited and fell into disuse during colonialism and neo-colonialism. This is why, for Nkrumah, the harmonization of the conscience of African societies should be couched in such a way that it will lead to the restitution of the humanistic and egalitarian principles that underlined traditional African societies.

This is the sense in which both *ubuntu* and *consciencism* can be characterized as 'narratives of return'. In explaining this, Gade asserts that "African postcolonial narratives of return have typically contained the idea that in order to create a good future, society needs to *return to something African* which does not stem from the previous period of colonial oppression but which is rather rooted in pre-colonial times." [33] It is this central communalism which defined African societies, and the principles of humanism and egalitarianism which underlined the communalistic African societies, that is upheld and called to be reinstituted by both *ubuntu* and *consciencism*. In this way, consciencism and ubuntu are both expressions of the ideals of African communalism.

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[31] Roederer, C. & Moellendorf, D. (2004). *Jurisprudence.* Lansdowne: Juta. 441

[32] Metz, T. (2014). Just the beginning for ubuntu: reply to Matolino and Kwindingwi. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 33(1): 65–72, p. 65.

[33] Gade, C. B. N. (2011). The Historical Development of the Written Discourses on *Ubuntu. South African Journal of Philosophy*, 30(3), 303-329. p. 304

Saving the Differences: Consciencism versus *Ubuntu*

In spite of their common foundation, significant differences persist between *consciencism* and *ubuntu* – differences in terms of aims, scope, and philosophical underpinnings. Gade[34] notes that the concept of *ubuntu* has been understood in various senses: as a human quality, a philosophy,[35] as, an ethic: Makgoba and Metz,[36] as an African humanism: Buthelezi;[37] and a worldview: Ngcoya.[38] A common thread that strings these various conceptions of *ubuntu* together is their emphasis on what it is to be human and to have humane relations with others. Such concerns have implications for the moral, social and political ethos of a society. This focus on human-ness or human relations is but one strand of the philosophical views that Nkrumah espouses in *Consciencism*.

Although *ubuntu*, like consciencism, traces its roots in African communalism, it does not, and it need not, lead to, or recommend a socialist system for the governance of African societies as Nkrumah does. While the ethics of *ubuntu* may be practiced effortlessly and effectively in a socialist society, there is no necessary connection, or direct transition, from the ethics of *ubuntu* to socialism, as Nkrumah envisaged the connection between *consciencism* and *socialism*. This stems from the fact that the political dimension or application of *ubuntu* is not integral to the values of human-ness, harmony and solidarity that *ubuntu* strenuously projects. The focus of *consciencism* is on political independence and uprooting all remnants of colonialism. It therefore positions a philosophical standpoint for erasing the footprints of colonialism on the personality of the African. Nkrumah was also interested in extirpating the whims and caprices of neo-colonialism and imperialism. He reasoned that each independent society contained positive *forces* – those that sought "social justice in terms of the destruction of oligarchic exploitation and oppression"[39] – and *negative forces* – the sum of the reactionary forces that tend to "prolong colonial subjugation and exploitation"[40] by ensuring that colonial powers maintain political ties with their colonies. The tension between the two forces encapsulates Nkrumah's view that matter "is a plenum of forces."[41] To attain genuine independence and thwart the whims of neo-colonialism Positive Action ought to overcome *Negative Action*. The most effective way to defeat neo-colonialism is for Positive Action not to relent in its revolutionary efforts against the negative external forces, and more importantly, against the internal negative forces who become "the political wolf masquerading in sheep's clothing."[42] Using the experience of the Convention People's Party (CPP) in the fight for Ghana's independence, Nkrumah contends that it is *necessary* for Positive Action to be "backed by a mass party, and qualitatively to improve this mass so that by education and an increase in its degree of consciousness, its aptitude for positive action becomes heightened."[43]

That Positive Action ought to stamp out Negative Action; that mass parties ought to be mobilized for independence, and that the activities of *external negative forces* ought to be defeated, renders Mkwanazi's supposition that consciencism "appeals" to the colonizer to recognize the humanity of the colonized quite strange; and even stranger when he asserts that *consciencism* plays a healing role when it "appeals to the colonizer to become a true

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[34] Gade, C. B. N. (2012). What is *Ubuntu*? Different Interpretations among South Africans of African Descent. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 31(3), 484-503.

