

UTILITARIANISM AND KANTIAN LIBERALISM: THE PROSECUTION OF COMPLEMENTARY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY OF “UBUNTU”

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Abstract

This work examines the African classical ethics in the concept of Ubuntu Philosophy. It repudiates the importance of the Kantian and Utilitarian ethical theories as the essential theories of justice writ large, and justice is seen as the most universal of the virtues in so far as it involves a disposition to give to all persons their due. So, under the conjectures of utilitarianism, justice is seen from the point of views of consequences and utility principles, in which we seek to balance the equation in human happiness. The findings of this work therefore, supports the thesis that ubuntu is an all-embracing interpretations of both negative and positive peace building in Africa through social trust among members of the community. Ubuntu embodies the spirit of collaboration with others, which serve as a cultural unity and political democratization of the people.. So, my main objective in this work is to bring out the point of convergence in the Kantianism and utilitarianism with the concept of Ubuntu's Philosophy. The theories therefore ellogiase in the concept of justice. Justice is to be extended to all; it is at least a common denominator. The Kantian theory epitomizes in the will of human action. Moral value is solely a function of the motives brought to action, whereas in the views of Utilitarianism it is the consequences of people's action that carry all moral weight. Ubuntu on the other hands is more pragmatic. It acts conspicuously above and beyond the call, for duty which yield the desired allegiance to norms of inter-personal civility, including the most fundamental precepts of individual autonomy. The co-culturation or enculturation of brotherhood determine the attentiveness to boundaries between self and others. This affords the visible indicators rather being controlled by them.

Keywords: Co-culturation, Enculturation, Herteronometivity, Homonometivity, Utilitarianism, Kantianism, Pragmatism, Ubuntu Moral Theory.

Introduction

Going by the concept of Ubuntu philosophy in Africa, it is not clear at all, how we can rekindle a language of justice from the perspective of Kantianism and Utilitarianism as moral ethical theories in Africa. These philosophical theories are polar opposites in the disposition of justice as a will towards human happiness. Kant enumerates with will of human action and duty is in turn understood as that which pure reason commands and voice of reason in practice is the categorical imperative, bidding us to act only in accord with precepts that are universalizable. Kantianism in the dimension of justice, categorically realign with the subjective will of the individuals in determining what is right, it rejects utilitarian criteria of consequentialist maximization. To phrase the contrast spatially, utilitarianism peers towards outward in business like fashion at the world that one's actions can engender a positive result, while the

Kantian gazes inward at the maxims that guide choice. So, there is an evidence of a big gulf separating the two theories. Despite the differences separating the two theories, both have some elements of binary beat in comparison with the concept of 'Ubuntu', which acts for duty. Ubuntu as an African philosophy places emphasis "on being self through others, it is an existential philosophy that consider self through others. I am therefore, we are" (Asike, 2016 B:177). It leans towards the foundation of a universal moral virtue which is altruistically benevolent to the common good. It is undue this panoply, that Ubuntu is beyond the scope of individualism in determining justice in the society. "Ubuntu" provides a dialogic framework for peace among the diverse states and cultures in Africa. It relates to the right knowledge of virtues for harmonious existentialism in Africa. It is within this fundamental framework, that it is vary imperative that we justifies the dimensional importance of these two theories of Kantianism and utilitarianism in the study of African philosophy of Ubuntu. Both are essentially important in understanding the concept of Ubuntu. One is on the subjective will of individual towards the society, and whereas the other is based on objective will of individual towards the general developmental structure of the society. Considerably in the light of Ubuntu philosophy, Kant adopts the ethics of the individual will in determining what is right. It literally extols the virtue of Ubuntu ethics, that "create this possibility in the forms of community which are simultaneously altruistic and benevolent" (Asike and Anwuluarah, 2018:1). On the realization of the Ubuntu African moral philosophy, one will virtually rationalize on the interest of human rights as to the disposition to others. The consideration of rights as the individual observance of justice is towards the society as whole. It is in this same sense of utilitarian consideration that it is towards the general good of community. Kantianism also under the subjective individual will considers the general good of the society.

This paper therefore revalidates the excellence of African philosophy of Ubuntu in cognizance with the Kantian and Utilitarian theories in western philosophical thought. It supports the existence of African philosophy in the manner of ethicism, logical consistency and epistemology.

