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African Philosophy:

An analysis of its existence as Ubuntu among the ovaHerero people

by

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background

Western philosophers and anthropologists, for centuries argued that the African was inferior in intellect and was more inclined towards animal-like instincts. For example, Hegel said the African is devoid of consciousness or intellectual awareness and as result was sub-human or could not be said to exist in meaningful sense. He went on to say, "The African is natural man in his completely wild and untamed state" (Hegel, 1837). This is recent history, which has been ground for both dehumanization of Africans in form of slavery, colonialism and dispossessing them of their land and cultural identity. Because the African is not fully developed and incapable of intellectual reflection, this would imply that the African probably cannot philosophize. Therefore, African philosophy cannot exist, in a true sense, except as a hybrid of western concepts simply contextualized for Africa. Therefore, the question of whether there is an African philosophy, should not only be taken for granted, because its subliminal implications carry far reaching consequences. It is an assumption that carries deep political, social, developmental effects regarding the humanity of an entire continent's people.

Given that background, initially I would like to conceptualize the notion of philosophy from a cultural perspective, re-conceptualize the notion of *Ubuntu* as a philosophy and further elaborate by application the concept of *Ubuntu* among the ovaHerero people, as evidence of the existence of African philosophy. The discourse will assume interaction with culture which "which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs" (Harris, 1927). It assumes that given the complexity of developing a culture, it cannot be unless such people engage higher thinking to be able to cultivate such a system of life. The Westerners have overlooked this form of intelligence and thinking, in search for mono-perspectivism and thinking that is grounded in Greek conceptualizations.

To achieve this objective, I will interact with various scholarly experts on African philosophy (P.H Coetzee, A.P. Roux, Johan Cilliers, Pantaleon Iroegbu, Du Bois, and many others), as well as

analyze electronic media, videos and sound recordings of the ovaHerero sages and scholars, about the ovaHerero way of life – emphasis on *Ubuntu*. I will then analyze my findings and compare and contrast them with the debate of the non-existence of African philosophy and work towards a conclusion from the results of pro and anti-African philosophy perspectives.

Motivation of the Study

Western thought has in recent history, especially with the dawn of colonialism dominated the philosophical discourse and a deliberate campaign has been put forward to reduce all other philosophical thoughts in the world to the dustbins of history and African thought has been one of those, that have severely suffered such a consequence. Colonialism did not only oppress Africans but it took away their identity and their humanity, and this was only possible through social and mental engineering campaigns. It is my objective through this paper to reveal some of the truth about the ontology of the African and Africa. A lot of socio-economic ills found in Africa are because of a lack of identity and directions, were Africans now, just go with the flow, because they have lost their true identity and I am hoping that this paper can shed more light on the ontology of the African, in order to liberate the African from the chains of mental slavery, in order for the Africans to stand up for themselves and determine his own destiny, because (Mazrui, 1986) explains that Africa's reality as it is now, is being realized in the image of the west, mainly due to the legacy of colonialism that exists in post-colonial Africa, and it is only through decoloniality that these damages can be reversed as suggested by the discourse on coloniality and decolonialty.

Statement of the problem

"African philosophy" as a way of life and a body of knowledge has been a bone of contention in the academia, but frankly put, it is not in the academia, rather in the western academia, and this is no surprise because this is done to feed the narrative of a useless Africa independent of western influence. It is my prerogative in this paper to demonstrate that Africa does indeed have an independent philosophy of its own, demonstrate the identity and ontology of such a philosophy as well as to demonstrate the application of such a philosophy on the continent.

Literature review

Considering That my paper seeks to demonstrate the existence and ontological nature of an African Philosophy namely *Ubuntu*, this literature review will seek to shed more light on the different aspects that will aid in achieving the objective of this paper, namely what philosophy is, what African philosophy is, what *Ubuntu* is and finally what the ovaHerero philosophy is. Western literature defines Philosophy as an academic discipline that constitutes the five main branches of philosophy that serves as the most fundamental aspects of reality[1]. There exists a very broad spectrum of accounts on what African philosophy is or ought to be, but they can be narrowed down to only two categories, one is the historical reconstruction[2], which focuses mostly on the trends in African philosophy namely ethno philosophy[3] and negritude[4], philosophical sagacity[5], Nationalist-ideological philosophy[6] and professional philosophy[7].

The second category focuses mostly on the ontological nature of what African philosophy is, what it is, in its essence, rather than its historical development, some explanation by scholars include "A system and coherent inquiry on how an African conceives and interprets the world", "A body of thought, attributed to the community rather than to the individual"[8] "African philosophy is the socio-cultural and economic thoughts of the African people"[9]. It is however the second category that is of greater importance to my paper. Ubuntu is the African philosophy sought after in my paper, a lot has been written about *Ubuntu*, however an ontological account of *Ubuntu* is lacking, I will be looking at some of the explanations provided by scholars for *Ubuntu*, comparing them to its direct translation from its Nguni derivative *"umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu"*[10], there are scholars who defined *Ubuntu* Superficially like (Colenso, 1861), (Jabavu, 1960) and (Kimenyi, 1979). The other group of scholars hold *Ubuntu* at a much higher status, equivalent to an ideology or a philosophy, these include scholars like (Eze, 2010), (Broodryk, 2002), (Shepherd & Paver, 1947), (Tutu, 1999), (Khoza & Fowarded By, 2006) and (Nkrumah, 1978). A considerable amount of

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[1] (Velasquez, 1991)
[2] (Coetzee & Roux, The African Philosophy reader, 2003)
[3] (Tempels, 1952)
[4] (Coetzee & Roux, The African Philosophy reader, 2003)
[5] (Oruka, 1983)
[6] (Mbanjo, 1998)
[7] (Hapanyengwi-Chemburu, 2013)
[8] (Sogolo, 1993)
[9] (Jaja, 2014)
[10] (Cilliers, 2019)

time was also spent unraveling the five branches of philosophy within *Ubuntu*, in order to shed more light on its ontology, for that we relied on scholars like (Tempels, 1952), (Kaputu J. A., O mara wandjambi kotate, 2018), (Coetzee & Roux, The African Philosophy reader, 2003) and (Udokang, 2014).

There literature on Ubuntu within the ovaHerero people is completely absent and one has to almost completely depend on sages, as well as cultural and traditional practices and oral accounts from the Herero people. But we shall look at their history[11], and facts[12] [13]. There are philosophical sages like Kaputu, through his Radio narrations will help us better grasp the philosophy of the ovaHerero[14], a great number of literature will come from the Descent system[15] , linguistic art[16], religious rituals and Social organization[17] of the Herero people. To figure out their origins we shall look at Kaputu who tells us about the immediate pre Namibian origins of The ovaHerero[18], linguistic similarities among the ovaHerero and some Namibians[19], the ovaHerero Bantu origins[20] as well as the Bantu's place within the entire continent[21] [22]. Finally, we shall look at the ovaHerero people as a case study, as we attempt to reveal *Ubuntu* as the center point of their philosophy, as well as to demonstrate their relations to the rest of Africans, by briefly tracing their ancestry.

Research Questions

This paper seeks to answer the question "Does Africa has an inherent philosophy?" if yes, "What is this philosophy and its ontology?" and finally "How does this philosophy relate to Africa and the African on the ground?"

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[11] (UNHCR, 2012)
[12] (Blench, 25)
[13] (Hartmetz, 2011)
[14] (Kaputu J. A., O mara wandjambi kotate, 2018)
[15] (Gibson, 1956)
[16] (Kavari, 2000)
[17] (Bollig & Gewald, 2000)
[18] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)
[19] (Pollard, Rosenburg , & Tignor, 2011)
[20] (Phillip & Randall, 2007)
[21] (Bernard, 1988)
[22] (Skogland, et al., 2017)

Significance of the Study

The study is very significant, in as such that it contributes to an improved social, economic and political transformation in Africa, through an African populace that better relates to itself. As Stated by (Mazrui, 1986) African reality is westernized, which in turn creates social, economic and political problems for Africa. A study like this will reveal realities about Africa and Africans that have been deliberately erased from society, through mental and social engineering campaigns throughout the world.

Objectives

This research aims to primarily undo the centuries long damages done on the minds of the Africans by revealing to the Africans and the world the true reality of Africa and Africans as opposed to the currently perceived one.

Research Methodology

This paper will be in a form of a thesis, the researcher will not only be looking to synthesize current literature, but to disagree, redefine and add to the current literature. Throughout the paper the researcher will be presenting new definitions, as he analyzes different literatures, a very considerable portion of this paper will focus on theorizing concepts like *Ubuntu* and philosophy as a way of life from the ground and also use other forms of research papers to achieve his objectives for example by contrast and comparing and critical summaries as well, as application as supporting forms of arguments for my thesis. This paper will also argue against other trends of African philosophy and demonstrate why those trends are not sufficient to qualify as African philosophies.

Most of the data will come from existing literature, the researcher will critically analyze literature on defining philosophy, *Ubuntu* and African philosophy, and use some of the existing literature on the ovaHerero people to shed more light on the ovaHerero people as well.

The researcher will make use of electronic media technology to get some of the data, several public recoded videos will be used and audio files for its information, these especially on the ovaHerero people. The researcher will use pictures of the ovaHerero people where necessary, photos that are mostly electronically sourced.

As a member of the ovaHerero people, the knowledge and experience of the reseacher about the ovaHerero people will also be used in this research.

Structure of the Research

For a chronological paper, there is a need to establish the ground work for this paper. I will begin by explaining what is philosophy as a culture or way of life, and articulate its conceptualization and its ontology. I then will proceed to identify and define Ubuntu and provide its conceptual background and ontology as the African Philosophy, I will then use this conceptualization of Ubuntu and apply it to the ovaHerero people in my attempt to prove Ubuntu as an African philosophy by application.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Considering That my paper seeks to demonstrate the existence and ontological nature of an African philosophy namely *Ubuntu*, this literature review will seek to shed more light on the different aspects that will aid in achieving the objective of this paper, namely what philosophy is, what African philosophy is? what *Ubuntu* is? and finally what the ovaHerero philosophy is? Western literature defines philosophy as an academic discipline that constitutes the five main branches of philosophy that serves as the most fundamental aspects of reality[23]. There exists a very broad spectrum of accounts on what African philosophy is or ought to be, but they can be narrowed down to only two categories, one is the historical reconstruction[24], which focuses mostly on the trends in African philosophy namely ethno philosophy[25] and negritude[26], philosophical sagacity[27], Nationalist-ideological philosophy[28] and professional philosophy[29].

The second category focuses mostly on the ontological nature of what African philosophy is ontologically, rather than its historical development, some explanation by scholars include "A system and coherent inquiry on how an African conceives and interprets the world", "A body of thought, attributed to the community rather than to the individual"[30] "African philosophy is the socio-cultural and economic thoughts of the African people"[31]. It is however the second category that is relevant to this paper. *Ubuntu* is the African philosophy sought after in this paper, a lot has been written about *Ubuntu*, however an ontological account of Ubuntu is also lacking. The researcher will be looking at some of the explanations provided by scholars for *Ubuntu*, comparing them to its direct translation from its Nguni derivative *"umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu"[32]*. There

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[23] (Velasquez, 1991)
[24] (Coetzee & Roux, The African Philosophy reader, 2003)
[25] (Tempels, 1952)
[26] (Coetzee & Roux, The African Philosophy reader, 2003)
[27] (Oruka, 1983)
[28] (Mbanjo, 1998)
[29] (Hapanyengwi-Chemburu, 2013)
[30] (Sogolo, 1993)
[31] (Jaja, 2014)
[32] (Cilliers, 2019)

are scholars who defined *Ubuntu* Superficially like (Colenso, 1861), (Jabavu, 1960) and (Kimenyi, 1979). The other group of scholars hold *Ubuntu* at a much higher status, equivalent to an ideology or a philosophy, these include scholars like (Eze, 2010), (Broodryk, 2002), (Shepherd & Paver, 1947), (Tutu, 1999), (Khoza & Fowarded By, 2006) and (Nkrumah, 1978). A considerable amount of time was also spent unraveling the five branches of philosophy within *Ubuntu*, in order to shed more light on its ontology, for that we relied on scholars like (Tempels, 1952), (Kaputu J. A., O mara wandjambi kotate, 2018), (Coetzee & Roux, The African Philosophy reader, 2003) and (Udokang, 2014).