[35] Motsei, M. 2007. *The Kanga and the Kangaroo Court: Reflections on the Rape Trial of Jacob Zuma*. Johannesburg: Jacana.

[36] Makgoba, M.W. (ed.) 1999. *African Renaissance: The New Struggle*. Capetown: Tafelberg & Mafube.; Metz, T. 2012. 'Developing African political philosophy: moral-theoretic strategies', *Philosophia Africana* 14(1), 61–83.; Metz, T. (2014). Just the beginning for ubuntu: reply to Matolino and Kwindingwi. *South African Journal of Philosophy*. 33(1): 65–72, p. 65.

[37] Buthelezi, M.S.T.M. 2004. *African Nurse Pioneers in KwaZulu/Natal – 1920-2000*. Victoria: Trafford.

[38] Ngcoya, M. 2009. *Ubuntu: Globalization, Accommodation, and Contestation in South Africa*. PhD Thesis, Faculty of the School of International Service. Amsterdam University.

[39] Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, p. 99
[40] Ibid., p. 99
[41] Ibid., p. 99
[42] Ibid., p. 101
[43] Ibid., p. 100

social partner to the African."[44] There is little or no evidence in *Consciencism* that Nkrumah was interested in establishing a relationship with the colonizers based on their recognition of the African as human beings. This interpretation of *Consciencism* by Nkhwanazi is borne out of finding a parallel between the social and political applications of *ubuntu* in post-apartheid South Africa and *Consciencism*. Talk of appealing to the colonizer to recognize the humanity of the African, or that the colonizer is less human in his treatment of the African properly belongs to the project of *ubuntu* but not *consciencism*. And this difference ought to be respected.

Consciencism, *Ubuntu*, and Ethics

Consciencism discloses a coherent ethical framework comprising meta-ethical and normative claims. As indicated in earlier sections, two principles that characterize the ethics of *consciencism*: humanism and egalitarianism, descend from ontological considerations. Humanism supplies what Nkrumah considers to the cardinal principle of *consciencism*, which is "to treat each man as an end in himself and not merely as a means."[45] *Consciencism*, then, assigns to human interests the measure of the rightness and desirability of ethical standards. But this does not mean that 'man is the measure of all things'; for this humanistic principle goes in tandem with the ideal of an egalitarian society that holds in check the excesses of individualist aspirations. Both the egalitarian and humanistic ideals are sustained by the metaphysics of the unity of matter.[46]

The normative theory of *consciencism* blends consequentialism with utilitarianism, and proceeds from the perspective that morally good behaviour consists in action that terminates in improving human welfare. It therefore prescribes to persons and social institutions standards of conduct that aim to realize the cardinal principle, and promote the well-being of all

community members. The goal of realizing the cardinal principle is based on the humanistic element of the ethical framework; and egalitarianism fosters the quest for "the socialistic responsibility of all for each and each for all"[47] in persons and social institutions. The consequentialist elements of this normative theory is noteworthy in its departure from the utilitarian interest in the good of the many, even if this were achievable only in the face of sacrificing the interest of the few. For, the idea of the responsibility of all for each in Nkrumah's consequentialism implies the promotion of everyone's interests.

Consciencism enunciates several meta-ethically claims of relevance. We draw attention to two of these. First, is its situational ethical character, which is substantiated by a provincial and non-cosmopolitan theory of social interests. Our discussion of the political-theoretical elements of *Consciencism* suggests that their underlying ethics take into account the colonial or neo-colonial bearing on a rule or an act when evaluating it ethically, rather than judging it according to absolute moral standards. Nkrumah states emphatically that consciencism does not enunciate a closed set of ethical rules, in the sense of rules whose application can be universally and unitemporally justified.[48] We are ill-advised to justify even ethical principles by universal standards. We will come to how such a situational ethical outlook fits his normative prescription to treat persons as ends in themselves, *a la* Kant's categorical imperative.

