The Role of Ubuntu Ethics in Promoting Citizenship Values: An Investigation into the Foundations of Social Harmony

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Abstract

This paper investigates how Ubuntu ethics can contribute as foundation for social harmony. Ubuntu is a concept in African philosophy which defends the intrinsic values of relationships. This sense of relationships further fosters harmonious co-existence in society. In reference to Ubuntu values, citizens ought to be educated in order to have respect for others and be more responsible for the well-being of others. In this paper, it has been argued that the African philosophy of Ubuntu ethics is an all-encompassing concept that revolves around some key values. It is contended here that these key values namely, solidarity, hospitality, and beneficence are the fundamentals of social harmony. Here we shall address two issues: first, implication of Ubuntu ethics as articulated in African philosophy, second, a proposal that how through imparting Ubuntu values as part and parcel of the citizens' education an atmosphere of social harmony and co-existence can be promoted in a given society.

Keywords: Ubuntu, Ethics, Social, Harmony, Education, Citizenship, Humanness

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Introduction

This paper contributes to the current debate on Ubuntu concept in African Philosophy. In this essay I shall suggest that Ubuntu ethics can contribute to social harmony in the society. Thus, there is a need to educate citizens on Ubuntu values of hospitality, solidarity and beneficence. This implies the promotion of Ubuntu values such as solidarity, hospitality and respect towards others – a goal attainable through education.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part explains key terms which are employed in the paper. The second part presents Ubuntu ethics. The third part of the paper presents the required Ubuntu values that are necessary for promoting citizenship based on concern for others.

Explication of Terms

Ubuntu

The term Ubuntu comes from the intrinsically connected but different components of a Bantu[1] noun U, Bu and Ntu. The concept 'U' is the Bantu definite article. Its English equivalent is 'The'. 'Bu' is the state and act of being something, while 'Ntu' means human, and in an ontological sense it refers to existence. Literally, Ubuntu is the state of being human. Ubuntu denotes 'humanity' and 'humaneness', in many Bantu languages. It summarizes core values of relational closeness and care of traditional village life by appealing to the fact that people are 'human together', this exhibits virtue of relationships, respect and recognition of others in our midst.

Ethics

The term ethics is derived from the Greek word "*ethos*" which means customs, a habitual way of acting, and character. The functional definition of ethics in this paper is drawn from Paul Ricouer. Ricouer defines ethics as "aiming at the 'good life,' for and with

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[1] Bantu term was coined by the German scholar Wilhem Bleek for all the languages spoken in Sub-Saharan Africa because of their similarity among people whose philosophy applies to the negro-Africans of Sub-Saharan African excluding Afro-Arabic parts such as Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia which have more of Islamic and Arabic influence. Also, Madagascar is not considered in this category since it is populated by Austronesian people who have their own cultural features. Though there are diversities there is a common central metaphysical backbone that unifies African cultures of the Sub-Saharan Africa, and it is the belief that the individual is ontologically part of the community and that the community is ontologically prior to the individual.

others, within the framework of just institutions; thus, ethics concerns all areas of life.[2] In this perspective, ethics is concerned with individual integrity aiming at both personal and community well-being in the just society. So, this paper follows this line of argument which views ethics as a disposition towards the personal well-being and the well-being of the community which involves concern for others in the society. This paper dwells on Ubuntu ethics as the source of social harmony.

Education

The term education is etymologically derived from the verb '*educare*' which means the general process of growing up, of rearing, of bringing up. Thus, education is a system of training and instruction designed to give knowledge and develop skills. Education can also be the knowledge, abilities and development of character and mental powers that result from such training. Education can be intellectual, physical and moral.[3] Moreover; education is a multidimensional concept as it has four dimensions namely; cognitive dimension of education, normative dimension of education, creative dimension of education, and dialogical dimension of education.[4]

This paper focuses on four major pillars of education as highlighted by the UNESCO report. These are:

1. Learning to live together which entails concern for the well-being of others,
2. Learning to know which entails absorbing and acquiring knowledge,
3. Learning to do which focuses on acquiring practical skills needed in the labour market for personal development and for societal development.
4. Learning to be which aims at character formation.

This paper takes into account education as an ongoing process of training people to live well in the society and to attain social harmony reflected through a sense of generosity, kindness, hospitality and fairness.