There literature on *Ubuntu* within the ovaHerero people is completely absent and one has to almost completely depend on sages, as well as cultural and traditional practices and oral accounts from the Herero people. But we shall begin by looking at their history[33], and facts[34] [35]. There are philosophical sages like Kaputu, who through his Radio narrations will help us better grasp the philosophy of the ovaHerero[36], a great number of literature will come from the Descent system[37], linguistic art[38], religious rituals and Social organization[39] of the Herero people. To figure out their origins we shall look at Kaputu, who tells us about the immediate pre Namibian origins of The ovaHerero[40], linguistic similarities among the OvaHerero and some other Namibian tribes[41], the ovaHerero Bantu origins[42] as well as the Bantu's place within the entire continent[43] [44]. Finally, we shall look at the ovaHerero people as a case study, as we attempt to reveal Ubuntu as the center point of their philosophy, as well as to demonstrate their relations to the rest of Africans, by briefly tracing their ancestry.

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[33] (UNHCR, 2012)
[34] (Blench, 25)
[35] (Hartmetz, 2011)
[36] (Kaputu J. A., O mara wandjambi kotate, 2018)
[37] (Gibson, 1956)
[38] (Kavari, 2000)
[39] (Bollig & Gewald, 2000)
[40] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)
[41] (Pollard, Rosenburg , & Tignor, 2011)
[42] (Phillip & Randall, 2007)
[43] (Bernard, 1988)
[44] (Skogland, et al., 2017)

What is Philosophy?

The objective of this paper is to present philosophy as a way of life, rather than an academic discipline or any other form, to achieve this we must draw our attention at the western definition of philosophy defined by its constituent branches namely metaphysics, Epistemology, Logic, Ethics and esthetics as explained by (Velasquez, 1991) "Philosophy is the whole, as far as the enquiries of reality are concerned, and the branches make up the parts of the whole". But to actually get the cultural essence of this branches one must look deeper to see their relations to culture.

Metaphysics is defined by Chaffee in this context as the "the study of the most general or ultimate characteristics of reality or existence"[45], which also happens to be the basis of every culture. Moser defines epistemology as "the philosophical study of the nature, origin and scope of knowledge"[46], which also makes up a most basic component in the realization of any culture, (Copi, Cohen, & McMahon, 2014) states that "Logic is the study of the methods and principles used to distinguish correct from incorrect reasoning" a fundamental subset of epistemology, which renders knowledge impossible without it, Mackinnon distinguishes between the two kinds of Ethics, normative and meta-ethics[47], which also is a fundamental aspect of Social organization and finally Aesthetics defined as the "value judgements we make, based on our experiences"[48], another basic component, with regards to our ability to interpret our cultures. It is the combination of this branches of philosophy with the definition of Culture or way of life, that allows (Maritain, 1957) to come up with fitting definition of Philosophy as a way of life or a culture.

African philosophy

To define African philosophy, it was deemed necessary to draw perimeters, such as Geography[49], The people their environment and experience [50]. *Ubuntu* was identified by the researcher as the African philosophy that fit all these requirements. *Ubuntu* has directly been translated as *"Umuntu ngumunt ngabantu"*[51], from its Nguni meaning. there are scholars who defined *Ubuntu*

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[45] (Chaffee, 2011)
[46] (Moser, 2010)
[47] (Mackinnon, 2015)
[48] (Stecker, 2010)
[49] (Hountondji, The Struggle for meaning: Reflection on philosophy, culture and democracy in Africa, 2002)
[50] (Pauls, 2009)
[51] (Cilliers, 2019)

Superficially like, Colenso described Ubuntu merely as "manhood"[52], Jabavu refers to *Ubuntu* as a "human feeling"[53] or as described as generosity by (Kimenyi, 1979), there however exist another strand of scholars who define *Ubuntu* as something more than just a feeling or a quality, promoting it to something philosophical such as Eze who states "*Ubuntu* is in fact, essentially what it means to be an African"[54], while Broodryk on the other hand says *Ubuntu* defines the person, as it determines what a person says, does or thinks[55] or Shepherd and Paver who describe it as an essential human nature[56], there are African leaders who have also been vocal about the philosophical nature of *Ubuntu* and its role in Africa, such as Nelson Mandela who says "*Ubuntu*….asserts, we are still all branches on the same tree of humanity"[57], (Tutu, 1999) who says *Ubuntu* means that my Humanity is inextricably bound up with yours, or Nkrumah who indirectly refers to *Ubuntu* by talking about the importance of the socialist/communitarian nature of African politics[58].

One of the main themes of this paper is to explore the ontology of *Ubuntu*, in order to provide for a justification of why the researcher believes it to be the main African philosophy. For this, the five philosophical branches were sought within *Ubuntu*, Kaputu says Africans organized themselves based on their religious understanding of reality[59], while Tempels presents to us with the hierarchical relationship of the Bantu religious system, as a basis for their social organization[60], as they attempt to shed more light on the metaphysical reality of *Ubuntu*, For the epistemology in *Ubuntu* we looked at (Coetzee & Roux, The African Philosophy reader, 2003) who states that experience and rationality are the two means of knowledge accumulation by African, while Omotso tells us how Social epistemology[61] reveals *Ubuntu* in the African epistemology, the aspect of logic was argued by the researcher purely using deductive reasoning, as an inherent human character.

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[52] (Colenso, 1861)
[53] (Jabavu, 1960)
[54] (Eze, 2010)
[55] (Broodryk, 2002)
[56] (Shepherd & Paver, 1947)
[57] (Khoza & Fowarded By, 2006)
[58] (Nkrumah, 1978)
[59] (Kaputu J. A., O mara wandjambi kotate, 2018)
[60] (Tempels, 1952)
[61] (Omotoso, 2017)

For ethics we look at (Udokang, 2014) who says ethics is a multifaceted center point of epistemological, ontological and logical expressions, while Ojomo draws our attention at how African ethics are inclusive of environmental ethics[62] and finally the aesthetics in *Ubuntu* is looked at by Molokwane, who speaks of the deep meanings imbedded in African arts, of either religious, natural or cultural significance[63] and (Njiofor, 2018) who tells us How Africans make use of their arts to strengthen social solidarity by making use of Proverbs, dictums or Arts performances. The Researcher seeks to thoroughly exam and reveal this branches within *Ubuntu,* in an effort to prove *Ubuntu* not only as the African way of life, but as the most fundamental way of life.

The researcher also briefly spent time comparing and contrasting between western, Confucian and *Ubuntu* philosophy in order to ascertain common philosophical elements among the three different philosophers. We begin with (Wei-Ming, 2014) who tells us about the factor of group solidarity that exist in the Confucian philosophy, just as it exists with Ubuntu, While Delio Tells us that the only thing western philosophy shares with *Ubuntu* is only the religiously inspired metaphysics[64]. Knowledge in Confucianism must be used for the benefit of the entire society[65], just as it is with *Ubuntu*, while Gill warns us about the egoistic approach to knowledge in western philosophy[66]. The Ethics of Confucianism are defined with the Ren and Li notions[67], which focuses on personal excellence for the sake of society, which shares the primary objectives of *Ubuntu* ethics, while the Ethics of the west are said to be individualistic in nature[68]. Confucianism observes an Aesthetical order, through their art, which aids with social cohesion[69], something that correlates with African Aesthetical values, that are said to be carrying deep natural, cultural or religious meanings, while again in the western philosophy, Art and Aesthetics are personal and individualistic and a private matter.

The researcher also took time to briefly criticize three trends of African philosophy, as he is not convinced that, these trends can be accorded major philosophical status. The work of (Hountondji,

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[62] (Ojomo, 2011)
[63] (Molokwane, 2019)
[64] (Delio, 2019)
[65] (Rosker, 2014)
[66] (Gill, 2006)
[67] (Yao, 2000)
[68] (Soares, 2018)
[69] (Wang, 2016)

Comments on contemporary African philosophy, 1970) criticizes ethno philosophy, while (Appiagyei-Atua, 2019) Criticizes professional philosophy and (Bodunrin, 2019) criticizes Philosophical sagacity.

OvaHerero Philosophy and Ubuntu

The literature on *Ubuntu* within the ovaHerero people is completely absent and one will have to conclude from what is said and done within the ovaHerero Society to put together a clear reconstruction of *Ubuntu* within the ovaHerero people. But we begin with a short background about the ovaHerero people, the history[70], and factual statistics[71] [72]. There are philosophical sages like Kaputu, who tells us that "everything the creator has given and done for the ovaHerero, was for the mere purpose of maintaining group solidarity"[73], a considerable amount of time will be spent on aspects of the ovaHerero culture that shows *Ubuntu* within the ovaHerero, things like Descent system[74], linguistic art[75], religious rituals and Social organization[76], as well as undocumented aspects of the ovaHerero way of life.

Finally, we shall look at the origins of the ovaHerero to demonstrate the relationship between them and the rest of the continent, looking at sources like Kaputu who tells us about the Zimbabwean and Angolan origins of the present day ovaHerero[77], linguistic similarities among the OvaHerero, Ovambo and Rukwangali people of Namibia[78], the ovaHerero Bantu origins[79], which speaks of the possible migration from the Niger-Congo area, towards the east and finally towards the south, as well as the Bantu's place within the entire continent[80] [81], who speak of the existence of other groups of people in Africa other than the Bantu, for example the Khoe, Cushite's and Afrasians, highlighting how these groups share linguistic similarities with each other.

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[70] (UNHCR, 2012)
[71] (Blench, 25)
[72] (Hartmetz, 2011)
[73] (Kaputu J. A., O mara wandjambi kotate, 2018)
[74] (Gibson, 1956)
[75] (Kavari, 2000)
[76] (Bollig & Gewald, 2000)
[77] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)
[78] (Pollard, Rosenburg , & Tignor, 2011)
[79] (Phillip & Randall, 2007)
[80] (Bernard, 1988)
[81] (Skogland, et al., 2017)

It is the objective of the researcher to study all these different literatures and critically analyze them in order to draw a conclusion between them, that indeed *Ubuntu* is the common denominator across the board in the African way of life. As well as to show that the ovaHerero people are a living example of people who apply *Ubuntu* philosophy as an African way of life.

CHAPTER THREE
WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

There is no single exclusive accepted definition of what philosophy is, mostly because of its very abstract nature, that deals with all subject matter on earth, because it seeks to investigate the essence of reality and all subject matter that emanate from reality. However, for this paper, philosophy will be defined in terms of culture and or as a way of life[82]. (Balbian, 2019) describes philosophy as a mere thought process, and it is according to (Maritain, 1957), that culture is a subsequent result of philosophizing.

> *"The unity of a culture is determined in the first place and above all by a certain common philosophical structure, a certain metaphysical and moral attitude, a certain common conception of the universe, of man and human life, of which social, linguistic and juridical structures are, so to speak, the embodiment"* (Maritain, 1957)

The researcher will define the term philosophy in the context of its five constituent branches, then proceed to demonstrate the relationship between these branches and culture, which then will be used to demonstrate that philosophy and culture are synonyms for the purpose of this paper. After which the researcher will proceed to expand on the five branches of philosophy and how each one applies to culture and finally, will conclude by defining what he means by "philosophy as a culture or way of life".