The other meta-ethical feature we wish to discuss has attracted considerable debate among African philosophers. It is the grounding of ethical commitments in metaphysics. This implies rejection of Hume's observation that moral judgments cannot be derived from claims about matters of fact.[49] On Humean terms, an evaluative premise must ground a value judgment for its derivation to be valid. Thaddeus Metz seems to have been observing the Humean principle in pointing out weaknesses in Nkrumah's

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[44] Mkwanazi, p. 275
[45] *Consciencism*, p. 95
[46] Ibid., p. 96-97

[47] Ibid., p. 39
[48] Ibid., p. 93
[49] *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part I, Section I, p. 469)

derivation of egalitarianism and principle of respect for human dignity from a materialistic ontology, in the following statement

To move from materialism about what exists to a dignity-based egalitarianism about how to treat others, I contend that one needs to defend a certain meta-ethical bridge premise to the effect that *particular* material properties confer a certain moral status among human persons, a claim that I point out coheres well with other views of Nkrumah's, particularly his 'categorical conversion' thesis.[50]

The initial two phrases of this quotation seem to raise an objection that is diffused by the concluding phrase, which accepts that Metz's 'meta-ethical bridge' matches Nkrumah's facility of categorical conversion. But Metz has insistently rejected the validity of deriving normative inferences from descriptive statements. He has reiterated this view by asserting such a defective inference in Gyekye's moderate communitarian theory of personhood, on the basis of which he reaffirms his conviction that "nothing moral can follow from anything merely metaphysical."[51]

In an exceptional defence of strategies for deriving ought-conclusions from is-premises, Owoye offers several reasons why Metz's criticisms are misguided. Owoye observes, among others, that Metz's criticism fails because it overlooks the implicit moral analysis and evaluative propositions of Gyekye and African philosophers to validate drawing normative conclusions from descriptive claims.[52] Furthermore, a plausible and more charitable way of characterizing what African philosophers, including Gyekye, do when they attempt to ground moral-political theories on a metaphysical conception of self and/or nature can be found in that does not violate, the NOFI ['no ought from is'] principle.[53] Even if one grants that Gyekye's argument is unsound because some of its premises may be implausible, "being unsound in this way doesn't by any means show it to be a violation of NOFI" as no necessary connection can be established between the supposed implausibility and inferring "ought" from "is";[54] and yet, "this necessary connection is what Metz must establish in order for his objection to take hold."[55]

Owoye points out several ways in which Metz undermines his own position. We discuss two of these. Firstly, Metz points out that even if there was general consensus on what human nature is, the moral/political obligations we would have need not correspond to this view of human nature. What this means, Owoye argues, is that a substantially different metaphysics of the self could be consistent with the commitments of moderate communitarianism. If so, then the descriptive claim about the nature of self upon which moderate communitarianism is premised becomes irrelevant to establishing what moral-political obligations it says we have. Owoye is right in concluding that Metz's acceptance that a particular ontology need not commit one's value judgments to that ontology leaves room for the appearance that Metz commits to something he wants to rebut. His reasons for this are self-explanatory:

For if more than one metaphysical view of self is consistent with, and entails some view of what moral-political obligations we have, it would follow that *in principle* moral-political obligations can be grounded on some metaphysical view of the self—although it would not be Gyekye's one. This objection doesn't cast doubt on the possibility of grounding obligations on metaphysics but implicitly asserts it. Why should the fact that some other metaphysical view, other than

[50] Met, T. (2017). "Exploring the Ethical Foundations of Nkrumah's Consciencism". In: Ajei (ed). *Disentangling Consciencism*. p. 292

[51] Metz, 2014. "Questioning African Attempts to Ground Ethics on Metaphysics". In *Ontologized Ethics: New Essays in African Meta-Ethics*, ed. John Bewaji and Elvis Imafidon, 189–204. Lanham: Lexington Books p.194.