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[2] Paul Ricouer, *Soi-même Comme un Autre* [Oneself as Another], trans. Kathleen Blamery (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 202.

[3] Albert Sidney Hornby, "Education," in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Walton Street: Oxford University Press, 1989), 385.

[4] Raphael J. Njoroge and Bennars, *Philosophy and Education in Africa* (Nairobi: Trans Africa Press, 1986), 119.

Citizenship

The roots of the term citizenship are in the Greek '*polis*' and the Roman '*Res Publica*'.[5] Pocock describes the classical Greek account of citizenship from Aristotle's perspective. In *Politics* Aristotle states that a citizen "is defined to be one of whom both parents are citizens … and who holds an office or is some other way participating in the deliberative or judicial administration of the state. Hence, it is evident that there are different kinds of citizens, and he is a citizen in the fullest sense who shares in the honours of the state".[6] Aristotle on citizenship is well captured at length in the following passage:

> It must be admitted that we cannot consider all those to be citizens who are necessary to the existence of the state; for example, children are not citizens equally with grown-up men, who are citizens absolutely, but children, not being grown up, are only citizens on a certain assumption. In ancient times, and among some nations, the artisan classes were slaves or foreigners, and therefore the majority of them are so now. The best form of state will not admit them to citizenship; but if they are admitted, then our definition of the excellence of a citizen will not apply to every citizen, nor to every free man as such, but only to those who are freed from necessary services. The necessary people are either slaves who minister to the wants of individuals, or labourers who are servants of the community.[7]

Aristotle's citizenship requires that citizens should participate in decision making, and in order to be able to participate, a citizen must be a male of known genealogy, a patriarch, a warrior and a master of the labour of others.[8]

However, in the contemporary world the concept of citizenship includes the legal status and political recognition as a member of a community as well as the specific rights and obligations associated with the membership. In the contemporary political philosophy, there several major categorizations, but two will be highlighted. First, citizenship in liberal thought. The centrality of the liberal thought is the notion that individual citizens act

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[5] John Greville Agard Pocock, "The Ideal of Citizenship since Classical Times," in *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. R. Beiner, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 29-52, 35.

[6] Aristotle, *The Politics*, ed. S. Everson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2028 (1278a35-1278a39).

[7] Ibid., 2027.

[8] Pocock, "The Ideal of Citizenship since Classical Times," 33.

rationally to advance their own interests and that the role of the state is to protect citizens in the exercise of their rights.[9] Granting each individual citizen the same formal rights is understood to promote equality. Exercising rights is seen as the choice of citizens. The underlying assumption is that citizens ought to have the necessary resources and opportunities to realize their potential capacities.[10] The pioneers of this model defend citizenship on the basis of equal rights such as economic and political rights.

The second category of citizenship is: communitarian notion on citizenship. Communitarianism is a normative model that serves as an antidote to individualistic liberalism and the notion of the self-interested and independent individual citizens as articulated by liberal thinkers. It presumes that human identity is constituted through the social realm. We are born into a socio-cultural universe where values, moral commitments and existential meanings are negotiated dialogically. Thus, fulfilment is never achieved in isolation, but only through human bonding at the epicentre of social formation. Michael Sandel argues that an individual sense of identity is produced only through relations with others in the community of which she/he is a part.[11] Sandel reminds us that a person must not be isolated from society because we can know a good in common that we cannot know alone. Sandel argues that:

> We cannot regard ourselves as independent [from society] … [we must understand] ourselves as the particular persons we are – as members of this family or community or nation or people, as bearers of this history, as sons and daughters of that revolution, as citizens of this republic. Though my life is subjective to revision, it does have "contours" – a defining shape arising from my 'projects and commitments' as well as from my wants and desires.[12]

Communitarian thought centres on the notion of the socially-embedded citizens and community belonging.[13] The individual citizen, it is argued, can only realize his/her

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[9] Adrian Oldfield, *Citizenship and Community: Civic Republicanism and the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1990), 2.

[10] Engin F. Isin and Patricia K. Wood, *Citizenship and Identity* (London: Sage, 1999), 7.

[11] Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Social Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 183.

[12] Michael Sandel. (1998). *Liberalism and Limits of Social Justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 354.