Philosophy in western literature

Using the argument from the branches of philosophy in western literature, western scholars use the five branches of philosophy to define philosophy as a body of knowledge. A philosophical body must comprise of these five branches, namely metaphysics, epistemology, logic, aesthetics and ethics. "Philosophy is the whole, as far as the enquiries of reality are concerned, and the branches make up the parts of the whole"[83]. What this means is that philosophy is those aspects of reality that deal with the most fundamental aspects of reality. As such every other matter that

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[82] (Maritain, 1957)
[83] (Velasquez, 1991)

is not a fundamental issue also falls within the definition of philosophy. With metaphysics for example, we can comprehend that sub-atomic particles aren't the building blocks of matter, or that epistemology shows us that our senses are incapable of aiding us in properly interpreting reality, ethics shows us that morality could never be objective no matter where you look at it from, all of which are issues that a lay man takes for granted on a daily basis. To shed more light on the western definition of philosophy by its branches, I will critically look at each branch, in my attempt to define them in a cultural context.

Metaphysics

Chaffee defines metaphysics as "the study of the most general or ultimate characteristics of reality or existence"[84]. This then includes everything from what we perceive, do, express and process, metaphysics deals with what the essence is, at which point that subject matter can no longer be reducible to something else[85]. Questions like, why are we here on earth at all? Fall in this category, because the answers to such a question speaks to our ontological reality, it gives meaning to the presence of human beings on earth. Metaphysics then does not merely only deal with questions, but a better understanding of our reality and creates identities for those realities, for example the diversity in culture and religion. So metaphysics is a field of philosophical enquiry, but as soon as this enquiry begins, metaphysics then defines the reality of the phenomenon in question, because after all a Christian is only a Christian because of the metaphysical understanding of their origin.

Epistemology

Moser defines epistemology as "the philosophical study of the nature, origin and scope of knowledge"[86] . this definition tells us that epistemology focuses on the essence of knowledge, what it is? How, when, where and why knowledge is? Usually this kind of thing is taken for granted, when we talk of knowledge we usually engage at the face value surface, for the most part entertaining things like what we know and how we know things. However, the study of epistemology is concerned with deeper aspects about knowledge, it deals with the ontology of

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[84] (Chaffee, 2011)
[85] (Feser, 2013)
[86] (Moser, 2010)

knowledge as Moser elaborates that epistemology entails; what constitutes knowledge, what it's based on and the extend of our knowledge.

Lemos defines knowledge as "a justified true believe"[87], meaning that knowledge is any belief that can be proven to be true and justifiable, so at a fundamental level, the essence of knowledge is belief. Knowledge is not only what you perceive through your senses but what you chose to belief after you have perceived. According to (Lemos, 2007) knowledge manifests in three ways, namely; by propositional, by acquaintance and by "how to" knowledge. Propositional knowledge refers to matters of facts, things that are obvious, like the sky is blue, while knowledge by acquaintance is what you know by association, for example one can only truly appreciate the size of an elephant by being as close as required to an elephant, and how to knowledge refers to the things we know based on our ability to do them, for example there is a difference between the knowledge of a bricklayer, who knows about bricklaying and a person who is not a bricklayer but knows about bricklaying.

There are three theories of truths in relations to knowledge, these theories speak of how we can distinguish truths from non-truths. Haack distinguishes the three as coherence, correspondence and pragmatic theories of truths[88]. She goes on to explain that the coherence theory require that truth must cohere to other truths, they must complement each other, one truth must depend on the other to make sense, and all contradictions must be eliminated. Correspondence theory requires that any truth must be verifiable in the real world, it must correspond to the physical world, while the pragmatic theory requires that we make up our own minds towards truth, for the things that we can never be sure of, based on the evidence we have, we must call in our personal experiences and rationality, a bit of coherence and correspondence approach in order to best determine these truths, pragmatic truths are relative to different people. The essence of knowledge, does not only tell us what we know or how we know things, but just like metaphysics, it influences our interpretation of reality. The things we do, the way we speak or live are based on what, why and how we know.

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[87] (Lemos, 2007)
[88] (Haacks, 1978)

Logic

"Logic is the study of the methods and principles used to distinguish correct from incorrect reasoning"[89], while reasoning is referred to as rationality by Nickerson, who says "rationality is internal consistency of belief and consistency of actions with beliefs"[90] logic therefore can be defined as our ability to make sound decisions, based on our ability to reason. We reason by observing all our evidence and weighing out all our options against each other in order to inform ourselves reliably, this process spells out our ability to define our realities.

Understanding that humans are logical and rational does not only separate us from the rest of the animals but it allows us to define and to amend our own realities, as we see fit. Cultural differences as they exist today are impossible without a thinking being. To prefer one way of life over another, is only possible through rational consideration. As such we are who we are today and we are where we are today because we have logically concluded this to be our best options, in so doing we define our realities.

Ethics

"The older you get, the wiser you become" This is an African proverb, Africans collectively as a tradition entrust leadership of their group to the oldest member of the group. This is because of the normalization and integration of the abovementioned proverb into African culture. Panzar and Potthast tells us that ethics is about the way the world ought to be or should be[91]. This is exactly what ethics is all about, it concerns itself with how people should live their life, what are the right things to do, when is the right time to do things and which is the right way to do things. In its broadest sense ethics seeks to conform global culture, while in its narrowest sense it is personal and private and seeks to define personal behavior.

Philosophical ethics seeks to understand the essence of ethics, what it is and why we bother with it[92], because understanding our behavior and why we behave the way we do, will assist us in

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[89] (Copi, Cohen, & McMahon, 2014)
[90] (Nickerson, 2008)
[91] (Panzar & Potthast, 2010)
[92] (Allan, 2015)

understanding how we ought to behave, why we behave the way we do and why we ought to behave the way we ought to behave. Ethics is categorized into two main categories, namely; Normative ethics and meta-ethics. Normative ethics is the branch that concerns itself with whether our behaviors are right or wrong, while meta-ethics is the branch that concerns itself with the fundamental nature of ethics e.g. its ontology[93]. "way of life" would best describe ethics, it is our culture, it is what defines us and distinguishes one group of people from another group of people. Political and economic systems all over the world are created all in the name of creating an ethical society.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics also known as the study of art, is a branch of philosophy that is closely related to the ethics branch, in such that it too seeks to address the question of value. It questions our capacity to judge our values, especially those values that we perceive with our senses. As human beings we go through life making value judgements all the time, judgements like beautiful, gorgeous, ugly, horrible and disgusting, or as explained by Stecker as, a certain value judgement we make from our experiences[94]. Experiential values, even though are universally described are almost never universally agreed upon.

Different things relate differently to different people, while I may think a pink colored car is really beautiful, someone else would think that very same pink car is disgusting. Which begs the question, why two people would perceive a common experience differently? Considering that human beings go through life having aesthetic experiences on a daily basis, defining their reality is also affected by these experiences. Depending on the ontological understanding of aesthetics of a particular people, their realities are defined accordingly. For example, if in one culture, dark brown skin color is regarded as beautiful therefore superior, then dark brown skinned colored people may get special privileges within the cultural setting.

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[93] (Mackinnon, 2015)
[94] (Stecker, 2010)

Conclusion

The researcher sought to establish the synonymous relationship that exist between culture and philosophy, as such any culture must comprise of metaphysical, epistemological, logical, ethical and aesthetical aspects. Therefore, culture cannot be fully defined unless it can demonstrate these philosophical aspects within itself. The five philosophical branches in a culture reveal the essence and the fundamentals of that culture, as such it is critical to understand these aspects of a culture when in pursuit of understanding a culture.

The Oxford American dictionary defines culture as "the customs, civilization and achievements of a particular time or people"[95]. This definition speaks of a way of life in its totality of a people, a summary of how a people live their lives and why they do, this including the fundamental understanding of such a culture. Arinze in his paper puts it very well when he says people assume their identities from their cultures[96]. It is therefore apparent that any culture that can demonstrate without a doubt that, that culture possess the five philosophical aspects, from the branches of philosophy, that culture can itself be classified as a philosophy. Because if culture is a way of life and philosophy defined by its branches can define a culture, then philosophy is culture and vice versa, both of them defining a way of life.

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[95] (Dictionaries, 1999)
[96] (Arinze, 2015)

CHAPTER FOUR
WHAT IS AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

The term philosophy has adequately been addressed in the previous chapter, defined as a way of life, however, this definition doesn't tell us how we can distinguish one philosophy from another, we are very much accustomed to the fact that, as people find themselves in different geographical areas around the world, so distinct are their ways of life, therefore these distinctions that exist in different culture due to geography, is what we will refer to as different philosophies. In this chapter the researcher will, clarify the parameters for qualifying a philosophy as a way of life, identify Ubuntu and present it as the ideological African philosophy, as well as to provide a comprehensive account of its ontology, after which western, Confucius and Ubuntu philosophies will be compared and contrasted, in order to reveal philosophical similarities among the three philosophies, the researcher will present a critique against three trends in African philosophy namely ethno-philosophy, Professional philosophy and philosophical sagacity and finally conclude the chapter.

African Philosophy

 The researcher identified two philosophical categories, one a "geographical origin philosophy" and the second one as a subcategory of the former a "tribal origin philosophy". The geographical origin philosophy refers to the way of life of an aboriginal people, who were first to inhabit a continent, while the tribal origin philosophy will refer to the culture of the descendant of the aboriginal people, who have broken up into smaller tribal bands, and usually move to different parts of the same continent and with them the evolution of their original culture[97].   There exist therefore eastern, western, African and middle eastern Philosophies in the world that we can refer to as geographical origin philosophies, while Chinese, Indian and Arabic philosophies are examples of tribal origin philosophies.

The main cause of cultural differences is geographical location[98], the fact that people are in different locations, exposed to different environments, by default presents different realities to them, these realities are then in turn interpreted differently and thus determines our cultures or

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[97] (Pauls, 2009)
[98] (Balasubramanian, 2018)

ways of life. It is this geography that distinguishes the geographical origin philosophy from the other, the African philosophy from either the western or eastern philosophies. In addition to the geographical location, other factors like language, religion, economy etc. aid in defining tribal origin philosophies.

Therefore, when answering the question of what African philosophy is, the territorial borders of Africa are the most fundamental determining factor[99]. African philosophy then, is the initial way of life, as determined by the aboriginal people of Africa. Now because all the tribal groups that have descendent from the aboriginal people of Africa, share common basic cultural traits and believes, it is these surviving cultural traits over millennia and geography that form the basis of an African philosophy. Jaja in his journal article defines African philosophy as "the reflection based on the experiences of the ancestors"[100], he further clarifies that it is an intellectual development of how and why the African thinks in a particular way. It is against this background that I will define an African philosophy as the common culture that exists among all the descendants of the African aboriginal, historically limited to the African continent.

Ubuntu

The researcher does not only offer an answer to whether there is an African philosophy, but goes two steps further, one he names *Ubuntu* as the African philosophy and two, provides an ontological account of the *Ubuntu* philosophy. A lot of literature has been written about *Ubuntu*, so much so that by now, we should have a good idea about what it is, or what it constitutes, yet we are nowhere close to that. so in this section the author seeks to answer the question, what is *Ubuntu*? What does it seek to define? And what does it have to do with philosophy?