[52] Owoye, O. A., 2018, "Is, Ought, and All: In Defense of a Method". In Method, Substance, and the Future of African Philosophy. Ed. Edwin E. Etieyibo, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan 161-185, p. 165

[53] Ibid. p. 163
[54] ibid. p. 170
[55] ibid. p. 171

Gyekye's, supports the same moral-political obligation lead us to the conclusion that metaphysical views are irrelevant to grounding moral-political obligations and not to the conclusion that Gyekye's metaphysical view of self may not adequately ground the relevant moral-political obligations?.[56]

Secondly, Owoye thinks Metz undermines his own criticism of Gyekye, by holding the view himself that dignity suffices as a condition for entitlement to moral treatment, because "the notion of dignity often hinges heavily on descriptive metaphysical assumptions about persons,"[57] and Metz's own account of dignity displays this attribute.[58]

In addition to Owoye's critique, which we think succeeds, our view is that Nkrumah's method of categorical convertibility can indeed serve the role of an evaluative premise that bridges factual and normative claims. NOFI succeeds, rightfully, in thwarting the inference of evaluative claims from facts in philosophical systems in which factual and normative claims are conceived as inhabiting distinct and non-contiguous domains of self-justification. But with its allowance of the emergence of self-consciousness from that which is not self-conscious, and of quality from quantity, categorical conversion implies erasure of such non-contiguity of facts and norms.

Consciencism, *Ubuntu* and Justice

Nkrumah argues that the five fundamental problems that plague African societies, which were mentioned in the initial section of this paper, necessitate a theory of social justice based on egalitarianism.[59] In this respect, the prescription to treat persons as ends in themselves directs the formulation of principles of justice for application by institutions and persons against exploitation in all its forms, toward upholding that cardinal principle of

consciencism. The ethical choices to be made to satisfy the requirements for justice in turn necessitates a political theory of social interests and a socio-political practice to ensure the functionality of justice.

But the idea of justice in *consciencism* displays clear ethical partiality. A basic tenet of its theory of interests is that people seeking to defeat oppression are 'the backbone' of the ends of political action which, in *Consciencism*, is to be pursued through 'positive action' carried out in a socialist political structure.[60] As pointed out earlier, positive action represents the set of social forces that seek social justice through the elimination of exploitation and oppression; on the other hand, 'negative action' represents those forces that seek to perpetuate colonial and neo-colonial subjugation and exploitation. The claim that people are the backbone of positive action means that positive action derives its authenticity from always having reference to 'the needs and nature' of the people seeking justice by liberation.[61] Ajei[62] has characterized as 'self-retrievism' such reference to the self as an immediate goal of restorative and distributive justice, and argued its centrality in Nkrumah's thought. He argues that Nkrumah perceived freedom[63] and justice as mutually dependent notions of commensurate value; and self-retrievism as a foremost attribute of these notions. Self-retrievism imposes a duty of self-awareness that mandates restitution of the values and principles that exemplify the 'African Personality', a state of being of the African "defined by the cluster of humanist principles which underlie the egalitarian outlook of traditional African society;"[64] and which has been severely eroded by colonialism and imperialism. From all of this, we can gather the thought that the 'self' that needs to be retrieved is either identical to an African personality, or an African

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[56] ibid. p. 171-172
[57] ibid. p. 172
[58] ibid. footnote 26
[59] Consciencism, p. 98

[60] ibid., p.103
[61] ibid.
[62] Ajei, M. O., (2017), "Justice and the Retrieval of the African Self: The Perspective of *Conciencism.* In *Disentangling Consciencism.*
[63] Nkrumah used this word interchangeably with 'liberation' in *Consciencism.* Throughout this essay, therefore, the notions of freedom and liberation will be considered to have a relation of identity.
[64] *Consciencism*, p. 79

personality is the goal that the self seeks to attain, and that this self is socially constituted in a humanist and egalitarian culture. It appears that ideas about the content, and sources of the notion of justice, in Consciencism conform with Akan notions of it. According to Majeed, Akan notions of justice are consequentialist but not utilitarian,[65] and socialist in tenor. Dispensation of justice in Akan communities' conceptions of justice does not "require those who have more than enough to help those in need is morally unacceptable"[66] are usually accepted.