[13] Anna Marie Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe*: *The Radical Democratic Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 1998), 117.

interests and identity through deliberation over the common good. Here, individual liberty is maximized through public service and the prioritization of the common good over the pursuit of individual interest.[14] For communitarians, citizenship is seen in terms of developing civic virtues such as respect for others and recognition of the importance of public service.[15] So, the communitarian thought asserts that our citizenship is constituted within a social conception of the good. Therefore, we cannot make individual rights the cornerstone of the political community. Thus, peoples' citizenship results from participation in specific social bonds. In this paper, I agree with communitarian ideals on citizenship. I suggest that communitarian thought on citizenship ought to be grounded on the civic virtues such as respect for others, recognition of others in terms of their culture beliefs, religious beliefs and their ideological positions. Recognition of others in the civic society should be directed towards realization of social harmony. I find Ubuntu ethics as presented in various literature having aspects of respect for others and recognition of others. These values are necessary in establishing social harmony in an inclusive society. The next section dwells on different African scholars understand harmony from African traditional worldview. Here, I specifically present Thaddeus Metz's philosophical constructive approach to Ubuntu ethics.

Ubuntu and Social Harmony

The term Ubuntu has increasingly become common in the literature on African thoughts. It is commonly used in philosophical, theological, sociological and political reflections emerging from African traditional thoughts and ways of life. Christian Gade demonstrates that Ubuntu has frequently appeared in writing since at least 1846 to 2011.[16] The analysis shows that in the written sources published prior to 1950, it appears that Ubuntu is always defined as a human quality. Gade adds that during the second half of the 1900's, some authors began to define Ubuntu more broadly: definitions included Ubuntu as African humanism, a philosophy, an ethic, and as a worldview. Furthermore, in his findings indicate that it was during the period from 1993 to 1995 Ubuntu as a conceptual team took a new paradigm expressed as follows: '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' translated

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 118.

[16] Christian, Gade, "The Historical Development of the Written Discourses on *Ubuntu*," 303. A paper presented on 24 November 2010, as a working paper at a Colloquium of the Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies, Gulu University, Uganda.

as 'a person is a person through other persons'.[17] This expression suggests that Ubuntu defends the intrinsic value of relationships as the source social harmony. Most authors on Ubuntu today refer to the proverb when describing Ubuntu. The space is not enough to give a detailed account of historical developments of Ubuntu in the written discourses.

I will show Thaddeus Metz's[18] analysis of Ubuntu as the foundation of harmony. In his work, "Confucian Harmony from an African Perspective," Metz discusses the philosophy of Confucian Harmony in light of a conception of harmony that is salient in the Sub-Saharan African tradition. The purpose here is not to show the similarities and differences between Confucian and Sub-Saharan African thoughts on harmony as articulated by Metz. However, my interest is to discuss how Metz philosophically analyses the concept of harmony by extracting philosophical nuances from other African scholars. Metz presents remarks from various scholars, but in this paper, I present remarks from only three scholars namely: Desmond Tutu (South African Anglican Bishop), Kwame Gyekye and Dismas Masolo. Metz presents Desmond Tutu's remarks about Sub-Saharan people's view on morality:

> We say, "a person is a person through other people." It is not "I think therefore I
> am." It says rather: "I am human because I belong." I participate, I share …
> Harmony, friendliness, and community are great goods. Social harmony is for us
> the *summum bonum* – the greatest good. Anything that subverts or undermines
> this sought-after good is to be avoided like the plague. Anger, resentment, lust
> for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness, are corrosive of
> this good.[19]

Tutu adds that "the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and is inextricably bound up in yours. I am because I belong. It speaks about

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Thaddeus Metz, in his works on Ubuntu ethics, he puts together many courses of African ethical thinking to construct a theory of what he terms 'Afro-Communitarianism'. Thaddeus Metz "Towards an African Moral Theory," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15 no. 3 (2007): 321-341. Metz's approach on Ubuntu ethics does not remain a mere ethnographic-philosophical description of traditional mores and practices, but rather constitutes a constructive analytic-philosophical endeavour. See Andreas Rauhut, "Expanding Motivations for Global Justice: A Dialogue between Public Christian Social Ethics and Ubuntu Ethics as Afro-Communitarianism," *Journal of Global Ethics* 13 no. 2 (2019): 142.