It must be noted that the word *Ubuntu* does not apply across the board in the Africa, this is because the word *Ubuntu* is exclusive to the Nguni language and those who speak it, while what it represents is an African sort of universal ideology and the Nguni language is a sub language category within the African languages. As such each of the different African languages have their own word to describe this *Ubuntu* phenomenon, however for the purpose of this paper, the word

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[99] (Morakinyo, 2019)
[100] (Jaja, 2014)

Ubuntu will be used to represent the same practice across the entire continent. Current literature on *Ubuntu* has been categorized into two main groups, in the first category, *Ubuntu* has been described as something less than a philosophy or way of life, and in the second category, it has been described as some sort of philosophy. All these definitions are rather descriptive, as not much effort is made to address the ontology of Ubuntu, so most writers if not all have reduced defining *Ubuntu,* as a subject within their major thesis. It is particularly disappointing that those authors who ascribe philosophical status to *Ubuntu*, chose to do this without properly diving into its ontology.

In the first category the scholars have shied away from defining *Ubuntu* as a philosophy or a way of life, but have rather reduced it to either a characteristic or quality of the African people. Colenso described *Ubuntu* merely as "manhood"[101], which is to mean that, to be a man in the sense of bravery and courage is to possess *Ubuntu*, Kimenyi described it as being generous[102], implying that egoistic people do not possess *Ubuntu*, while Jabavu reduced *Ubuntu* to a mere feeling, referring to *Ubuntu* as a "human feeling"[103]. These definitions for Ubuntu are not worthy of a philosophical status, they simply present *Ubuntu* as these human characteristics among an array of other human characters, this also implies that, these authors must have either thought an alternative major philosophy existed for Africans or they simply didn't think that Africans have a philosophy all together, at least not in the "way of life" sense.

For the second category however, Authors here rightfully equate *Ubuntu* philosophical status, Eze states "*Ubuntu* is in fact, essentially what it means to be an African"[104], while Broodryk on the other hand says *Ubuntu* defines the person, as it determines what a person says, does or thinks[105] or Shepherd and Paver who describe it as an essential human nature[106]. Even though this paper is in total agreement with these authors, unlike them and many others, this paper seeks to provide justification for this philosophical assertions, why and how exactly *Ubuntu* qualifies to be a

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[101] (Colenso, 1861)
[102] (Kimenyi, 1979)
[103] (Jabavu, 1960)
[104] (Eze, 2010)
[105] (Broodryk, 2002)
[106] (Shepherd & Paver, 1947)

philosophy. In this category, *Ubuntu* is according philosophical statuses, as an ultimate inherent and original way of life of Africa, the definition by Broodryk for example explicitly points to the fact that we are who we are primarily because of *Ubuntu*, initially through our thoughts, followed by our words and then actions, are entirely influenced by *Ubuntu*. One of the objectives of this paper is to ontologically define *Ubuntu* in order to justify the thesis of this paper about *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* is therefore adequately described from its Nguni proverb "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*", which directly translates in "a person is a person because of other people", according to the Zulu-English dictionary, the word *Ubuntu* directly translates to "humanness"[107].

Ubuntu therefore is an African Philosophy that encapsulates the African reality in its entirety, including human interaction with the environment. *Ubuntu* is merely the communitarian based social organization of the African people, as such every and any aspect of the African person is and must be determined from the relations that exist between one African and everyone else in the world. Just like (Forster, 2010) puts it, "I too agree that *Ubuntu* is a communal way of life which demands that society is run for the sake of everyone", what is worth noting is the fact that *Ubuntu* becomes the primary driver, as the way of life of the African, The African religious practices, traditions and economic practices are all set up in such a way that they conform with the principles of *Ubuntu*, but also that they protect and preserve those principles of group solidarity. In the following section I will provide an ontological account of *Ubuntu* as a philosophy, which will seek to justify why *Ubuntu* is the fundamental primary mover of the African way of life and why it qualifies to be a philosophy.

Ubuntu Ontology

Since the Researcher claims, *Ubuntu* to be the major African philosophy, the onus then, is on him to make sure that its ontology lives up to this status. I will demonstrate this by revealing the five branches, as they exist, within *Ubuntu* philosophy and also show how *Ubuntu* is designed to protect and preserve itself.

Metaphysically the reality of Africans is religiously based, all of their reality is explained through a deity, the creator of the universe, what is real for the African, is that which has been created by

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[107] (Doke & Vilakazi, 1972)

the deity, as such, reality is also only perceived by the will of the deity, as well as being the influencer of all the events in the life of an African. Unlike foreign civilizations, the Africans do not treat separately their religion, politics, economy or traditions, for them all these systems are interrelated and forged into a single cultural system[108]. However, the religious aspect enjoys the highest status, every other aspect is organized in relations to the religious conceptualization of the African life, this is so because the religious account provides the African with their genesis account, as such it becomes only logical to organize everything according to how they best understand their origins[109].

Africans understand reality in the strict religious sense, such that every natural thing is the creation of an all-powerful deity e.g. trees, animals and nonliving things, coupled with that is the believe that everything that happened, happens and is yet to happen is ultimately caused by the deity, as such, African embark on a religious system that seeks to protect this natural order of things. What is real for an African, is that which is willed and permitted by the deity. Even though there is no written or spoken evidence to show the religiously driven culture of Africans, their cultural organization speaks volumes. (Tempels, 1952) provides us with an account of the metaphysical organization of the Bantu people, I will use this to speak for all indigenous African, for reasons previously mentioned.

In Tempels's book, there exist a hierarchal relationship for all of reality, the deity assumes the highest position as the first mover and creator of all, who provides the vital force, this deity creates everything else. Next in line are the ancestors, in the second highest position, these are human beings who have died since time in memorial, who act as intermediaries between the deity and the living, for the living and act as messengers of the deity to the living. The ancestors are followed by the living human beings, who organize themselves and their environments according to the instructions of the ancestors, as instructed by the deity. Next is the other living organisms, animals and plants and lastly, the nonliving things. The last two categories mainly serve the purpose of sustaining the human beings, however only in specific ways as instructed by the ancestors.

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[108] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)
[109] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)

Tempels describes this relationship as existing in a "spatio-temporal" state, so the deity is the author of the vital force, a sort of universal energy that all the living things possess and are required to have, however only at the discretion of the deity. What Is obvious looking at this relationship is that it is a centralized version of reality whereby all of reality exists to serve its creator.

The centrality of religion in the life of Africans is evident within their religious organization, through their religious practice of ancestor veneration, the aim, it appears is to appease the creator through their ancestors. Ancestor veneration is an indigenous religious practice of the Africans, that is practiced across the continent by all Africans, it is organized in the following manner; there is a site for religious ritual, usually were ancestor veneration takes place, usually very important announcements are made during the rituals, like marriage, births or deaths, as well as very important requests are made for example "vital force"[110]. The interesting thing about this practice lies in its motives, why did Africans choose this kind of religious ritual? what did they wish to achieve with it?

Considering that their philosophy is that of *Ubuntu*, it was only logical for them to opt for a religious system that promoted interdependence and group solidarity. The readers may be aware of the fact that our parents do not only play the role of providing and security for their children, but are by default also group solidarity enforcers, by this I mean that for as long as they are alive, all their descendants are united under them and this is why we witness a great divisions or splits among relatives, once a parent, grand parent or great grandparent passes away. I believe that therefore in order to protect and preserve *Ubuntu,* The Africans followed the same principle, that in order to keep us united and restore group solidarity, there is need to unite at the highest level of our reality, which better place, than through their religion. By keeping all their ancestors alive through a central point of veneration, *Ubuntu* would be forever preserved for millennia to come, for as long as this religious practice is upheld, *Ubuntu* will survive and the descendants will forever have a common point of conduct.

This is the metaphysical comprehension, that exists within the *Ubuntu* philosophy, the fundamental understanding of reality has been tied down to the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, it is through

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[110] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)

this it seems, that African religions are organized to protect and preserve the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, it becomes more so clear, when you realize that the reminder of the Africans life revolve around the ancestors, and it should so rightfully, if the goal is to protect *Ubuntu*.

I have defined **epistemology** as the fundamental aspect of knowledge in any culture, which determines the culture of a people based on how they choose to know. Let us turn our attention to a quote by both Teffo and Roux;

> *"Much of the African way of life and day to day activities are based on empirically verifiable facts. Independent of supernatural influence. In fact, a feature of African metaphysics, is that it has a strong empirical (i.e. based on experience) flavor"[111]*

These authors are clearly referring to how Africans process their truths, that for an African, experience is the best teacher, as such experience is one mode of acquiring knowledge for them. Therefore, what is seen, felt, touched, heard or smelled qualifies as truth to an African, even those things that by western standards are regarded as "sense deception" they too are just as real to an African. A second mode of knowledge is rationality, the use of reason to acquire knowledge is not exclusive to any specific race or group of people, but rather a universal human attribute, as such Africans possess it too, and they make use of it. Kaphagawani and Malherbe explain that "rationality is the means by which we are able to form a reasonably accurate picture of our world"[112]. It is therefore through reason that Africans have come to put everything together for example, the existence of an all-powerful, creator deity.

But how exactly is this knowledge made use of in order to define, preserve and protect *Ubuntu*? In all of African culture, knowledge is passed on in two fold, one from the elders to the young and two through social solidary efforts. It is tradition in Africa to ensure that since culture was not written down, that the elders before they die, must pass on the necessary knowledge to their offspring (Coetzee & Roux, The African Philosophy reader, 2003), through oral instructions and most importantly by demonstration.

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[111] (Coetzee & Roux, The African Philosophy reader, 2003)
[112] (Coetzee & Roux, The African philosophy reader, 2003)

This ensures that the offspring are aware of what is expected of them and that they continue to keep the culture of their ancestors alive, this is for example also how, *Ubuntu* philosophy is passed on from one generation to the next. The second fold, is through the learning methodology, that forces every member of the group to learn equally, knowledge through oral instruction and observation is transferred in group settings, African children traditionally do not chose what it is they want to learn or not learn, all the boys go through the same learning procedures growing up and so do the girls, the men and the women as well. Boys are taught to become men by compulsory initiation in groups, women and children are taught to cook and care for the house by doing their chores in groups, every single member of the any African group participates in the traditional performances of songs and dances, from the toddlers to the oldest member of the group, and this is how everyone gets to become a singer, dancer and performer, and this is what (Omotoso, 2017) refers to as "social epistemology".

As far as **logic** is concerned, to be logical is to be rational or reasonable, it has been said by Aristotle, that all men are rational animals. Unless we seek to argue that African people do not fall under the category of "men", then there is no reason to assume that Africans are not a people who possess logic. This line of thinking of coarse relegates the Africans from the Human species. But since we know for a fact that the African people are part and puzzle of the human species, we can therefore conclude that they too are logical and rational human beings. One needs not to look far to see evidence of reason in African culture, for example how did the African come to the conclusion of a creator deity without reason? They must have reasoned that, even their very presence on earth required a creator, or even the conceptualization of *Ubuntu* by them, has causes, origins and objectives and these elements point to a systematic thought process that only humans are capable of. Logic and reason is a fundamental aspect in any human culture, without it African culture wouldn't have religious, political or economic aspects to it and it is well documented how Africans were politically, economically, socially and religiously organized independent of foreign interventions, especially that of the west.

It is therefore evident that the logic that the Africans possess gave birth to the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, the researcher is forced to rely on a bit of deduction here, in an attempt to answer the question "how and why did the Africans come up with the notion of *Ubuntu?*". To come up with the best system that promotes social communitarianism, they must have first had to deem such a

system fit for themselves, they therefore through reason identified such a need and again through reason found a solution and as a result, *Ubuntu* across the board in Africa survived for millennia.

Group solidarity is the central theme when it comes to African **Ethics**, it is here where *Ubuntu* is most evident, because it is the aspect that encompasses the daily routines of African culture, it is also important to note here that African ethics are completely tied to African religion, economy and politics, it is also a multifaceted center point with epistemic, ontological and logical sides[113]. According to (Kaputu J. A., O mara wandjambi kotate, 2018) the rules and regulations that govern the life of Africans, are not designed for individuals, but are societal based.