Utilitarianism versus Kantian Liberalism: Seeking Justification towards Ubuntu Philosophy

The discretional spectrum in the moral doctrines of Ubuntu philosophy extends from the baseline upward of the community relationship. It recognize a baseline of maximally accepted conduct towards others in the society. These are the prescriptive set of correlative in which the individual is bound to live within the society. One may not transgress or trespass against the right of others in the society. The norm is the stipulation of the right reason to be democratic and exist in conjunction with others in the political community. The individual are at liberty, to act in accordance with the norms of the society. The sublimity of the individual thought is illuminated as the right concept to duty. We do things in relation to others, not as a moral command but as a duty. Literary this has been extolled by Kant in his unique of categorical imperative. For the Kantians, consequences do not matter; rather moral value is solely a function of the motives brought to action. "The only thing without qualification, insists Kant, is the will that directs itself by signal of duty. Duty in turn, is understood as that which pure reason commands" (Asike & Anwuluorah, 2018:4). Kant in this manner is bidding us to act only in accord with that are universalizable in cognition to our general subjective will. Thus, it is in this trajectory that Ubuntu moral theory advocates

in the precepts that are universalizable. It is existential philosophy that considers self through others in the society. “I am therefore we are” (Asike, 2016 B:177). A person is existing in relation with others in the community. Every single human being only thoroughly exists like human being by means of relationship with others in that community. It is form of a vital force that bridges the hiatus between people in a divided society. It does this with principle of reconciliation, reciprocity, inclusivity, democracy and humanism. It is realistic in the sense of unity among the fragment individuals in the community of citizenship; so far one to live effectively in the community. He/she must imbibe the principles of Ubuntu philosophy. It is a philosophy of positive peace-building with moral obligation to goodness. It is altruistic and benevolent.

The normative understanding of the concept of “Ubuntu” refers to the fact that Africans have some dialogic forms of deontological ethics which have a formative influence on the moral dispositions of members towards the civilities of virtues for the existence of common good. It connotes love, peace, humanistic, holistic, positive peace-building, justice and showing of remorse and repentance. It is the real sense of theoretic virtues in Africa deontological ethics, which occurs through the modeling of good citizens and benevolence in the society. Ubuntu is a bond of unity amongst the people of Africa. A person belongs to his community by participating and by with others in his or her community.

So, by advocating Kantianism and Utilitarianism as a model of theoretical structure in Ubuntu Philosophy is like giving the exposition of African philosophy within the Western Philosophical Thought. It is useful to note that Africans have formal mode of existence which give the status of political communities before the arrival of Euro-Christian traditions and Islamic-Arabic tradition in Africa. The African philosophical thought prior to modernity in African was rejuvenated with the philosophical concept of “Ubuntu” ethics. Perhaps, Ubuntu philosophy was the foremost of moral philosophy in Africa. It is the first in a series of intellectual and political responses to the expansion of western philosophical thought and Arabic tradition in Africa. The western philosophy more than any other brands developed a flourishing mythology and ideology. According to Vander-berger, the Westernization process resulted from:

1. The prevailing forms of capitalism, notably illustrated by slavery in the new world and incipient colonial expansion.
2. Social Darwinism which dovetailed with economic liberalism of the late 19th century. Liberal utilization like John Stuart Mills legitimized Laissez-fair, which in turn was reinterpreted as a mandate not to interfere in with any form of human inequality and sufferings. It literally reflected the platonic idea which would have supported the view that Negros were slaves as a result of natural selection (Vander-Berger, 1967:57).

The Ubuntu philosophy is holistic in approach. It is a systematic entrenchment of the peoples ideologues within the society they live. Only in community with others has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore is personal freedom possible. Alienation of individual affects the overall functioning of the society. It is also in the likes of Socrates who opines that a just citizen is a just society. And Tutu on a related note asserts that:

Ubuntu is very difficult to render in a western language. It speaks to every essence of being human. When you want to give high praise to someone we say 'Yu U nobuntu'; he or she has 'Ubuntu'. This means that they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring, reciprocal and compassionate. They share what they have. It means that my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs, we belong to a bundle of life. We say a person is a person through other people. I am a human being because I belong, I participate, I share with others. I am available to others, affirming of others does not change me from being myself as a person (Tutu, 1999:10).