[19] Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Random House, 1999), 35.

wholeness; it speaks about compassion".[20] Therefore, for Tutu Ubuntu affirms that the importance we give to each other is what enables us to live together and respect our differences as human beings. Ubuntu prides itself on seeing 'the other' as a true reflection of oneself.[21] Ubuntu is about adopting a new positive attitude towards the other.

Tutu proposes that Ubuntu presupposes tenets of social harmony. These are; harmonious co-existence and friendship, eventually, leading to the attainment of social harmony. Thus, everything contrary to these tenets such as anger and resentment might lead to social disharmony and social discord.

Another influential African philosopher who argues for African traditional values as source of harmony is Ghanaian Kwame Gyekye. He says, "a harmonious cooperative social life requires that individuals demonstrate sensitivity to the needs and interests of others … Communitarian moral theory … advocates a life live in harmony and cooperation with others, a life of mutual consideration and aid and of interdependence, a life in which one shares in the fate of the other".[22]

Finally, the Kenyan historian of African philosophy Dismas Masolo discusses what he calls the "communitarian values" of "living a life of mutual concern for the welfare of others, such as in a cooperative creation and distribution of wealth … Feeling integrated with as well as willing to integrate others into a web of relations free of friction and conflict."[23]

According to Metz, from these remarks, there are two distinct values enshrined in thoughts expressing Ubuntu ethos. On the one hand, there is reference to beneficence in the form of achieving the good of all, mutual consideration and aid, sympathy and concern for the welfare of others.[24] For Metz, this reflects a *sense of solidarity*. It involves making mutual engagements with people and acting for the sake of one another.[25] Here, solidarity

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[20] Ibid., 31.

[21] Mojlefa. Lehlohonolo Koenane, *"Ubuntu* and Philoxenia: *Ubuntu* and Christian Worldviews as Responses to Xenophobia," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74 no. 1 (2018): 4-5.

[22] Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*: *Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 72, 76. Cited from Thaddeus Metz, "Confucian Harmony from an African Perspective," *African and Asian Studies* 15, no. 1 (2016): 12.

[23] Dismas Masolo, *Self and Community in a Changing World* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2010), 240. Cited from Metz, "Confucian Harmony from an African Perspective," 13.

[24] I bid., 13.

[25] Thaddeus Metz. "The Final Ends of Higher Education in Light of an African Moral Theory," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43 no. 2 (2009): 182.

manifests having a sense for the good of all people, being sympathetic, acting for the common good, serving others and being concerned for other's welfare.[26] Thus, failure to exhibit solidarity would make people in the society to be either indifferent to one another's flourishing or downright hostile and cruelty toward each other.

However, there is, on the other hand, reference to considering oneself a part of whole, being interdependent and sharing a fate, being close and feeling integrated. This reflects sharing a sense of self or enjoying a feeling of togetherness.[27] For Metz, this reflects a sense of *shared identity* denotes considering oneself part of the whole, sharing a way of life, belonging and integrating with others. Here, to identity with each other is largely for people to think of themselves as a 'we' as well as for them to engage in joint projects, coordinating their behavior to realize shared ends.[28] For people to fail to identify with each other could involve outright division between them – that is, people not only thinking of themselves as an 'I' in opposition to a 'you' or a 'they', but also aiming to undermine one another's ends.[29] Thus, failure to identify and recognize other people's beliefs, customs and religious values would bring about social disharmony in such a society with people with diversified identities.

Metz argues that a second theme amongst African scholars on harmony and morality in general is hospitality and the practice of being extremely welcoming towards strangers.[30] In the traditional African setting, the stranger is welcomed and given a due respect. The stranger is well accommodated, given food, local brewery and full recognition

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[26] Thaddeus Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approaches to Social Protection: From Capability to Ubuntu," *Global Social Policy* 16 no. 2 (2016): 138.

[27] Thaddeus Metz, "Confucian Harmony from an African Perspective," 13.