Even the socialist economic system adopted by the Africans, also aims to protect and preserve *Ubuntu*. Kaputu continues to explain that the political system and organization in Africa followed the same trends, the oldest member of the society was both the religious and political leader, these leaders command obedience in order to effectively ensure knowledge transfer and social solidarity. Another aspect is that African Ethics is not only people centered, but also includes environmental ethics, the preservation of the environment is deeply embedded in the African culture[114]. This explains the eco-friendly approaches Africans have towards developments, all their traditional consumables are environment friendly, from their utensils to the clothes they wear, are all natural, their houses are built from either plant material animal dung or sand, completely natural, their preferred means of transport has always been by animal, and their subsistence approach to their economy protected the environment from unnecessary unrecoverable damages, due to profit driven economies. The type of ethics that was produced, has come about by default, due to the fundamental metaphysical and epistemological understanding of their reality, resulting in an *Ubuntu* oriented ethics (Udokang, 2014).

Aesthetics Just like ethics, is a default by product of the fundamental metaphysical, epistemological and logical understanding of reality. More than defining the African way of life, it mostly promotes and raises awareness about the way of life of the African. Aesthetics expresses for the African how they understand and interpret reality. Typical African aesthetics would include

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[113] (Udokang, 2014)
[114] (Ojomo, 2011)

the interpretation of values, the creation, participation and manifestation of arts. African arts are always inspired by reality, religiously, naturally and socially, there is deeper meaning to the Arts of Africa than meets the eye[115]. Aesthetical interpretations are left to individuals, to each make up their own minds, however the development of cultural arts have a different approach.

Just like any other philosophical element in African philosophy, Aesthetics too seeks to protect and preserve *Ubuntu*. African Aesthetics are organized to promote social solidarity; the craftsmen never create crafts in isolation, while he and he's fellow craftsmen produce craft, their children are made to watch and learn, as well as to practice, rock paintings and engravements usually tells the story of the society and its organization, traditional performances of dances and songs, poetry and chants are occasions for every member of the society to take part in, from the toddler to the oldest member of the group , this explains why every African becomes a multi performer, a singer, dancer and poet[116] [117]. This Is because the participation in Arts is a compulsory social engagement, while enhancing social solidarity in the process. "Proverbs, sayings, dictums, verse and many other poetic formulations are loaded with meaning reflecting the societies outlook and experience in all aspect of life"[118]. This quote brings me yet to another aspect of meaning in African aesthetics, every piece of art is an expression of reality, there exist deep meaning and symbolism in African Art (Molokwane, 2019). Yet again *Ubuntu* occupies a central stage in the African Aesthetics, *Ubuntu* defines the African aesthetics, yet again proving that *Ubuntu* is absolutely fundamental in every aspect of the African life.

Comparative analysis: Western, Confucius and *Ubuntu* philosophies

To put things in perspective, the researcher thought it necessary to make a comparative study among two other philosophies by comparing them against each other and against *Ubuntu* philosophy, in order to draw similarities, so as to establish their philosophical basis as a way of life. Because if we can agree that western and Confucius philosophies, are indeed philosophies, then *Ubuntu* too can qualify as a philosophy by the same standards that qualify western and

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[115] (Molokwane, 2019)
[116] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)
[117] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)
[118] (Njiofor, 2018)

Confucius philosophies to be philosophies. I will briefly go through the five branches of philosophy, in my attempts to identify them within these three types of philosophies.

Metaphysically, just like *Ubuntu*, Confucius philosophy also focuses on group solidarity, it seeks to protect and preserve social bonds[119], however they differ in the metaphysical approach, *Ubuntu*'s reality is religiously based, while that of Confucianism is based on nature, while Africans look at the supernatural to make sense of their reality, the Confucianist looks at the state of nature, especially human nature. Western philosophical metaphysics is just like that of Africans, supernaturally inspired[120], however the entire western philosophy is individualistic in nature, while in the west it is the individual who has a personal relation with the deity, in Africa, it is the society that has a relationship with the deity through their ancestors.

In epistemology again, Confucianism develop their knowledge from a social, humanistic approach, with experience and reason being the best teacher, for the Confucianist knowledge must be used to make the society a better place through improved cohesion (Rosker, 2014), this is not very different from the epistemology within *Ubuntu* philosophy, were knowledge is used to protect and preserve solidarity. Western epistemology seeks knowledge for the sake of knowledge, were empiricism and reason take center stage[121], in the west knowledge is not sought for an already preexisting ideal, but for the sake of knowledge acquisition, through scientific experiments and discoveries. Knowledge in the west is left to the individuals to do with it as they please, provided they do not abuse others with it, as such some may change the world with it for the better and others will merely use it to enrich themselves at any costs, all in all, what role knowledge will play in the society is completely vested in individual member of society.

Logic appears to be the only common denominator within all the philosophies, this is because of its natural dispensation, logic is more of a natural phenomenon, a human attribute, than a social construct, as such we are all inclined to use it throughout our lives. However, the distinction must

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[119] (Wei-Ming, 2014)
[120] (Delio, 2019)
[121] (Gill, 2006)

be observed that for both *Ubuntu* and Confucianism logic is used to preserve social solidarity, while in the west it is used to promote individualism.

Confucianism is primarily based on morals and ethics, through its Ren and Li concepts, Confucianism seeks to promote a highly moral society, with strong social bonds, while the Ren focuses on personal development and society, the Li focuses on the personal role and responsibility within society[122], just like in *Ubuntu*, it is the Manifestation of the metaphysical , epistemological and logical understanding of reality of Confucianism. In the west ethics are personal and private, political, economic and social orders in the west are set up to serve the individualistic outlook of the people, there are no social responsibilities among members of a common society, instead it is only the authorities, that can enforce social a social ethics, when necessary[123]. Individualism, Confidentiality and self, takes center stage over social solidarity within the western ethics.

Finally with aesthetical value was central to the Confucian culture, according to them, there exist an aesthetical order, which when followed ensures social cohesion[124], an illustration of this is the fact that certain colors for clothes are reserved for the leaders and not be worn by anyone else, because of their perceived aesthetical value, following the filial piety rules, social solidarity is achieved. Although the manifestation of aesthetics is different for both *Ubuntu* and Confucius, they both seek to achieve social solidarity, while in the west again, aesthetical value is not universal to the group but subjective to the individual, there exist no superior social objective for aesthetical value in the west, what is beautiful, ugly or awesome or the use thereof is completely personal and private.

It is clear through these observations that both *Ubuntu* and Confucianism share a common philosophical objective, that of social solidarity, while the west promotes the philosophy of individualism, based on its liberal political system, capitalistic economic system and a social order of personal freedom and independence. What is worth noting however is the fact that all these

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[122] (Yao, 2000)
[123] (Soares, 2018)
[124] (Wang, 2016)

philosophies have metaphysical, epistemological, logical, ethical and aesthetical elements within them, which equally qualifies them as philosophies in the context of this paper.

Critique on Ethno-philosophy, Professional and Sage philosophies

Considering that the attempts in this paper is to provide for an alternative, superior theory of African philosophy, the work would be incomplete, if more light was not shed on why the researcher have rejected some of the previous work done on African philosophy. Considering that the researcher does not have the privilege to discuss all the trends in African philosophy, he chose the above mentioned three, that are of greatest interest to him. The purpose of this section, is to present why my theory is more superior to these three theories of African philosophy theory.

Ethno-philosophy

I will approach this entirely from the angle of Tempels in his work titled "Bantu Philosophy". Even though he provides metaphysical, epistemological, logical, ethical and aesthetical insight into the way of life of the Bantu people, he fails to pin point, the central philosophical notion of the Bantu people, what exactly qualifies as the "African philosophy" in this work, is it the vital force, the social solidarity, the culture or the language? Tempels was not clear on this, secondly he failed to provide a philosophical framework, that would define his work as an African Philosophy, he did well to provide us with an account of the bantu people, but by which standards, do we qualify his work as African Philosophy, what do we look at? Finally, according to Hountondji his work was too narrow, stressing that ethno-philosophy speaks only of Akan and Dogon Philosophy[125], as an African philosophy work, his work is supposed to cover the entire people of the continent and not only the Bantu people, he fails to even at least provide us with the link between the Bantu and everyone else in Africa, at best his work cannot qualify as an African philosophy, but rather as a subcategory of African philosophy, or simply just Bantu philosophy as the title suggests.

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[125] (Hountondji, Comments on contemporary African philosophy, 1970)

Professional Philosophy

Considering that a philosophy is a way of life, I fail to understand how professional philosophy wishes to define African philosophy without a cultural context, professional philosophy appears to me more of a methodological approach rather than an attempt to define African philosophy. It is regrettable to want to define an African philosophy, merely because of the work done by an African philosopher, if for example Senghor was to do work on Chinese epistemology, does that do qualify as African philosophy? I think not, it is merely work don't by an African philosopher, it is perhaps acceptable to classify work done by African Philosophers on Africa as African philosopher, but we cannot seriously classify all the work, by all African philosophers as African philosophy. Appiagyei-Atua warns of not only the impossibility but the dangers of relying too much on professional philosophy, he writes "African philosophy is thus consigned and confine to accepting western standards of philosophy and ideas of civil society, human rights and development"[126], It is therefore imperative that any approach that seeks to define an African philosophy must have an African approach, and professional philosophy fails at this as it seeks to define African philosophy from a universalist point of view, yes professional philosophy must equip itself with universal philosophical academic tools, but to define an African philosophy, it must take seek a completely African approach to get it right.

Philosophical Sagacity

They are defined as the wise men/women, who by mere use of reason can produce immense knowledge, but can this be defined as an African philosophy or just a mere method to source information? Bodunrin likened Odera's sage philosophy to the Socratic method, and questioned, whether it wasn't just a mere duplication of the same method?[127] Sages are knowledgeable people, it means they possess knowledge, considering a philosophy as a way of life, how does being knowledgeable translate into an entire philosophy, especially when all members of the group are not Sages. Sagacity does not provide for a philosophical framework, much less one that can define African philosophy, sages have diverse knowledge that is as diverse as the number of sages, it seems far-fetched that a systematic African philosophy as a way of life can be defined by sagacity

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[126] (Appiagyei-Atua, 2019)
[127] (Bodunrin, 2019)

alone, instead sagacity can aide the process of defining an African philosophy, by making use of the knowledge from the sages.

Conclusion

The debate in African philosophy has evolved and the challenge is no longer about whether an African philosophy does exist, but rather what exactly this African philosophy is and what its ontology constitutes. It is very important that when defining something, some ontological account be provided. It is its philosophical aspects of metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics and aesthetics, that give *Ubuntu* a philosophical status and now even a comparative analysis can be made, to ascertain *Ubuntu*'s philosophical status.

Ubuntu defines the African way of life from its grass roots, right up to its highest political organization, *Ubuntu* is central to the African way of life, politics, economy, society and education, all these are organized in line with the *Ubuntu* ideals. We must change our mind sets about the position of *Ubuntu* in Africa, it is not merely part of the African life, or culture, instead it is the ultimate way of life, it is the common denominator in Africa, it defines the African reality, from the grass root to the top. There has not yet been made a comprehensive African philosophy account before, everything else from ethno-philosophy, professional philosophy and philosophical sagacity have at best only provided a methodological approach to defining and describing African philosophy, *Ubuntu* provides for a more comprehensive philosophical account for Africa, one that includes, fundamental realities as well as the African cultures as they exist today.