Nkrumah's idea of social justice, limited as it is to strategies for securing the interests of subjugated peoples, can hardly constitute a cosmopolitan moral and social theory. But in the humanistic egalitarian ethics that *Consciencism* espouses, a just pursuit of one's self-interest would imply conduct that cultivates the interests of others within the community of the subjugated as well. We maintain that this is what Nkrumah meant by asserting that the ideals to which a just African society should aspire is characterized by "the socialistic responsibility of all for each and each for all."[67] But to assert that this view of social justice requires curtailing individual liberties would be a procrustean distortion of Nkrumah's thinking. For, in Nkrumah's view, "philosophical consciencism seeks to promote individual development, but in such a way that the conditions for the development of all become the condition for the development of each."[68] Put differently, the extent of the pursuit of individual goals that Nkrumah's just society can accommodate falls short of granting "to men an equal right to dominate and exploit each other."[69]

We have not encountered an explicit statement on the nature or content of justice in *ubuntu* philosophy. But nevertheless, this does not lead us to the assumption that *ubuntu* lacks a perspective on justice, as the philosophy accommodates ethical principles that have sustained the dispensation of justice in Bantu societies for centuries. Deliberations on justice in the discourse on *ubuntu* have yielded less coherent perspectives than consciencism does. Ramose reasons that the demands of distributive justice that can be inferred from the ethics of *ubuntu* would be satisfied when one accepts the idea of the equal worth of beings with regard to their humanness.[70] It is easy to conclude from this that an *ubuntu-inspired* system of distributive justice would accord its subjects equal concern even though they may receive unequal recognition; and establish rules of distribution that takes seriously the   1principle of the equality of the worth of human life. These seem to suggest that the ideals of solidarity and mutual concern for others would facilitate a distributive system that values the ethic of sharing above individual accumulation of goods, especially when this accumulation subverts the stated ideals.

Such understanding of Ramose's conclusions coheres with Metz and Gaie's[71] claim that in *Ubuntu* philosophy, distributive justice is morally right when the outcome expresses esteem for communal relationships.[72] Further, in their view restorative justice on *ubuntu* terms values sustenance of relationships above mechanisms of resolution of conflicts in a rights-based and adversarial framework of conflict resolution. For, *ubuntu* mechanisms proceed by considerations of whether a given person is communally related to the agent, "in a way that need not be grounded in universal norms of promise-making."[73] These considerations suggest that desirable and ethically justifiable realizations of justice *Ubuntu* would be those that foster communal relationships by encouraging reconciliation, cooperation and harmony among citizens.

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[65] Majeed, H. M., "The Notion of Justice in Akan Culture: How Consequentialist is it?", *Contemporary Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (2014), 99-112, p. 105
[66] Ibid. p. 109
[67] Consciencism, p. 39
[68] ibid. p. 98
[69] ibid. p. 49

[70] Ramose, 1999, p. 146
[71] Thaddeus Metz and Joseph B.R. Gaie. The African ethic of Ubuntu/Botho: implications for research on morality, *Journal of Moral Education* Vol. 39, No. 3, September 2010, pp. 273–290
[72] Metz and Gaie, p. 277
[73] ibid., p. 283