Thus, to draw an interface with this concept of 'Ubuntu' would mean to become a point of reference with the Kantianism and Utilitarianism. Both theories are in classified relationship with the privileges of 'Ubuntu' philosophy. They try to rationalize society through the individual participation and activities in the society. Corroborating this Soccio asserts that:

Society will at least be able to provide property or wealth. Instead of having to compete for a good life, doing creative, satisfying work that benefits us individually at the same time it benefits society collectively. There will be no one class, hence no class conflict. The economy will reach a state of balance and history as such, class struggle will end. (Soccio, 2001:399).

Thus, is from the above background, that one considers the political and ideological tendencies inherent in Ubuntu philosophical rationalism. Ubuntu epitomizes love. In human sense of the word, it is like the Kantian model of the subjective will of human freedom. As David Bell emphasizes it, he assert that:-

It is impossible to conceive anything in the world or indeed anything beyond the world can be considered good without qualification, excepts a good will. (Bell, 1996 (ed.) by Bunnin & Tsui-James: 599)

Kant's aim, in other words, is to identify and defend, the most basic moral principle or law, directly determines the ethical value in which we subject ourselves without any inclination of law and order, thus, it is in this respect that Ubuntu is like Kantian epistemological model. They believe in the subjective will of individual. Every adult human being is autonomous, and it is for this reason that they possess moral dignity, deserve moral respect, and ought, never to be treated as mere means to an end, but always as above and beyond the call for duty. It is innate in us and it is the fundamental precepts of individual autonomy of belonging to the societal vital force of common good. Through the punctilious observance of conventional form, one indicates one's continued allegiance to the norms of inter-personal civility in harmony with others. This genuinely corroborated with the free will of the agent in keeping the moral law. We work for the Society not because there is a moral law subjecting us to obey or either by inner forces like inclinations, desires and passions, or by external forces in the outer world. Again, the autonomy requires that agents can exercise rational self-control over their decisions and their actions. More so, Kant is trying to envisage that the autonomy requires such self-control is the sole responsibility of the individual agent. And no genuinely autonomous agent can relinquish responsibility for the principle on which he or she acts to

any external authority, Kant here emphasizes, that it is the agent alone that determine issues on moral autonomy.

Perhaps it is under this consideration that we can discuss the theory of utilitarianism as part and parcel of Ubuntu philosophy. As Ubuntu act conspraciously above and beyond the call for duty as the maxim universally accepted by Kant, Utilitarianism upholds the tenacity of its engagement on the principles of Utility and consequences. Ubuntu admonishes in the same way, in the avalanche of utilities and consequences. It basically subject the individual for the practically working of the community. "Ubuntu is considered to be more fundamental to the life of everyone in the political community. Relating to this Ortega in the "revolt of the masses" argues that. "the fundamental radical truth is the co-existence of myself with the world. Existing is the first and foremost of co-existence. It is I myself seeing something which is not myself, it is I loving another being. It is I that is suffering from things" (Ortega, 1966:232). It may surely be right to reflect in the existentialism of Ortega's theory with that of Ubuntu In African philosophy. Both have the ultrusive benefits of the society.

It is under this spell, that we will discuss utilitarianism in relation to Ubuntu Philosophy. Utilitarianism as a moral theory is like Ubuntu in the pursuit of human happiness. It maximizes the cost benefits of all individual in the political community. It centers on man towards his utilities and consequences of his action in bringing happiness to the generality of the society. To the utilitarianism, even if one considers happiness or reason to be greatest good, one benefits from such actions". (Okoro, 2002:310)

Utilitarianism act so as to bring about the greatest good for the greatest number of people in the society. It is leaning towards the development of the common good, but with variants of the consequences as that determines the action of the generality of the people. By this, it is purely in determination of the common good, through the democratic process of the growth of good by the greatest number. Thus, by articulation of the pressure of a peace building for harmonious existentialism or harmony in the society, utilitarianism is much like Ubuntu dialogic ethics in recapitulation of the "the absence of unequal and unjust structures, cultural practices about security democratic participation, respect for human rights, development, social progress and justice" (Francis, 2006:27).

Hence, we critically reflected these theories in unity of cultural transformation of humanity through the normative structure of human individualism. "Individualism in its extreme form, on the one hand, the socialism, on the other, ... of human nature - a nature which entails both personal moral responsibility and social co-operation" (Boxxled.) by Eberly; 1994:254).