CHAPTER FIVE
OVAHERERO PHILOSOPHY AND *UBUNTU*

Introduction

Because the ovaHerero people are a great, great, great descendent of the African aboriginal people, their philosophy is no different from that of the general African descendants, at least in their fundamental aspects. It is therefore my duty to demonstrate the *Ubuntu* of the ovaHerero people, by analyzing the metaphysical, epistemological, logical, ethical and aesthetical elements in the culture of the ovaHerero people. Because the word *Ubuntu* is Nguni, it does not exist in the otjiherero language, instead the ovaHerero have their own language to describe this phenomenon. The proverb, "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" can be directly translated in otjiherero as "*O mundu, omundu menarovandu*", however the Herero use a shortened version "*Omundu yovandu*" meaning "the person belongs to people", or "*o mundu omundu*" which means "a human being is a human being, no matter what", insinuating that people should be our highest priorities above all other living and non-living things, as Kaputu teaches that "*Tengovandu, Otjinavandu ozongombe matjikuyeka*"[128] meaning "Respect people, because without people, you won't accumulate wealth". In this section I will discuss the philosophy of the ovaHerero people, by revealing their metaphysical, epistemological, logical, ethical and aesthetical aspects of their culture, after which I will attempt to trace the genealogy of the ovaHerero people and then conclude this chapter.

The OvaHerero

The ovaHerero people are one of the tribal nations found in Namibia, they are comprised of several sub-ethnic groups namely; Herero, Himba, Mbanderu, Tjimba, Zemba, Hakaona, Kwandu, Kuvale and Tjavikwa, all of which speak the otjiherero language but with distinct dialect, however, there exist no dialect distinction between the Himba, Herero and Mbanderu. The ovaHerero people belong to the Bantu group of people in Africa, in Namibia they are scattered across the central to the northeastern parts of the country. The Himba, Tjimba, Hakaona, Kwandu, Zemba, Kuvale and Tjavikua are all located in the northwestern sphere of Namibia, cross cutting the border into south

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128 (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)

western Angola, while the Mbanderu are predominantly found in the central eastern parts of the country, the Herero are found from the central to the western central of Namibia[129].

Due to the 1896 war and 1904 genocide war, most of the ovaHerero people escaped to exile in Botswana and later some migrated to South Africa, and even though the country has attained independence in 1990, many of the people who went into exile because of the 1896 and 1904 wars are still in exile to this day. In 2012 the ovaHerero population only made up 7% of the country's population[130]. All the sub ethnic groups of the ovaHerero have three main things in common, cultural norms, language and history, the ovaHerero are originally nomadic pastoralist, however today, only those groups found in the North eastern parts of Namibia remain Nomadic[131].

The Herero in central Namibia have been forced to abandon the nomadic approach and simply live pastoralist lives, this is due to the fact that they were dispossessed of their ancestral lands and cattle, and lost the majority of their tribes people during the genocide war of 1904[132], as such had to reinvent and redefine themselves, post the genocide war, the central Namibian ovaHerero are the most westernized ovaHarero group, this is again due to the genocide war, after they lost the war, they became German captives and every aspect of their lives was determined by the Germans for them, a good example of this is the fact that the ovaHerero from the central parts of Namibia are the most Christianized of all the groups (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019).

According to (Fage & Tordoff, 2002) the ovaHerero lineage can possibly be traced to the Cushitic people of east Africa, as they share linguistic similarities and cattle herding practices, it is from there that they are suspected to have begun their migration to southwards towards present day Angola, then Northern Namibia and central Namibia.

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[129] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)
[130] (UNHCR, 2012)
[131] (Blench, 25)
[132] (Hartmetz, 2011)
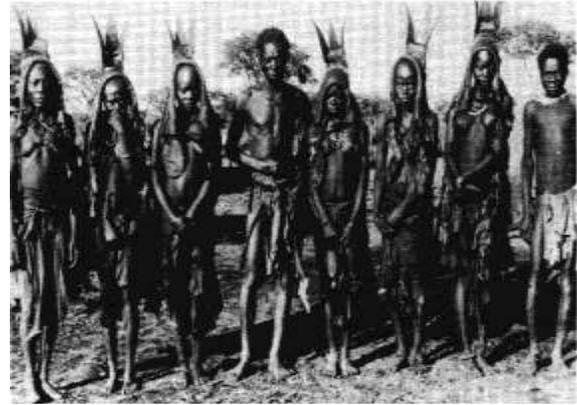
Physical variants among some of the different ovaHerero People. At the top left is a Zemba family (Brink, 2019), at the top right are the central ovaHerero before the genocide war, at the bottom left, we have the post genocide central ovaHerero men, who now wear the German colonial army, as their traditional attire and at the bottom right are two Herero women of central Namibia in the blue and grey costume and another two Himba ladies (Williams, 2012)

ovaHerero Philosophy

The researcher here seeks only to demonstrate how the five branches of philosophy apply to the ovaHerero. In their **metaphysical** conception of reality, their religion is that of ancestor veneration, even though the ovaHerero believe that the deity, called *Ndjambi*, created everything, they don't see themselves as worthy enough to get audience with it, they think *Ndjambi* is too great an entity, far beyond their comprehension and this is the reason they engage in ancestor veneration as a medium to *Ndjambi*. As a matter of fact, it is a taboo to mention "*Ndjambi*", as you may be calling misfortunes upon yourself, it is only those equivalent to high priesthood, who can mention *Ndjambi* directly, and also in very rare occasion e.g. in prolonged draught, that may be possible life threatening, also there is a norm in their culture to never call your parents by their names, now you can imagine the implications on *Ndjambi*, therefore the ovaHerero recognize a creator deity,

but are missing the required means to communicate with, this Kaputu says is due to *Ndjambi*'s mysterious nature[133].

The ovaHerero have an *Okuruuo*, this point serves as the midpoint of the ovaHerero and their ancestors through veneration, here they, the living announces death, birth, marriage and other smaller things that occur on a daily basis and they especially ask for fortune and good luck for the entire society, as a matter of fact the ancestors must be informed of every little thing that takes place within the society and their homesteads[134]. This Kaputu says is because metaphysically the first and oldest ancestor, the one who started the homestead or society never ceases ownership of his people and or properties, which explains why Herero inheritance is based on birth lineage, those who inherit are not the owners of the inheritance, but mere custodians of it and as such have to constantly report back to the owner, about the status of the children, homestead and cattle, it is because of this arrangement, that everything, that belong to the ancestor now belongs to each and every one of his descendent, the inheritor simply holds them in custody as a birth right.

To ensure group solidarity and *Ubuntu*, the ovaHerero have a robust and multisided system of tracing one's genealogy. It is what the researcher refer to as the triple layered descent system. The first and most immediate layer, is through the names of one's parents, because Herero name a child and add references to their fathers, however this system has now been simplified by the surname system, so any person knowing all their parents' names, can trace them by following the birth lineage, today the ovaHerero people can trace their genealogy even up to ten generations using this system alone. The second layer is through the *eanda* system, every Herero belongs to the same e*anda* of their mother, which can then be traced back to the initial owner of that *eanda*, after whom it was named, so in actual fact everyone who shares the same *eanda*, are descendants of a common mother.

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[133] (Kaputu J. A., 2018)
[134] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)
Eanda is the matrilineal descent system, that groups all the children of the same mother together

The ovaHerero have nine main *omaanda*(plural), namely *ovaKueuva, ovaKuendjandje, ovaKuenatja, Ovakuendata, ovaKuahere, ovaKuauti, OvaKuenambura, ovaKuatjiti* and *ovaKuatjivi*. The *ovaKueva* are further divided into *OvaKueuva voHauari, voMutati, voMusi* and *voPera* and the *ovaKuendata* are also further divided into *ovaKuendata vondjiuo onene* and *vondjiuo onditi*, both these further divisions are sibling based divisions (Kaputu J. A., O mara wandjambi kotate, 2018).

The last form is the *oruzo* system, all the ovaHerero surnames belong to either one of the *Otuzo*(plural), the *Otuzo* are several, namely; *Ohorongo, Onguangoro, Esembi, Omuhinaruzo, Ondanga, Ohambandarua, Otjihaviria, Otjiporo, Onguanjimi, Onguendjandje, Otjitjindua, Omakoti, Onguejuva, Ondjiva, Okanene, Onguatjindu, Omuko, Ondoto, Ombongora, Onguakavero, Onguangemba, Okasema, Ozombapa, Omarunga, Onguatjija, Ondondere* and *Otjirungu*, these list may or may not include, all the *otuzo* of the ovaHerero people.

The *otuzo* are described and defined by their sacred rites and every Herero acquires their *oruzo* from their Father, as such everyone with the same *oruzo,* are descendants of a common father[135]. What is clear here is that the ovaHerero have prioritized the preservation of blood lines, which points to the protection and preservation of *Ubuntu*. It is not difficult to see that through pairing up the sexes within the ovaHerero people, for reproduction purposes, everyone will be related to everyone else by blood line, through either one of those triple layered descent system and that this triple layered descent system has managed to mold the ovaHerero people in one big family by bloodline.

The *oruzo* system has been coupled to the religious rites, every *okuruuo*'s sacred rites are defined by its *oruzo*, as such the ancestors that can be venerated at a specific *oruzo*, are only those of that *oruzo* and vice versa, it is only the descendants of the same *oruzo* that have religious rites performed on their behalf at their *okuruuo* and the ancestors are aware of who their descendants are, even those born hundred years after their death, because remember, every birth and marriage

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[135] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)

is announced to the ancestor at the *okuruuo*. This triple layered descent system is for example the backbone of the current ovaHerero people in Central Namibia, in their continued efforts to reorganize themselves more than a hundred years after the genocide war.
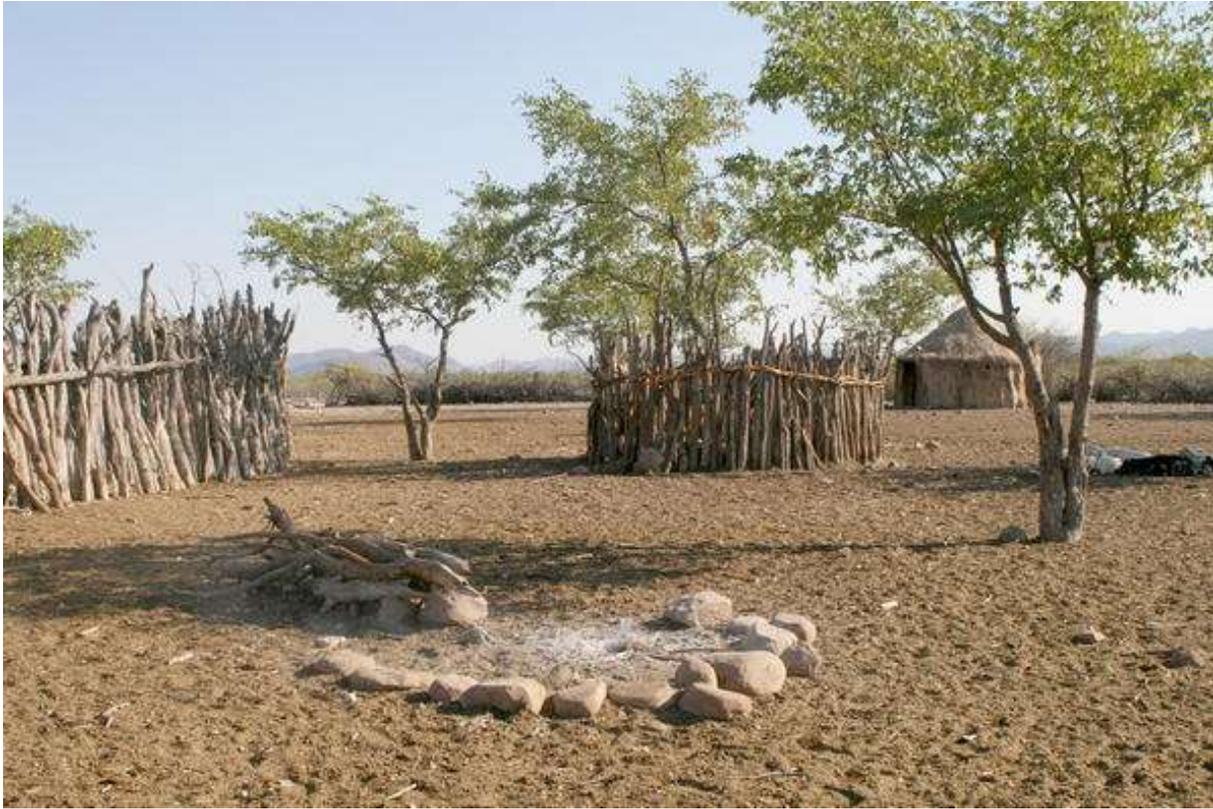
Okuruuo. A homestead in the Kaokoland, showing the religious site, called okuruuo (Overblog, 2019)