[28] Thaddeus Metz, "The Final Ends of Higher Education in Light of an African Moral Theory," 183.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Thaddeus Metz, "Confucian Harmony from an African Perspective," 14. (Here, Metz highlights African scholars who defend harmony and morality from perspective of hospitality, for example, Nelson Mandela. 2006. Experience Ubuntu. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HED4hooxPPA. Julius Gathogo, "African Philosophy as Expressed in the Concept of Hospitality and *Ubuntu*," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 130 no 2. (2008); Jean Pierre Matondo, "Cross-cultural Values Comparison between Chinese and Sub-Saharan Africans," *International Journal of Business and Social Sciences* 3 no. 1 (2012); Mnyaka, Mluleki and Motlhabi, Mokgethi. "Ubuntu and Its Socio-Moral Significance," in *African Ethics*: *An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*, ed. Munyaradzi Felix Murove (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009) 63-84.

as a human being. However, this practice is eroding away due to various reasons such as commercialization, growth of cities and urban areas, etc. Due to increased erosion of Ubuntu values among Africans, there is a need to re-introduce Ubuntu values in our education system. This might cultivate citizens with the Ubuntu values of beneficence, solidarity, respecting others and recognizing others.

Imparting Ubuntu Ethical Ideals to Citizens

Ethical education in *Ubuntu* presupposes imparting citizens to have a sense of humanity and respect towards others including strangers. Such educational training will be in line with John Dewey's affirmation that the best and the deepest moral training is that which one receives by having to enter into proper relations with others.[31] This pedagogy will encourage citizens to live together as caring for the well-being of others in the community.[32] Vincent Eustice Mhina, suggests that '*Utu*' concept as a prefix of *Ubuntu* implies caring, empathy, sharing and respect for others and therefore is a pedagogical approach that can provide instructors with a source of willingness and ability to facilitate a process through which students in a given classroom, become a caring community.[33]

Ubuntu as Respect for the Other

Ubuntu as an ethics of humanness and dignified respect that one person accords another and *vice versa*, resonates with the practice of treating people with 'equal dignity' – that is, with openness, empathy and authenticity.[34] Citizens ought to be educated about the value of respecting others. This sense of respect is reflected through virtues of generosity, kindness, compassion, benevolence and concern for others without discrimination based on gender, race and religion. Ubuntu as respect for the other entails recognizing and acknowledging the identities of others in the particular society, respecting their beliefs, customs and values.

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[31] John Dewey. "The Need for a Philosophy of Education," *The New Era in Home and School* 15 no. 2 (1934): 112.

[32] Kuhumba, Kevin Shijja. "The Role of the Ethical in Building Human Capital: A Pre-Requisite for Tanzanian Industrial Strategy," *Chiedza* (Journal of Arrupe Jesuit University), 19 no. 2 (2017): 67.

[33] Mhina, Eustice Vincent. "Education for Youth Development in Bantu Africa "Utu"–Centred Anthropology and Pedagogy: A Case Study of Tanzania," *Salesianum* 73 no. 1 (2011): 84.

[34] Eveline, Lindner, Linda. Hartling & Ulrich, Spalthoff. "Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies: A Global Network Advancing Dignity through Dialogue." in *Interculturalism, Education and Dialogue*, ed. Tina, Besley, & Michael, Peters, (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 390.

Respect for the other entails acknowledging the customs, cultural values, ideological positions, religious beliefs of various groups in an inclusive society. This helps in strengthening social cohesion and relationships. In this regard, Metz would argue that harmony might mean certain caring or supportive relationship.[35] For Metz, sense of relationships and good-will ought to go hand in hand. One has a relationship of good-will insofar as one: wishes another person well, believes that another person is worthy of help, aims to help another person, acts so as to help another person, acts for the other's sake and finally, feels good upon the knowledge that another person has benefited and feels bad upon learning that the other person has been harmed.[36] Examples of goodwill include helping the needy and charity work directed towards enhancing the welfare of needy people in our society. Ultimately, this leads to growth in moral life in terms of values of generosity and kindness as captured by Ubuntu. In this connection, Augustine Shutte argues "the moral life is seen as a process of personal growth … our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human. And this means entering more and more deeply into community with others. So although the goal is person fulfilment, selfishness is excluded".[37] This brings the need for Ubuntu values which focus on building relationships, fostering solidarity and respecting others as opposed to the vice of selfishness, harming others, social exclusion, racism, hate speeches, discrimination along the lines of gender, race and religion.