Articulating a Symbiotic Relationship between Consciencism and *Ubuntu*

Despite the differences outlined thus far, a symbiotic relationship can still be found between the two philosophical systems. We have tried to point out that both *Consciencism* and *ubuntu* place a central value on community relations and human dignity. Another noteworthy similarity between these two systems of thought is sharing in strategies of justification of moral norms. Uchenna Okeja has suggested that African philosophers have employed, at least, four strategies in their bid to justify moral norms.[74] These are: (1) appeal to tradition, (2) appeal to community, (3) appeal to religion and the gods, and (4) appeal to human well-being. In our view, this is fair representation of the typologies of justification of moral norms in African philosophy. Nkrumah's *Consciencism*, and several statements of *Ubuntu* ethics undoubtedly invoke strategies 1, 2, and 4 to justify their normative conclusions. It would have sufficed, for the purposes of this paper, to have acknowledged and accredited these typologies, but for Okeja's assertion that they all fail to provide sufficient grounds for justifying moral norms. In our view, this invites commentary.

The appeal to tradition, according to Okeja, grounds moral principles and conduct "by pointing out that the principles in view cohere with what obtained among African ancestors."[75] Although variously formulated by different exponents, the strategy culminates, he says, in the view that "the accumulated history of a community is the most cogent explanation and justification of what constitutes moral rightness or wrongness."[76] Thus, collective historical experience becomes the standard of justification. By contrast, advocates of the community typology of justification ground moral norms on the ideal of harmonious participation in, and promotion of, community. Okeja associates these advocates with Stutte's judgment that ethical principles and norms of conduct

that "promotes personal growth and participation in community is good, everything that prevents it is bad."[77] Finally, those who appeal to human well-being maintain that moral norms are well-justified if they promote or guarantee human well-being.[78]

Okeja considers these strategies unjustifiable, for several reasons. The appeal to tradition fails for multiple reasons: it fails to take into consideration the perspectives of individual moral agents. It fails also by treating tradition as "some-thing immutable or frozen in history."[79] By immutability, Okeja means that its proponents construe tradition as a social artifact that has ceased to evolve and remain immune to the destabilizing impacts of experiences such as colonialism. He argues that since traditions actually evolve, it is implausible to argue that the justification of moral norms consists in their coherence with tradition [as frozen artifacts of culture].

Okeja errs in this judgment. The problem with his argument is premising it on a faulty view of what traditions are, i.e., social artifacts that have ceased to evolve. This account of tradition is reminiscent of Robin Horton's pejorative characterization of traditional African thought systems as 'closed', permissive of unanimous conclusions and intolerant of theoretical alternatives.[80] In contrast to this view, Ajei has argued that a tradition can plausibly be seen, also, to configure a particular way of producing, organizing and consuming thought; that has capacity to inspire and challenge its adherents to critical reflection.[81] Ajei's view reflects the view of several African philosophers, ranging from the first-

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[74] Okeja, U., 2008. "Justification of Moral Norms in African Philosophy", in *Method, Substance and the Future of African Philosophy*, pp. 209-228

[75] ibid. p.214

[76] ibid. p. 215

[77] Shutte, Augustine. 2009. Ubuntu as the African Ethical Vision. In *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*. ed. Munyaradzi Felix Murove. 85–99. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press. p. 92

[78] Okeja, 2018. p. 219

[79] ibid. p. 221

[80] Horton, R. (1967) "African traditional thought and Western science." In *Africa 37* (02): 155-187, p. 155

[81] Ajei, M. O, (2016) 'Kwasi Wiredu's Consensual Democracy: Prospects for Practice in Africa' European Journal of Political Theory, Vol. 15(4) 445–466, p. 447

generation of African philosophers such as W.E. Abraham and Kwasi Wiredu to current practitioners.