"Ootate a vetjiti nao" is a common phrase used by the ovaHerero people, directly translated as "That is how our ancestors did it". This is evident of how the ovaHerero depend on experience as a source of knowledge, traditional and cultural norms are never reinvented instead they are forever passed on from one generation to the next generation. In Kaokoland for example, the Himba today do everything, exactly as they did it two hundred years ago, they still live a nomadic life. To disregard an ancestor's instruction on doing something, is Tantamount to calling misfortune, upon one's life[136], for example it is said during a burial proceeding, the body of the dead can never enter the homestead after dark, with five PM as the cut of time, and that doing so will bring misfortune in the society and the living ovaHerero of today have accepted this assertion purely based on the supposed experience of their ancestors, as irrefutable truth, it is a very much upheld tradition of

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[136] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)

the ovaHerero people in the 21ˢᵗ century, Kaputu explains that Our ancestors made law from trial and error, and as soon as they got it right, it became law or "*ovizerika*"[137]. Rationality is another factor that aided in the acquisition of knowledge of the ovaHerero people, this one goes without saying by the mere fact that the ovaHerero are human beings, therefore rationality is innate to them, the evidence of their rationality is in abundance, it is reason, that led them to come up with their triple layered descent system, the circumcision of the boy child and even their conceptualization of *Ndjambi* and how they relate to *Ndjambi*.

Epistemology in the ovaHerero is primarily used to preserve *Ubuntu*, because everything their culture dictated, based on what and how they knew, was for the purpose of *Ubuntu*. The religion, economy and social systems all sought social solidarity. To demonstrate this, their religion forms the basis of their metaphysical epistemology both their cattle, which is their economic base and their triple layered descent system, which defines their social relations are both interlinked to the religion, giving all these aspects religious significance, and subsequently forming the basis of their culture[138].

Logic and rationality is innate, it is a human attribute and attempting to even demonstrate it in the ovaHerero is an insult to their humanity, or any other human being. But for the sake of argument and clarity, I will thoroughly look at a case that demonstrates the logical superiority of the ovaHerero people, I will do this by critically analyzing the ovaHerero's conceptualization of *Ndjambi*, I will put myself in their place and logically deduce, how they would have possibly come to such a conclusion based on the current understanding of their concept of their religion.

Unlike the Christian God, the ovaHerero's *Ndjambi* is a mysterious entity, named only based on its descriptive attributes as such they name him accordingly, the Christians on the other hand describe their God in detail, as if they had access to their God, for example according to Exodus

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[137] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)

[138] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)

chapter 34 verse 14 which states that he is a jealous God[139] or in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 14, that he is a man[140], as opposed to being a women. Kaputu points out, that *Ndjambi* is the alpha of everything, he created everything, the trees, mountains and ourselves, but we don't speak to *Ndjambi*, because we are not worthy, we are mere mortals of his creation, how can we ever justify communicating with *Ndjambi*? I believe that the ovaHerero logically deducted that, if there are all these things on earth and that they found here, including themselves, then there must be a creator for it all, who is not of the same nature, but of a supernatural ontology. However, it appears that because of the mysterious nature of *Ndjambi*, there was nothing else the ovaHerero could know about him, for example, Where *Ndjambi* is? How *Ndjambi* looks like or why *Ndjambi* created an entire universe? I believe it is the deadlock to all these questions, that led to the establishment of the ancestral veneration ritual of the ovaHerero, something that would not be possible, without the engagement of logic and reason.

It is logical therefore to conclude that, since they were not privy to the nature of *Ndjambi*, they couldn't possibly be sure of how to communicate with *Ndjambi*, and the ancestral veneration ritual, is an alternative form of communication, which made sense because they knew the nature of their ancestors, they knew their ancestors had ears and a mouth and they knew, that their ancestors were familiar with them, therefore, why not communicate with them through the *Okuruuo*[141], because even the ovaHerero are and have always been stern believers in Life After death, their ancestors die physically, but the spirit is alive and roaming all over the place, in my opinion it makes more sense for them to have reasoned that the medium better suited to transfer their issues to *Ndjambi*, were indeed their ancestors. It therefore can be concluded that, the ritual of ancestral veneration was due to a need to communicate with *Ndjambi*, this in my opinion is the basis of the ovaHerero's ancestor veneration ritual. Therefore, what we are witnessing here is not only rationality and logic but an extremely higher strand of logic and reason, considering that this ritual could be more than a millennia old.

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[139] (KJV, 1609)
[140] (KJV, 1609)
[141] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)

In the pre-colonial era, the ovaHerero people, were among some of the well-organized people, they had a fully operational polity, with a socialist economic and political system, a judicial system and their own religion[142]. It is through these structures that the **ethics** of the ovaHerero people manifests itself. Like all the rest of the African ethics, theirs too is centered around the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, an ethics based on social solidarity, and Honesty, accountability, respect, obedience and self-preservation, make up some of the values of the ovaHerero people[143]

To demonstrate the genius of how the ovaHerero sought to protect and preserve *Ubuntu* through their ethics, let me begin with their economic system. The economy of the ovaHerero is their cattle, primarily they lived of their cattle, their food, clothing and shelters, all come from their cattle, and they used their cattle as currency for all the other things they couldn't produce themselves[144]. but here is the trick, as already alluded to, every Herero has an *eanda* and *oruzo,* the ovaHerero cattle are also categorized according to the *omaanda* and *otuzo*. Every homestead has a pool of cattle that belong to the *oruzo* of that homestead, these cattle, are sacred and can be traced back to the forefather who initially started that homestead and these cattle are still owned by this initial original owner, all the descendants after him, merely inherits them and serve as a custodian for the next in line to inherit, after he passes on, these cattle of the *oruzo* belongs to every member of that *oruzo* as a beneficiary, by virtue of the *oruzo* having religious significance, the *oruze* cattle too, assumes the same significance, they too are tied, because of this to the homestead (*omuvanda*) and to the people, through the *oruzo*, as such these cattle can never be used for trading purposes, their main objective is to ensure the long term survival of the people of that *oruzo* [145] [146].

Among the cattle of the *oruzo* are the rest belonging to different *omaanda*, the cattle categorized under the *eanda*, belong to individuals within the homestead, that they either inherit from any familiar member of their *eanda*. These cattle can be disposed at will by their owners, for example for immediate sustenance and economic needs, even though these cattle are owned individually, the mere fact that they are *eanda* cattle, places an obligation on the owner of their responsibility

[142] (Gewald, 1999)
[143] (Kaputu J. A., O mara wandjambi kotate, 2018)
[144] (Africa, 1918)
[145] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)
[146] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)

to the *eanda*, because the nature of these cattle is such that no one buys them, or makes them, everyone just inherits them through the *eanda*, so technically, every descendant of that *eanda* is entitled to them. As such ones *eanda* or *oruzo* is what qualifies them as heirs to these cattle, again forcing the ovaHerero to keep very close relations, through their economy.

In governance, there are no separation of powers, for the ovaHerero the king (*Ombara*) serves as the political head, religious head and judicial head. Leadership is eternal and it is a birth right, through the bloodline. Even under this common leadership, the King doesn't have the separated political, religious or judicial departments, sort of arrangement, all this are intertwined and are treated as one and every leadership decision made carries with it political, religious and judicial implications[147]. Kingship like everything else is tied to the *oruzo* and it too serves to achieve the objective of the *oruzo*, this is why a king only rules those that belongs to his *oruzo*, it is a bloodline and imposes a biological responsibility on the leader[148].

Perhaps just for the sake of clarity, let me shed more light on the *oruzo* and kingship relations. Every homestead *(omuvanda)* is tied to the *oruzo*, every *oruzo* encompasses several surnames, therefore several homesteads, because the leaders of the several homesteads belong to the same *oruzo,* it means they are all descendants of a common forefather, as such all they need to do is to trace the eldest living male descendant to lead the *oruzo* and serve as the king of that *oruzo[149]*. The social organization of the ovaHerero speaks volumes for social solidarity.

I will explain this in terms of the social organization of the homestead, let us assume the establishment of a new homestead. According to Kaputu, a married man, who lives with his father, request his father, to avail to him a piece of land in order to build his own homestead. The first thing to note is that, that homestead will belong to the *oruzo*, but under his father's custodianship, because land is never privately owned. The man then takes his wife and moves to his new home, he begins by setting up the kraal for the cattle and then the wife proceed to building her house, in

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[147] (Bollig & Gewald, 2000)
[148] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)
[149] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)

Herero culture, men don't build or own houses, all the houses belong to the women, after which the men then goes to collect all his inherited cattle from his *eanda,* and those of the *oruzo* loaned to him, and those of his wife and brings them all to their new home. This man reserves the right to accommodate anyone of his sisters, who may need a place to stay, as such the wife builds her houses and the sisters also build their houses, since Herero culture is polygamist, every wife of the husband should also build her own house, these houses are named after the *eanda* of the women who builds them. The sisters are of the same father as the man, so they share the same *oruzo,* wives take on the *oruzo* of their husband, when they get married and abandon that of their father, as such every one with their children shall belong to the *oruzo* of that homestead, so they all become the responsibility of the head of the homestead, to be taken care of through the traditional norms. The emphasis here is on the *oruzo,* to preserve social solidarity.
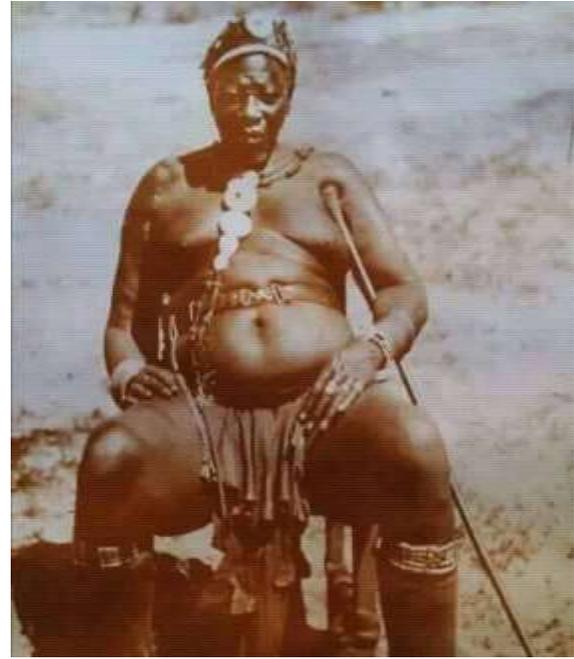
Ovaherero Leadership: Top left is King Samuel Maharero, He led the central ovaherero in the Genocide war of 1904. Top right is Chief Mbuandjou, he was one of the Herero Chiefs of central Namiba, he died in the 1904 war. bottom left is King Kahimemua Nguvuava and his wife, he was the leader of the Mbanderu, died in the 1896 war. Bottom right is Hikumuine Kapika, king of the Kapika Royal house and left is a women milking the oruzo cattle (Williams, 2012)

OvaHerero **Aesthetics** is no further from another social project, the aesthetics are far and wide, art is explicit within the ovaHerero, but then again the arts are just an expressive form of the metaphysical, epistemological and logical manifestation of the ovaHerero people. The arts of the ovaHerero mainly seek to raise awareness, educate and foster social solidarity. Their art work, includes crafts and they mostly produce consumable crafts, daily usable things like kitchen utensils, *otjipuna* (perfume container) and or the *okati* (walking stick), the ovaHerero decorate their calabash (*ondjupa*) with red ochre and designed cattle hides, the women for example decorate themselves as per their status in society depending on whether they are married, or not, or have children or not, most of these arts are made in support of the *oruzo* and the *eanda* to achieve their ends, one interesting aspect in this regard is that the colors of the Herero cattle are categorized according to their *otuzo*, as such the people of that *oruzo*, would make clothes from those hides and their *oruzo* becomes identifiable just from the clothes they are wearing[150].