Ubuntu as Caring for the Other

In African culture, a high premium is placed on caring for one another, especially treating the destitute, helpless, strangers and foreigners with care. Okafor posits that, in traditional African culture the weak, the aged, the incurable, the helpless, and strangers were affectionately taken care of in the comforting family atmosphere.[38] The idea of humanness is clearly evident in the way traditional Africans exercised care towards others. Care as a value is exercised towards others, especially towards the weak and downtrodden. Ifemesia sees humanness among Africans as a concept that defines 'life emphatically

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[35] Thaddeus Metz, "Toward an African Moral Theory," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15 no. 3 (2007): 336.

[36] Ibid., 336.

[37] Augustine Shutte. *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001), 30.

[38] Festus Chukwudi Okafor. *Africa at Crossroads* (New York: Vantage Press, 1974), 23.

cantered upon human interests and values; a mode of living evidently characterized by empathy, and the consideration and compassion for human beings'.[39]

Ubuntu as caring is not only aimed at encouraging others to make appropriate choices, but also to evoke in others the capacity to be imaginative and to re-educate themselves, and to trust and rely upon those whom they received care from.[40] Caring, then, does not merely involve cultivating in ourselves 'degrees of affection' towards others, but also encouraging others to develop the capacities of empowerment, evaluation and modification, that is what others consider to be sufficiently good reasons for acting, and to imagine alternative possibilities so as to be able to re-educate themselves.[41] Ubuntu ethics of caring for the other reminds us about the welfare of others including strangers and foreigners in our midst as they too are human beings escaping economic hardships, wars and violence from their countries of origin seeking better livelihoods and lives of dignity. Thus, they ought to be given opportunities to develop their capacities. Pope Francis, at Centro Astalli, an initiative of social work of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Rome, commended the centre for entering into a relationship with asylum seekers and refugees, recognizing them as people, committed to finding concrete responses to their needs. In my view, the Pope's order takes into account caring for the needs of asylum seekers, especially their social needs, spiritual needs, physical needs and needs to enhance their capabilities like education and training. These acts depict Ubuntu value of care for the welfare and well-being of others.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that social harmony grounded on Ubuntu ethical virtues ought to respect human dignity, respect for human life and harmonious co-existence. I strongly agree with Godfrey Onah's remarks. Onah thinks that African values are worthy to be put into consideration so as to achieve social harmony. Onah asserts that:

> At the centre of traditional African morality is human life. Africans have a sacred reverence for life … To protect and nurture their lives, all human beings are

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[39] Chieka Ifemesia. *Traditional Humane Living among the Igbo*: *An Historical Perspective* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company, 1979), 2.

[40] Yusef Waghid. *African Philosophy of Education Reconsidered*: *On Being Human* (New York: Routledge, 2014) 62.

[41] Alasdair MacIntyre. *Dependent Rational Animals*: *Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Peru, IL: Open Court, 1999), 83.

inserted within a given community … The promotion of life is therefore the determinant principle of African traditional morality and this promotion is guaranteed only in the community. Living harmoniously within a community is therefore a moral obligation ordained by God for the promotion of life.[42]

In this regard, social harmony requires mutual respect for human life, cherishing communal values, social cohesion and living harmoniously despite of diversities in terms of religion, culture, beliefs and ideological positions.

This paper challenges the actions which cause disharmony in the society, for example, xenophobic attitudes whereby non-nationals encounter brutality, killings and destruction of their property by nationals. Africa as a continent encounters instances of social disharmony, for example, heinous crimes against humanity such as child abuse and women abuse especially in war torn areas; ethnic conflicts, post-election conflicts, political dictatorship, systematic corruption, brutality and killing of people with disabilities such as people with albinism, increased poverty caused by poor management of resources. All these instances among others hinder social harmony in African societies. Promoting social harmony in the African context would require in my view integrating Ubuntu values into the African socio-economic and political mainstream. Finally, I propose two lines of action. First, taking into consideration Ubuntu values citizens can be taken through a regime of educational training whereby they are imparted with the values pertaining to Ubuntu ethics. This would raise citizens who are duty-conscious towards the dignity of the other. Secondly, there is an urgent need to do further studies on Ubuntu values as an ethical solution to increased cases of social disharmony in Africa.

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[42] Onah. Godfrey. "The Meaning of Peace in African Traditional Religion and Culture." available at http://www.afrikaworld.net/afrel/goddionah.htm, accessed on 11/12/2018.