Okeja finds two problems with the typology that appeals to community. First, it proceeds from an implausible starting point by misconstruing "the consequence of value pluralism for the justification of moral norms" as it reduces all moral values to one ultimate value—the community.[82] Yet, "this monist starting point is implausible because it is not evident that all other putative moral values can be derived from the ultimate value of the community."[83] Secondly, this typology is an unattractive justificatory strategy because of its reactive epistemological character, which consists in the centrality of the maxim "I am because we are", which reacts to the Cartesian statement of the Cogito.[84] Suffice it to say, to this criticism that the ethical conclusions of Gyekye's moderate communitarianism admits of pluralistic justification, as it asserts both the moral value of individuals and community. Okeja does not show the implausibility of this. He can therefore scarcely pronounce the failure of the community strategy. Again, moderate communitarianism is premised on the view that the maxim "I am therefore we are" overstates African communitarian thought, and Okeja's arguments do not invalidate this either.

Finally, the rejection of the typology that resorts to human well-being depends on Okeja's argument that the concept of human well-being is indeterminate. Yet, to accept it as justification for moral norms, we need to know in what exactly the goodness or otherwise of an action consists, and how it facilitates this knowledge.[85] Here again, we think Okeja's conclusions fail to take cognisance of the clear content of the notion of well-being provided in *Consciencism*, which is articulated in its conception of justice and socio-political theory. Furthermore, Gyekye defines clearly what constitutes well-being in a moderate communitarian framework; and Wiredu's sympathetic impartiality approach to ethical conduct adumbrates an idea of welfare for pursuit.

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[82] Okeja, 2018, p. 223
[83] ibid.
[84] ibid.
[85] ibid. p. 224

Can the philosophy of *ubuntu*, with its emphasis on humane relationships and harmonious living, provide a cogent answer to problem of the three competing strands of African consciences and societies, which Nkrumah identifies in *Consciencism*? In Nkrumah's thought, *consciencism* was to forge a harmony of these strands. This is to be achieved by rendering traditional African communalism as the foundation upon which usable elements of the Euro-Christian and Islamic tradition would be accommodated. This implies that *philosophical consciencism* conceives of the notion of harmony in terms of *absorption*. The merit of Nkrumah's conception of harmony is an Africanisation of the social, moral, and political institutions bequeathed to Africans by the Euro-Christian and Islamic traditions. But is genuine harmony achieved if the base or foundation simply absorbs the other two traditions?

The concept of harmony implies concord, agreement, a fitting together of things to produce a pleasant co-existence of the things joined together. Absorption, however, implies a process whereby one thing accommodates another thing. Absorption is, therefore, logically distinct from harmony: accommodating something does not necessarily entail that one lives in harmony with the thing being accommodated, even if it is expected that the accommodation will achieve harmonious living. Absorption has the tendency for encouraging cultural assimilation, albeit, in the case of consciencism, the Euro-Christian and Islamic traditions are the ones that are adapted or adjusted to fit into the traditional African communalism. In practice, for the African to live in harmony with persons from the Euro-Christian and Islamic cultures is for the African to acknowledge their humanness and accommodate elements of their cultures that are in accordance with the African way of life. The African is to embrace these other cultures without losing her African-ness. While absorption implies a taking-in of other traditions, it does not imply a giving-out, a giving-up, or a giving-in, of the African way of life to the harmonious co-existence of the three traditions. That is, absorption does not imply reciprocity – it takes in without giving out. It does not contribute to the mutual co-existence of the three traditions, as it takes in without necessarily giving-in. And it needs not imply

discarding (obnoxious) aspects of African traditions, which means that it takes in without giving up. Yet, these three factors: reciprocity, mutual contributions, and the willingness to give up bad practices, are crucial for a harmonious coexistence of people in a society.