It is useful to remember that individuals are parts of the hegemonic structure of any society and they go by indications of ideology or theory inherent in that culture. So, the concepts of Ubuntu, Utilitarianism and Kantianism admonish with the hegemonic cultures that were inherently in the society.

Utilitarianism and Kantian are bi-polar, opposite in the quest for a moral theory. Despite the considerate gulf separating the two theories, Kantianism marches in step with Utilitarianism to a binary beat. To phrase the contrast spatially, Utilitarianism peers outward in businesslike

fashion at the world that one's actions can engender, while the Kantian inward at the maxims that guide choice.

Thus, within the academic taxonomy of moral philosophies, Ubuntu's ethics is standardly presented to bridge the lacuna or hiatus between Utilitarianism and Kantianism. Ubuntu acts conspicuously beyond the domain of human apriori to establish the intensity of the generality of the good to the people. It takes into account the moral concept of righteousness, compassion for the downtrodden, or commitment to projects that shape the moral contours of a life. It is purely subjective and as well as objective in standing conscientious to duty. The neutrality in which Ubuntu involve in seeking to bridge the lacuna between Utilitarianism and Kantianism. It is the principles of the individual will for the humanization paradigm. A person is a person in relations to the society. He pursue his own good in his own way, so long as he did not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Hence, it is this light that Ubuntu impact the idea of humanitarian paradigm. It confirms to the principles of utilitarianism in bringing utilities to all and sundry, within the confines of community relationship, reciprocity, inclusiveness, collaboration and collectivity.

More so, on the classical rejection of utilitarianism for possible violation of individual rights, that utilitarianism does not respect the dignity of person because it ignores the individual in favour of whatever will most likely produce the greatest total happiness. Utilitarianism does not take differences between people seriously; it treats the many individual desires of person as a single system of desires, just like Ubuntu that admonishes mainly for the benefits of the community. Though, to be very precise, Ubuntu is also quite similar to Kant in freely choosing what is good and what is bad. Under the spell of Ubuntu ethics, he or she is part of the society that works for the common good in justifying what is right or what is bad for the community. He or she sees himself/herself in relations to the society. So the question of the individual liberty does not exist, as he is working for himself, he is also working for others too. I think therefore we are not literally to say that "I think, therefore I am". Here, in the lights of Ubuntu ethics, we don't derive much of its moral force from the appeal of the self-image that animates our ontological world in Africa. We see ourselves internally from others and nothing more. Though, the self is part of the whole community of people in the order of reciprocity. It consists in living together in harmonious existentialism.

Conclusion

This work is categorically a new frame of thought, to seek for the true position of African philosophy from the perspective of the theoretical analysis in the principles of Ubuntu philosophy. Here in this work, we extol the African moral philosophy as a social-political and economic virtue of knowledge in transforming the agenda of African philosophy. We literally, create the possibility in forms of community which are simultaneously altruistic and benevolent in discussing the other impending theories of the western philosophy in Utilitarianism and Kantianism as moral philosophical theories.

Ubuntu is a dialogic ethic transformation of political communities in Africa. It is like Utilitarianism and Kantianism which create socio-political harmony amongst people in the society. It is a set of normative structure of development of common good in Africa, and has been relegated to the background due to the wide range of influences in modernity in Africa. The structures of post modernity are entirely new structure of dialogical thinking, in which

there is no more essence of Africa socio-political theories in the new circle of modernity, and they are highly engulfed in Western Philosophical Thought.

By looking into this argument very critically, it became very imperative that there is need for restructuring or could I say that, there must be a co-culturation, enculturation or hybridizations of culture in Africa's World of 21st century. This invariably will bring the much desired peace in the development of Africa. The outcome of the dialogic ethic relations among variant cultured in the world today, have not yet resulted in positive peace-building. It is still contestable in reaching the desired goal. Thus, Ubuntu on this ground has proven to be very formidable ethical theory in fostering peace in Africa during pre-colonial period. It is a moral philosophy in which Africa ethos or virtues are based, and as such must be revived to be equally utilized in global peace-building. Ubuntu as liberal theory of virtue in Africa should be given the status of effective legitimization in nation building process. It helps in the cultivations of common good, through the ambiances of conflict resolution in Africa.

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