These arts are critical in defining the culture, they are what the researcher would term meaningful crafts, also skill transfer of these crafts is mandatory from one generation to the next, each and every child must learn this crafts, with exceptions to the gender sensitive crafts. Performance Arts is another aspect of ovaHerero arts, they have Traditional songs, dances, poetic chants (*omitandu, omajano*) proverbs (*omyano vya Tjipangandjara*). for the most parts all these performance arts, tell historical accounts and current affairs of the ovaHerero people[151]. The striking thing about the ovaHerero's performance arts, is that there are no solo performances, no one sings or dances alone, they are all performed in groups, both by the young and old.

The Aesthetics is rather targeted, almost like it has an objective to achieve, it is however only through the observation, participation and oral transfers of these arts, that the descendants get to understand the what's, how's, when's, whys and where's of these aesthetical elements. They just serve the purpose of manifesting the objectives of the *otuzo* and *omaanda*.

Ovaherero Arts: Top left are several different craft work of the ovaherero. Top right are the Zemba women, performing traditional dances. Left are central ovaHerero women also performing traditional dances (Brink, 2019)

As I have clearly articulated that the way of life of the ovaHerero people are founded on the branches of philosophy, namely metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics and aesthetics, all interconnected and interdependent to achieve and maintain the socially constructed *Ubuntu* philosophy.

African Ancestry of the OvaHerero

The main thesis of this paper is about African philosophy, and since the ovaHerero are chosen as a study group, my work would not be complete if do not attempt to show, the relationship between the ovaHerero and the rest of African people. Therefore, this section of my paper deals with the place of the ovaHerero in Africa especially their genealogy, which in turn will seek to justify the notion of *Ubuntu* as a universal African philosophy.

The ovaHerero are a Namibian tribe, that have evolved in several distinct ethnic groups, namely Himbas, Mbanderus, Hereros, Hakaaona, Zembas, Tjimbas, Kwandus, Kuvales and Tjavikuas. The ovaHerero are closest linked to the Ovambo, duped cousin tribes, as Kaputu narrates how the Ovambo and ovaHerero share Mangundu ancestry[152]. Otjiherero and Oshivambo language are the most similar, different languages, followed by the Rukwangali language in the Kavango region[153]. The ovaHerero belong to the Bantu group of people, the southern African Bantu people are suspected to have migrated from the northwestern Africa[154], and primarily established themselves south of the Sahara Desert in central and east Africa before finally migrating to the South of Africa[155]. Apart from the Bantu in Africa, there exist three other major groups of people in Africa, The Khoe people, predominantly found in the South of Africa[156], Afrasians found in the North west Africa, together with the Cushite found in the north eastern Africa[157]. These four distinct groups form the major groups of people on the African Continent, it is within this context that wish to trace the genealogy of the ovaHerero people, because if I can show common ancestry between all these groups and the ovaHerero, then it follows that *Ubuntu* indeed is a common philosophy across the continent.

It is not clear how exactly How the Hakaona, kuvale, Tjavikua, tjimba, zemba and Kwandu interrelate or relate to the Mbanderu, Himba and Herero but Kaputu states that the Herero and Mbanderu are a breakaway group from the Himba in the Northeast Namibia, some more than five hundred years ago and that the split between the Mbanderu and Herero, may have happened, somewhere along the way, very soon after the migration southwards began[158]. But due to the common language shared by all these ovaHerero groups, there is reason to believe they share very close common ancestry[159], with the exception of the Mbanderu and Herero, the other groups are divided between Northeast Namibia and Southeast Angola.

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[152] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2019)
[153] (Pollard, Rosenburg , & Tignor, 2011)
[154] (Pollard, Rosenburg , & Tignor, 2011)
[155] (Phillip & Randall, 2007)
[156] (Bernard, 1988)
[157] (Skogland, et al., 2017)
[158] (Kaputu J. A., O mara waNdjambi kotate, 2017)
[159] (Oliviera, et al., 2017)

In tracing the origins of the ovaHerero, Kaputu tells us that before the ovaHerero ever settled in Namibia, they were first in Angola, and that these group in Angola split from Tonga people of Zimbabwe, and then migrated southwesterly to settle in Angola (Kaputu J. A., O mara wandjambi kotate, 2018). While the origins of the Tonga is not well known, (Kapambwe, 2018) states that before the Tonga, there existed a group of people called the Mbara, in the same area were the Tonga are found, and that they are suspected to have been the ancestors of the Tonga. Asante tells us that the Tonga Sages speak of their east African origins[160].

The Bantu of east Africa are said to have migrated from sub Saharan western Africa[161], from the Niger-Congo[162] family group of Bantu people. Linguistic similarities exist between the Niger-Congo, Afrasian and Cushitic languages of north Africa, as well as evidence for linguistic and cultural similarities, existing between the Cushitic people and the Khoe people[163], hinting perhaps to a common genealogy of all the African people. With the current research findings and literature available, it is very difficult to pinpoint the exact genealogy of the ovaHerero up to its east African origins, these is because most of the work done focuses primarily on linguistic characteristics, rather than birth lineages, migration patterns and cultural similarities, also original tribal and ethnic names and labels are absent from the literature, instead what you have are Eurocentric names and labels, coined by the western researchers as they saw fit for example, the word Bantu or its classification, this in turn leads to more distortion of the History.

The ovaHerero for example resemble several traits from different African groups, for example, their dressing code and cultural practices resemble to a large extend that of the Maasai tribe in east Africa, while their language is more closely related to their southern neighbors for example the Shona of Zimbabwe and Rukwangali of Kavango, the ovaHerero have also been described as a very brave and fearless "war like" tribe, likened to the Zulu of South Africa, their ancestral veneration ritual through okuruuo is said to be similar to a practice in the temple of Vesta in Rome,

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[160] (Asante, 2019)
[161] (Berniell-Lee, et al., 2007)
[162] (Simons, 2018)
[163] (Ethhnolgue, 2019)

other things include the social status of their women, the extraction of the lower front teeth, traits found within the Nubian and Cushite tribes of the Nile river[164].

Conclusion

In order to conduct proper research on the genealogy of the ovaHerero, or any other African tribe, two things are of critical importance, the removal of language barriers and a field works approach, to all the groups of interest, to conduct interviews and observe the way of life of the people, within the context of their language, and not this conclusions western academics come up with, in the narrow context of their own languages. What is however evident from my work is that this four major groups of African people are linguistically linked, which could point to cultural assimilations at different times throughout history of different groups, however more work needs to be done in this regard, however the current approach needs to be revisited and that this kind of research must move from the narrow approach of seeking linguistic similarities only, to a more broad approach, that includes more factors like birth lineages, cultural similarities and cultural similarities.

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[164] (Africa, 1918)

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

This paper's main focus was the debate on the existence of African philosophy and its existence, and in addition it also explored an ontological account of the proposed African philosophy. The researcher believes there is an African philosophy and that this philosophy is *Ubuntu*. The Researcher also believes that the true nature of a philosophy should be anthropological, a way of life, as proposed in this paper, and that such a philosophy should demonstrate the five branches of philosophy about fundamental reality. The researcher then went ahead to reveal this branches within the Ubuntu philosophy, as well as to show that *Ubuntu* is indeed the fundamental driving force that guides everything in the life of an African.

To prove this point, the researcher applied *Ubuntu* philosophy to the ovaHerero people and showed how their way of life is completely depended, guided and influenced by the *Ubuntu* philosophy, and in order to ensure that, this was not construed as an ovaHerero affair only, the researcher went to shed light on the possible genealogical origins of the ovaHerero as far back as possible, which in turn showed the possible origins of the ovaHerero culture or way of life, as a collective African way of life. Based on all this, the researcher was able to conclude that African philosophy does exist, *Ubuntu* is this philosophy and it lives within every descendent of the aboriginal African people

Research Weakness

This research faced many challenges, there is a culture of literature reproduction in the current literature on African philosophy and *Ubuntu*, many scholars reproduce what has already been said, argue for or against what has already been said, however it is only handful of scholars who focus on producing new theories and challenging the existing ones. The researcher tried to avoid this and attempted to add to the current literature, rather than focus on the already existing literature. Most of the literature on *Ubuntu* lacks an ontological explanation, as such most if not all literature written on *Ubuntu* does not tell the researcher what exactly *Ubuntu* is or how to approach it, for this the research had to produce an entire ontological account on *Ubuntu*. A lot of detail has been

omitted on the local people, most of the literature on the ovaHerero for example focuses mostly on the Genocide war, and not much is written about the anthropology of the Herero, and the little literature that exist is riddled with huge misconception in interpretation, especially the work written by foreign scholars to Africa, this can be attributed to language barriers, both written and spoken, a very good example of this is the work of Father Tempels on Bantu Philosophy, while he has done outstanding work, he's interpretation of the work weren't completely accurate, he took what he was told, and understood it in his western languages or ways of life.

Recommendations

Further research must have more African participants in it, in order to ensure much more accurate interpretation of our history and produce more accurate literature, this is also particularly important because an increased culture of research about our own history, will help us decipher what needs to be done by ourselves about ourselves, because for the past more than a century foreigners have been researching African ways of life, and these researches were not for our consumption, but for themselves, as such we as Africans must adapt the same attitude towards research about our own history.

This paper was written from a deep rooted urge to familiarize myself with who I am and to better understand the African philosophy as well as to raise awareness of it. It has now become public knowledge that colonialism has deliberately robbed us from our history and culture, so that we know less about ourselves. It appears that not knowing oneself is the worst form of humanity, because not knowing were one comes from means one doesn't know who they are or why they are on this earth and much less what exactly they are doing living, it leads to an empty and meaningless reality and this is exactly what the colonizers wanted to turn Africans into.

It is therefore imperative upon us to rejoin the academic sphere in order to rediscover ourselves and reestablish our purpose on this earth through the proper understanding of our ontology as Africans, and just like the saying goes "until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter". This is very evident in the current academic literature on who the Africans are, because those who tell the African story currently are they themselves foreign to

Africa, and it must be noted that his very same people are not going to come back to undo all these damages they have done to the African people and history, in fact they do not have the capacity to undo their damage, even if they wanted to, the onus is therefore on us Africans, who possess the capacity to define ourselves, to stand up and fic for ourselves, ourselves. Another African proverb says "You can blame the whole world for putting you down, but you cannot blame anyone for staying down", we must heed this call and stand up, dust ourselves off and get back to reestablishing the great African civilizations, that once existed, the like of Kemet, Mali empire or the great Zimbabwe civilizations because Africans are a great people, duped to be the ancestors of humanity and their ancient civilizations speak volumes of their level of philosophical comprehension[165].

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[165] (James, 1954)

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