Ubuntu's conception of harmony can serve as a plausible furnace within which the harmony of the conflicting three traditions of African societies can be forged. The sense of harmony understood within *ubuntu* philosophy is 'seeking out community' with others. "To seek out community (harmony) with others",explain, "is not merely the notion of doing whatever a majority of people in society want or of adhering to the norms of one's group, which are influential forms of relativism and communitarianism in the West. Instead, from our African viewpoint, developing or respecting community (harmony) is an objectively desirable kind of interaction that should instead guide what majorities want or which norms become dominant."[86] Harmony, in Metz's view, is a combination of two themes, solidarity and identity: "First, there is the idea that one has a moral obligation to be concerned for the good of others, in terms of both one's sympathetic emotional reactions toward other people and one's helpful behaviour toward them. In short, one has a duty to exhibit solidarity with others. Second, there is the idea that one has a moral obligation to think of oneself as bound up with others, that is, to define oneself as a member of a common group and to participate in its practices. One also has a duty to identify with others."[87]

This sense of harmony in terms of solidarity and identity which issues forth from *ubuntu* can forge a genuine harmony among the three competing segments of African societies. The duties to exhibit solidarity with others and identify with others, in short, to create community with others, can address the three crucial factors of harmony which absorption could not express. Having communal relations with others implies both reciprocity

[86] Metz and Gaie, 2010, p. 86
[87] ibid. p. 276

and mutual contributions – the mutual exchange of norms, ideas, and material things; it also implies critically examining, and to an extent, discarding, one's own norms and practices which will not augur well for sustaining the communality that has been established. The philosophy of *ubuntu*, therefore, has a more plausible conception of harmony which can be appropriated to solve the schizophrenic condition of African societies identified in *Consciencism*.

Can *ubuntu* equally benefit from *Consciencism*? *Ubuntu* is many things to different people. Gade[88] has attempted to map out the various definitions and conceptions of *ubuntu* among both indigenous people of Southern Africa from whom the word originates and academic philosophers and scholars who theorize on *ubuntu*. To the question of *what Ubuntu is?* Gade found that "it is possible to distinguish between two clusters of answers. The answers of the first cluster all define *ubuntu* as a moral quality of a person, while the answers of the second cluster all define *ubuntu* as a phenomenon (for instance a philosophy, an ethic, African humanism, or, a worldview) according to which persons are interconnected."[89] The various (and different) conceptions of *ubuntu* is not an essential problem *per se* giving that the concept is rooted in the languages and cultures of Southern Africans. However, scholars who see *ubuntu* as a philosophy and have attempted to theorize about *ubuntu* have not provided for *ubuntu* a consistent and coherent philosophical system by which the concept can be understood. Thus, it is reasonable to assert that *ubuntu* philosophy, unlike *Consciencism*, does not contain a consistent system of metaphysical, epistemological, and social political dimensions. What scholars do is to make inferential applications of *ubuntu* in social and political situations. Conversely, consciencism is a consistent and coherent system. Nkrumah systematically showed the connections among the metaphysics, epistemology and politics of *Consciencism* into a complete whole. *Ubuntu* can take inspiration from the systematicity that *Consciencism* offers.

[88] Gade, 2011, 2012, op. cit.
[89] Gade, 2012, p. 484

Conclusion

Drawing connections between two concepts and systems and reflecting on their differences and similarities lead to a deeper understanding of the two concepts or systems. *Consciencism* and *ubuntu* can be summed up as philosophical systems that, on the one hand, reject all forms of coercion, inequalities and injustices since these do not uphold the equality and dignity of human beings, and on the other hand, promote cohesion, harmony, and communal relationships among members of a society. They do these two things – rejection of coercion and promotion of cohesion – by appealing to a restitution of the fundamental principles underlying traditional African societies – humanism and egalitarianism. We have argued that this appeal to traditional African communalism and the common principles they uphold, makes *Consciencism* and *ubuntu* authentic African systems that are *expressions* of the distinctive ethics and philosophical worldview of Africans. The two systems, originating separately from different societies on the African continent goes to buttress the belief that African societies share a common ethic and philosophy. Although we highlight some differences between *ubuntu* and *consciencism*, we also show that both *ubuntu* and consciencism have similar conceptions of the justice and that *ubuntu* and consciencism can benefit from each other: *consciencism*, from the principle of harmony that *ubuntu* espouses; and *ubuntu*, from the systematicity that *consciencism* displays.